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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children:
promotion and protection of the rights of children**

Security Council
Seventy-sixth year

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2020, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.¹ Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,² and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2020, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information presented does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors, including access. The report presents trends

¹ See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2020/1030](#)), Mali ([S/2020/1105](#)), Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Nigeria ([S/2020/652](#)), the Philippines ([S/2020/777](#)), Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)), South Sudan ([S/2020/1205](#)) and the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/46/39](#)).

² For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2147 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



and patterns of violations, and engagement with parties responsible for violations that might lead to behavioural change, including promotion of accountability and inclusion of child protection provisions in peace processes. In the report, it is noted that attacks or threats of attacks on community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures. Where measures undertaken by listed parties had a positive impact on children or where ongoing conduct is of concern, this is highlighted. On the basis of enhanced engagement with parties, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and those that have not.

II. Situation of children and armed conflict

A. Overview of trends and patterns

4. In 2020, the situation of children in armed conflict was marked by a sustained high number of grave violations. The United Nations verified 26,425 grave violations, of which 23,946 were committed in 2020 and 2,479 were committed earlier but verified only in 2020. Violations affected 19,379 children (14,097 boys, 4,993 girls, 289 sex unknown) in 21 situations. The highest numbers of violations were the recruitment and use of 8,521 children, followed by the killing (2,674) and maiming (5,748) of 8,422 children and 4,156 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.³ Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (3,243), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons. Escalation of conflict, armed clashes and disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law had a severe impact on the protection of children. Cross-border spillover of conflicts and intercommunal violence affected children, in particular in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions.

5. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Verified cases of abduction and sexual violence against children increased alarmingly by 90 and 70 per cent, respectively. Abduction is often combined with the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence. Continued high levels of denial of humanitarian access to children remained a concern. While attacks on hospitals decreased and attacks on schools increased, both continued to endanger children.

6. Grave violations affect boys and girls differently. Whereas 85 per cent of children recruited and used were boys, 98 per cent of sexual violence was perpetrated against girls. Sexual violence remained vastly underreported, owing to stigmatization,

³ Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not necessarily give an exhaustive view of the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

cultural norms, absence of services and safety concerns (see also [S/2021/312](#)). Abduction and killing and maiming also affected boys more severely (76 and 70 per cent, respectively).

B. Challenges and the way forward

7. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic aggravated existing vulnerabilities of children, including by hampering their access to education, health and social services, limiting child protection activities and shrinking safe spaces. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic exposed these children to grave violations, notably recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence. Attacks on schools and hospitals, and the military use thereof, exacerbated the plight of children.⁴ While engagement to end and prevent grave violations was challenging, my Special Representative and country task forces made progress in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Engagement with parties to conflict resulted in the release of 12,643 children from armed groups and armed forces.

8. As emphasized in Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) and by the Secretary-General, the protection of children affected by armed conflict is crucial to prevent conflict and sustain peace. National and regional stakeholders should develop and expand initiatives to prevent grave violations. Prioritization of data analysis is crucial for early identification and response to prevent the impact of armed conflict on children, through enhanced information collection and analysis, support for national capacities and inclusion of child protection concerns in mediation.⁵ Strategies and mechanisms for information exchange, while respecting individual data protection, in particular on cross-border issues, need to be researched.

9. Access challenges and escalation of conflict challenged child protection capacity and the monitoring and reporting of violations. While child protection actors adapted their working methods, strengthened the use of technology and maximized partnerships, child protection remained overstretched. The response to survivors was hampered, which led to delays in the separation of children from parties to the conflict and in family reunification and reintegration. Child protection advisers mainstream child protection and lead monitoring and prevention efforts. It is therefore important that their number and roles be assessed, protected and increased to adequately protect children.

III. Information on grave violations

A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

Afghanistan

10. The United Nations verified 3,061 grave violations against 2,863 children (2,020 boys, 840 girls, 3 sex unknown).

11. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 196 boys, attributed to the Taliban (172), Afghan National Police (5), Afghan National Army Territorial

⁴ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict", April, 2021.

⁵ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (New York, 2020).

Force (4), pro-government militia (7) and jointly by the Afghan Local Police and pro-government militias (8), mainly in the northern (124) and north-eastern (51) regions. Children were used in combat, including in attacks with improvised explosive devices, intelligence gathering, staffing checkpoints and subjected to sexual violence. Nine boys were killed and injured in combat.

12. As at 31 December 2020, 165 children (164 boys, 1 girl) were detained on national security-related charges in juvenile rehabilitation centres for periods up to 3.5 years. In addition, 318 children, predominantly of non-Afghan nationality, were in prison with their mothers who were detained for alleged or actual association with the Taliban and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP).

13. The United Nations verified the killing (760) and maiming (1,859) of 2,619 children (1,789 boys, 827 girls, 3 sex unknown) attributed to armed groups (1,098) (including the Taliban (940), unidentified armed groups (115) (including from crossfire between the Taliban and ISIL-KP (3)) and ISIL-KP (43)); and government and pro-government forces (962) (including the Afghan National Army (708), unidentified government and pro-government forces (111), international forces (46), pro-government militia (23), the Afghan National Police (22), unidentified components of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (16), the National Directorate of Security (14), the Afghan National Civil Order Force (10), the Afghan National Border Force (9) and the Afghan Local Police (3)). Remaining casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (512) (including from crossfire between pro-government forces and armed groups (404)) and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (47). Child casualties resulted from ground engagement (1,195), non-suicide improvised explosive devices (517), explosive remnants of war (315) and air strikes (299). Other causes of casualties included targeted killings, suicide and complex attacks,⁶ threats, search operations and abduction.

14. Sexual violence affecting 13 children (9 boys, 4 girls) was attributed to the Afghan National Police (6), including 5 boys used as *bacha bazi*,⁷ Taliban (3), Afghan National Army (1), Afghan Local Police (1), pro-government militia (1) and Afghan National Army Territorial Force (1).

15. A total of 152 attacks on schools (62), hospitals (90) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified. Armed groups were responsible for 110 attacks, attributed to the Taliban (101), ISIL-KP (3) and unidentified armed groups (6). A total of 30 attacks were attributed to government and pro-government forces, including the Afghan National Army (16), Afghan National Border Force (1), pro-government militia (2), international forces (1) and unidentified government and pro-government forces (10). In addition, 12 attacks were attributed to unidentified perpetrators in crossfire between armed groups and government and pro-government forces.

16. The military use of schools (5) and hospitals (2) by elements of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (2), pro-government militias (2), the Taliban (1), the Afghan National Army (1) and the Afghan National Police (1) was verified.

⁶ A deliberate and coordinated attack that includes all of the three following elements: a suicide device, more than one attacker and more than one type of device, as defined in the annual report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

⁷ *Bacha bazi* is a harmful practice whereby boys are used by men for entertainment. The boys are made to dance at parties and are often dressed in female clothes and subjected to sexual violence, as reported by UNAMA and OHCHR in their annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

17. The abduction of 55 children (46 boys, 9 girls) by the Taliban (54) and a pro-government militia (1) was verified. Of those, 42 children were released, 4 were killed, 1 remained with the pro-government militia and the whereabouts of 8 children remain unknown.

18. A total of 26 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (24), Afghan National Police (1) and government forces (1) were verified.

Developments and concerns

19. I commend the Government for the continued progress in implementing the 2011 action plan and the 2014 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, including through the launch of the child protection policy by the Ministry of the Interior in November 2020, which includes provisions on the recruitment and use of children, *bacha bazi*, and the screening of children in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, with 187 child applicants prevented from enrolling in 2020. I call upon the Government to sustain the gains made in the implementation of the action plan since 2011 and to continue to prioritize the implementation of the road map, notably in terms of legal and policy reforms related to children detained on national security-related charges for actual or alleged association with armed groups and whose age assessment must be accelerated and subject to standard operating procedures, and in addressing reintegration policy gaps by adopting a referral system for the reintegration of children who have been separated from parties to conflict, released from detention and/or rejected from recruitment centres, as they remain at risk of recruitment and use. I also urge the Government to prioritize accountability for perpetrators and assistance for survivors and their families, and I urge the parliament to adopt the Child Rights Protection Law.

20. I continue to be concerned by the high number of children killed and maimed by all parties, as well as by landmines and explosive remnants of war, and at the high number of attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge the Government and the international community to invest in mine clearance and education. I am seriously concerned over the continuing increase in casualties caused by air strikes carried out by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and urge the Government to strengthen and implement protocols to prevent child casualties. I note the reduction in aerial operations by the international forces that has resulted, inter alia, in a sharp decrease in the number of child casualties attributed to these forces. I request my Special Representative to engage proactively on the implementation of measures taken by the Government to mitigate grave violations and to support the development of an action plan between the Afghan National Army and the United Nations on the killing and maiming of children.

21. I condemn all grave violations committed by parties to the conflict and am particularly concerned about the increase in the recruitment and use and the abduction of children by the Taliban. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I urge the Taliban to cease violations and engage with the United Nations to sign an action plan to end and prevent violations against children.

22. I welcome efforts to achieve a lasting political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan and urge the Government and the Taliban to include child protection concerns in these negotiations.⁸

⁸ United Nations, Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, *Practical Guidance for Mediators*.

Central African Republic

23. The United Nations verified 899 grave violations against 731 children (440 boys, 291 girls) which occurred during the reporting period. In additionally, 201 grave violations against 201 children (130 boys, 71 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

24. A total of 584 children (400 boys, 184 girls) were verified as recruited and used by ex-Séléka factions (412), including Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (374), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (19), Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (15), joint UPC/MPC (2) and Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) (2); Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) (46); Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (45); anti-balaka (42); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (31); internal security forces (4); joint Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (3); and unidentified perpetrators (1). Children were used as combatants (111) and in support roles (464) and subjected to sexual violence (9). In addition, the recruitment and use of 190 children (124 boys, 66 girls) by anti-balaka in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

25. Four boys were arrested by the internal security forces for alleged association with armed groups; two were released. The United Nations advocated the release of the remaining 2 boys, as well as 10 children arrested in previous years. Four boys arrested in previous years were released in 2020.

26. The United Nations verified the killing (21) and maiming of (21) of 42 children (23 boys, 19 girls), mostly from gunshots. Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (20) (including from crossfire between anti-balaka and UPC (2) and between the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and UPC (1) and explosive remnants of war (5)), ex-Séléka factions (9) (FPRC (8), UPC (1)), anti-balaka (7), 3R (5) and Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) (1). In addition, the killing (5) and maiming (3) of 8 children (6 boys, 2 girls) in previous years by UPC (4) and unidentified perpetrators during crossfire (4) (between anti-balaka and FPRC (2) and between traders and the PK-5 group "YOU" (2)) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

27. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 82 girls were verified and attributed to ex-Séléka factions (27) (FPRC (12), unidentified ex-Séléka, MPC and UPC (4 each), Séléka Rénovée (2) and joint FPRC/MPC (1)), 3R (14), unidentified perpetrators (15), anti-balaka (13), LRA (7), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (4) and internal security forces (2). Perpetrators were arrested in two cases (1 each from the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and internal security forces). In addition, sexual violence against three girls in 2019 by anti-balaka, unidentified ex-Séléka and 3R (1 each) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

28. A total of 30 attacks on schools (23) and hospitals (7) were verified and attributed to Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (14), unidentified perpetrators (6), ex-Séléka factions (5) (MPC (2) and FPRC, UPC and unidentified ex-Séléka (1 each)), anti-balaka (3) and 3R (2).

29. A total of 11 schools (10) and hospitals (1) were used for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (4), UPC (2), joint FPRC/MPC (1 school/1 hospital) and unidentified ex-Séléka, Révolution et justice-Sayo Branch (RJ-Sayo) and unidentified perpetrators (1 each). As at December 2020, three schools were still in use for military purposes.

30. Some 58 children (33 boys, 25 girls) were abducted by LRA (35), 3R (12), anti-balaka (6), FPRC (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2), including for recruitment purposes (29), sexual violence (10) and ransom (5).

31. The United Nations verified 103 incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (46), anti-balaka (21), ex-Séléka factions (20) (joint FPRC/MPC (8), FPRC (6), UPC (3), unidentified ex-Séléka (2) and MPC (1)), CPC (11) and 3R (5).

Developments and concerns

32. I welcome the appointment of a Minister Counsellor to the President on child protection and the promulgation of the Child Protection Code criminalizing child recruitment and use, and I encourage the Government to prevent the recruitment and use of children into armed and security forces. I welcome the conviction of 110 perpetrators of violations against children and urge the authorities to continue to pursue accountability for violations against children. I call upon the Government to submit its initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and I continue to urge the adoption of the protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian protection actors.

33. I welcome the release of 497 children following United Nations engagement with armed groups, including 255 children from FPRC. In addition, 190 self-demobilized children from anti-balaka were identified. The United Nations initiated dialogue with an LRA splinter group.

34. I am alarmed at the elevated numbers of grave violations, including the sharp increase in recruitment and use, sexual violence, abduction and attacks on schools, including by parties that have signed action plans with the United Nations. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all grave violations and to release children from their ranks.

35. I am concerned over the impact of electoral violence, leading to an increase in incidents of sexual violence and recruitment and use, and I call upon the signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to continue to implement it, including its child protection provisions.

Colombia

36. The United Nations verified 210 grave violations against 184 children (123 boys, 61 girls).

37. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 116 children (77 boys, 39 girls). Perpetrators were dissident groups of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) (66), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (22), unidentified perpetrators (12), the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (9) and Los Caparrapos (7). According to the Government, 144 children (105 boys, 39 girls) were separated from armed groups and entered the protection programme of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

38. A total of 69 children (48 boys, 21 girls) were killed (48) and maimed (21) by unidentified perpetrators (36), dissident FARC-EP groups (18), AGC (7), the Colombian armed forces (4), Los Caparrapos (3) and ELN (1). Children were killed and maimed by gunshots (49), landmines (12) and improvised explosive devices (8).

39. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affected nine children (2 boys, 7 girls). Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4), the Colombian armed

forces (3) and dissident FARC-EP groups (2). The perpetrators were arrested in the three cases attributed to the Colombian armed forces, and investigations are ongoing.

40. Six attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (2) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4) and AGC and ELN (1 each).

41. One school was used for military purposes by a dissident FARC-EP group in March.

42. Two children (1 boy, 1 girl) were abducted by dissident FARC-EP groups, including one for recruitment. Their whereabouts are unknown.

43. Eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to dissident FARC-EP groups (3), AGC and unidentified armed groups (2 each) and ELN (1).

Developments and concerns

44. In July, the Government approved a national action plan to implement the 2019 policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children and launched the programme “Súmate por mí” to prevent child recruitment and use by armed groups. I encourage the Government to allocate adequate financial and human resources for their implementation, in particular in vulnerable areas, including in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

45. I welcome advances in accountability, including through Case No. 07 of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, concerning the recruitment and use of children, and I also welcome that the Truth Commission is addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children.

46. I am concerned about the continuing recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular by FARC-EP dissident groups and ELN, and by the increase in killing and maiming of children. I urge all armed groups to immediately release all children and to adopt and implement commitments to end and prevent all grave violations. I encourage the Government to continue its demining and mine risk education activities. As of February 2021, the crime of sexual violence against children is imprescriptible in Colombia. I urge the authorities to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence by the armed and security forces and to strengthen prevention and response for survivors.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

47. The United Nations verified 3,470 grave violations against 2,912 children (2,113 boys, 799 girls). In addition, 1,786 grave violations against 1,294 children (787 boys, 507 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

48. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 788 children (687 boys, 101 girls), all of whom were recruited, used and separated in 2020. Perpetrators were Mai-Mai Mazembe (209), Nyatura (109), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaises (101), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (66), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (62), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (34), Raia Mutomboki (34), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (29) and other armed groups (143). One boy was recruited by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to spy on Mai-Mai elements. The incidents occurred in North Kivu (544), South Kivu (117), Ituri (65) and Tanganyika (62). Fifty girls were subjected to sexual violence, and 240 children were used as combatants and 456 in support roles. In addition, the recruitment and use of 1,164 children (747 boys, 417 girls) by armed groups (1,162) (including Kamuina Nsapu (1,047) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (30)) and the armed forces (2) were verified at a later date.

49. In addition, 1,313 children (1,135 boys, 178 girls) were recruited in previous years and used, until their separation in 2020, by 36 armed groups: Mai-Mai Mazembe (296), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (187), Nyatura (185), Kamuina Nsapu (126), NDC-Rénové (93), Raia Mutomboki (67) and other armed groups (357). Two boys were used by the armed forces as servants for one year. The incidents occurred in North Kivu (764), Tanganyika (188), the greater Kasai region (177), South Kivu (119) and Ituri (65). A total of 592 children were used as combatants. Some children escaped and others were released following United Nations advocacy or through demobilization processes.

50. The United Nations verified the detention of 85 children (72 boys, 13 girls), by the armed forces (80) and the Congolese National Police (5) for alleged association with armed groups. Most (76) were released upon advocacy by the United Nations following detention periods of up to three years.

51. The United Nations verified the killing (220) and maiming (143) of 363 children (217 boys, 146 girls), mostly attributed to armed groups (294): CODECO (140), NDC-Rénové (27), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (26), Nyatura (23), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (16), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (14) and other armed groups (48). Government forces were responsible for 59 child casualties (armed forces (43) and the national police (16)), while another 10 casualties resulted from landmines and explosive remnants of war. The main causes were ethnically motivated raids on villages (146); crossfire between armed groups and the armed forces (25); and armed group clashes (23). A spike in casualties occurred during ethnic violence in Ituri and of armed groups fighting in North Kivu, with 83 per cent of all casualties verified in these two provinces. In addition, the killing (18) and maiming (32) of 50 children (34 boys, 16 girls) mainly by armed groups (46), including CODECO (15), Nyaturya (8) and Bana Mura (6), and by the armed forces (4) were verified at a later date.

52. The United Nations verified that 396 girls and 2 boys were subjected to sexual violence by armed groups (261) (Nyatura (50), NDC-Rénové (40), CODECO (31), Mai-Mai Mazembe (20), other groups (120)) and by government forces (137) (armed forces (92), national police (41), Agence nationale de renseignements (4)). Violations occurred in North Kivu (192), the greater Kasai region (58), Ituri (50) and other provinces (98) and involved rape (245), gang rape (77), forced marriage (46) and sexual slavery (23). Of the government elements, 45 suspects were arrested and 4 were convicted. Two armed group members were also arrested. In addition, sexual violence against 170 children (2 boys, 168 girls) by armed groups (148), including Kamuina Nsapu (67), Mai-Mai Mazembe (18) and Nyatura (7), and by State actors (22), namely the armed forces (12), the national police (9) and the Agence nationale de renseignements (1) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

53. The United Nations verified 145 attacks on schools (101) and hospitals (44) and on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals in Ituri (83), North Kivu (33), South Kivu (15) and other provinces (14), mostly attributed to armed groups (128): CODECO (66), NDC-Rénové (14), Twigwaneho (14), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (10) and other groups (24). Seventeen attacks were attributed to the armed forces. CODECO deliberately destroyed 53 schools during attacks in Ituri. In addition, 28 attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (6) by Twigwaneho (26), Bana Mura (1) and the armed forces (1) were verified at a later date.

54. Five schools were used by the armed forces in North Kivu (4) and Tanganyika (1) for up to four months for military operations and subsequently vacated.

55. There were 460 children (307 boys, 153 girls) abducted by Mai-Mai Mazembe (106), Nyatura (53), ADF (48), CODECO (42), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (38), NDC-Rénové (31) and other groups (135). Seven girls were abducted by government forces (armed forces (4), national police (2), Agence nationale de renseignements

(1)). Children were abducted for purposes of recruitment (273), sexual violence (88) and ransom (4) and for unknown reasons (95). Most abductions occurred in North Kivu (270), Ituri (94) and South Kivu (42). Separately, 52 children abducted in 2017 by the Bana Mura in Kasai province were returned to their families following United Nations advocacy. In addition, the abduction of 374 children (296 boys, 78 girls) by armed groups (370), including Mai-Mai Mazembe (71), Nyatura (55), Bana Mura (52) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (48), and by State forces, namely the armed forces (3) and the national police (1), were verified at a later date.

56. Three incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to the armed forces, Mai-Mai Yakotumba and Mai-Mai Mazembe (1 each).

Developments and concerns

57. The armed forces continued to screen new recruits, separating 53 children before enrolment. I commend the Government for its continuing efforts to sustainably prevent child recruitment and use by its forces. I call upon the Government to durably address sexual violence against children, by implementing the 2012 action plan and prioritizing access to services for survivors.

58. I welcome the conviction of the former leader of Nduma défense du Congo, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, for war crimes, including child recruitment and use. The conviction of 17 soldiers of the armed forces and 11 police officers for the rape of children and the trials of suspected child recruiters are positive developments. I commend the Government for its efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable and urge them to continue to do so.

59. The signature of seven new commitments by commanders to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, following United Nations engagement, is encouraging. As a result of similar commitments, 838 children were released in 2020. I encourage remaining armed groups to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

60. The separation of 2,101 children is a positive development. I urge the Government to facilitate access of child protection actors to demobilization sites to separate children. I call upon the Government to approve, fund and implement a national community-based disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. I appeal to the donor community to support the reintegration of children formerly associated with parties to conflict.

61. Despite a noted decrease, I am gravely concerned by the persistent prevalence of violations, particularly the recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence against children, and the increased attacks on schools. I call upon all parties to conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children.

62. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2020/1030](#)).

Iraq

63. The United Nations verified 85 grave violations against 82 children (62 boys, 19 girls, 1 sex unknown) that occurred during the reporting period. In addition, 32 grave violations against 22 children (8 boys, 14 girls) that occurred in the previous reporting period were verified at a later date.

64. The recruitment and use of one boy by the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) was verified. The boy was recruited in 2018, used, and killed in a military operation in May 2020. In addition, the recruitment and use of a boy by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2015 was verified at a later date.

65. As at 31 December, 1,114 children (1,071 boys, 43 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily ISIL.

66. A total of 79 children (61 boys, 17 girls, 1 sex unknown) were killed (24) and maimed (55) by ISIL (36), Operation Claw⁹ (2), Companions of the Cave¹⁰ (1) and unidentified perpetrators (40). Some 65 incidents took place in areas previously under ISIL control, and 25 casualties were caused by indirect attacks or crossfire, 17 by improvised explosive devices and 17 by explosive remnants of war. In addition, the killing (4) and maiming (2) of six children (3 boys, 3 girls) that took place in 2016 and 2017 in Mosul (Ninawa) was verified at a later date and attributed to ISIL (3) and the international counter-ISIL coalition (3).

67. Incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against nine girls by ISIL that took place in 2014 were verified at a later date.

68. The United Nations verified an Operation Claw air strike in Sulaymaniyah Governorate that hit a health centre. A total of 27 instances of military use of schools by the Iraqi police (22), the Peshmerga (1) and the Iraqi Army (4) were verified.

69. The United Nations verified the abduction of three children (1 boy, 2 girls) by ISIL. In addition, the abduction of 16 children (5 boys, 11 girls) attributed to ISIL that occurred between 2014 and 2016 was verified at a later date.

70. One incident of denial of humanitarian access was verified in 2020, claimed by the Guardians of Blood.

Developments and concerns

71. I welcome the decrease in cases of recruitment and use of children attributed to PMF and the ongoing engagement between the Government and the United Nations to develop an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by PMF. I urge the Government to speedily agree to and sign the action plan. I encourage the Interministerial Committee on Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Child Rights Violations to resume consultations with the United Nations.

72. I remain deeply concerned at the ongoing killing and maiming of children by landmines and explosive remnants of war. I urge the Government to implement international legal instruments on landmines and explosive remnants of war and to promote mine clearance and mine risk education, including prior to any movement by internally displaced persons back to contaminated areas.

73. I remain concerned about the situation of children detained on national security-related charges, including for their alleged association with armed groups, and recall that children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. The detention of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, with respect for due process. The United Nations is committed to supporting the Government in the reintegration of children actually or allegedly associated with parties to conflict. I welcome the reintegration of 355 children (259 boys, 96 girls) through United Nations-supported programmes, in coordination with the Government, and urge the Government to develop and implement a national reintegration programme for children affected by armed conflict.

74. I commend the Government for its efforts to release 194 children (95 girls) allegedly affiliated with ISIL and to facilitate their return to their countries of origin.

⁹ Launched by Turkey in northern Iraq in May 2019.

¹⁰ Ashab al-Kahf, an armed group.

I call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of their children, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, with respect for family unity and the best interests of the children, and in accordance with international law.

Israel and the State of Palestine¹¹

75. The United Nations verified 1,031 grave violations against 340 Palestinian and 3 Israeli children (327 boys, 13 girls) in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel. In addition, 96 grave violations against 96 children (92 boys, 4 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at later date.

76. The United Nations verified the recruitment of two Palestinian boys by Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades in Gaza.

77. The United Nations verified the detention of 361 Palestinian children for alleged security offences by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (361, including 283 in East Jerusalem). Eighty-seven children reported ill-treatment and breaches of due process by Israeli forces while in detention, with 83 per cent reporting physical violence.

78. Twelve children (11 Palestinian boys, 1 Israeli boy) were killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (9), in Gaza (2) and in Israel (1) by Israeli forces (8), Palestinian security forces (1), Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades (1), unidentified perpetrator (1) and explosive remnants of war (1). Of the eight Palestinian children killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, seven were killed by Israeli forces by live ammunition (6) and physical assault during arrest (1), during law enforcement operations (3), demonstrations and confrontations involving stone throwing (2) and Molotov cocktails (1), and a shooting attack against Israeli forces (1). The child killed by Palestinian security forces was shot with live ammunition in a law enforcement operation. One Israeli boy was killed in the occupied West Bank while being pursued by Israeli police after allegedly throwing stones at Palestinians.

79. A total of 326 children (324 Palestinian children, 2 Israeli children; 313 boys, 13 girls) were maimed¹² in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (304), and in Gaza (22) by Israeli forces (294), Israeli settlers (20), Palestinian armed groups (2) and unidentified Palestinian perpetrators (2) and explosive remnants of war (8). The main causes of maiming of children by Israeli forces were tear gas inhalation (170), rubber-coated metal bullets and sponge-tipped bullets (70) and live ammunition (34). Eight children were maimed by Israeli forces during demonstrations at the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence. In Gaza, six Palestinian children were maimed during air strikes by Israeli forces on Gaza, and two Palestinian boys were maimed by a rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group landing near their home. Separately, the maiming of another 96 children (92 boys, 4 girls) by Israeli forces that occurred during demonstrations in Gaza in 2018 and 2019 was verified at a later date. Two Israeli children were maimed in stone-throwing incidents attributed to Palestinian perpetrators.

80. The United Nations verified 30 attacks on schools (11) and hospitals (19), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to Israeli forces (26) and Israeli settlers (4) in Gaza (4) and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (26). Incidents involved air strikes (4), settler attacks (1), attacks on medical personnel (18) and threats against teachers or students (7). The United Nations verified one incident of a school being used for military purposes in

¹¹ For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

¹² Any action that causes a serious, permanent, disabling injury, scarring or mutilation to a child.

Gaza by unidentified perpetrators. Separately, 94 other interferences with health (5) or education (89) by Israeli forces (90), affecting the education of more than 6,900 Palestinian children, and Fatah's Tanzim (4) were verified in the occupied West Bank. Most verified interferences involved Israeli force closures or denial of teachers' and students' access through checkpoints (39), Israeli forces firing tear gas or other weapons in and around schools (22), or threats of demolition (9). Self-identified members of Fatah's Tanzim dismissed students and teachers from four schools owing to demonstrations.

81. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces (661) was verified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. Two incidents occurred in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through the delay and/or prevention by the Israeli forces of medical care being provided to fatally injured children. The suspension of coordination between the authorities of the State of Palestine and Israel in response to the plans by Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank continued to pose additional obstacles to children in need of medical treatment in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. Some 28 per cent of permit applications to Israeli authorities for children to exit through the Erez crossing to access specialized medical treatment outside Gaza were delayed and 3 per cent were denied, affecting 659 children (397 boys, 262 girls). Three Palestinian children died while waiting for permission to access medical care outside Gaza.

Developments and concerns

82. I welcome the collaboration extended by the Israeli and Palestinian parties to my Special Representative following my request in 2019 to further examine the cases of maiming and injuries caused by Israeli forces and of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups (see [A/73/907-S/2019/509](#)), reiterated in June 2020 (see [A/74/845-S/2020/525](#)). I take note of the findings resulting from these consultations, which I have shared with the authorities of Israel and the State of Palestine. I welcome that both authorities reported that corrective measures had been taken and existing protection frameworks had been strengthened and that both expressed commitment to continuing to engage to better protect children. I note that investigations by Israeli authorities are ongoing and call for these investigations to follow international standards. My Special Representative will continue to engage with all parties to protect children, and I encourage the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to reinforce their dialogue with the United Nations at the country level, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

83. While I note a decrease in grave violations in 2020, I remain deeply concerned by the number of children killed and maimed, including through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and I urge Israel to continue to investigate each case where live ammunition was used, as required by procedure, and urge the authorities to pursue accountability for violations against children.

84. I urge the Israeli authorities to review and strengthen measures to prevent any excessive use of force, to ensure that force be used only when necessary and to minimize the effects of its forces' operations on children and ensure accountability in all cases involving the killing and maiming of children. I further call upon Israel to better protect schools as places of learning. Taking note of the decrease in detentions, I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and end the administrative detention of children, prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention, and halt any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants. Of concern are continued allegations of attempts to recruit detained Palestinian children as informants.

85. I am also concerned by the two incidents of children recruited by al-Qassam Brigades. I call upon al-Qassam Brigades to cease the recruitment and use of children and to abide by its domestic and international legal obligations. I urge all Palestinian armed groups to protect children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence or by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes.

86. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Lebanon

87. The United Nations verified 16 grave violations against 16 children (14 boys, 2 girls).

88. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of nine children (8 boys, 1 girl) by Jund Ansar Allah¹³ (3), unidentified perpetrators (2), Fath al-Islam (2) and ISIL (2). Three children were used as combatants.

89. Children continued to be arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges, including allegations of terrorism, with the verified detention of two boys. As at December 2020, an additional three boys were detained.

90. Seven children (6 boys, 1 girl) were killed (6) and maimed (1) by unidentified perpetrators.

Developments and concerns

91. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

92. I reiterate my call upon armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

93. I am concerned about the continued detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, and urge the Government to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims, detain them only as a measure of last resort for the shortest appropriate period of time and refer them to reintegration programmes.

Libya

94. The United Nations verified 166 grave violations against 117 children (94 boys, 23 girls).

95. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of nine boys by the Libyan National Army (LNA) and affiliated forces (3), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (3) and Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as the Free Syrian Army (Mu'tasim and Samarqand brigades) (3), which trafficked them from the Syrian Arab Republic to Libya.

96. The United Nations verified the detention of one boy by LNA and affiliated forces, and of 67 children and their mothers, from several nationalities, by the Judicial

¹³ A Palestinian armed group based mainly in the Ein El Hilweh and Mieh Mieh Palestine refugee camps of Lebanon.

Police for the mothers alleged association with ISIL, in Judaydah prison in Tripoli. As at December, 12 children had been repatriated to their countries of origin.

97. The verified killing (31) and maiming (65) of 96 children (79 boys, 17 girls) was attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (71), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (8) and unidentified perpetrators (17), and caused by shelling (50), air strikes (20) or explosive remnants of war (26).

98. Five verified cases of sexual violence (3 boys, 2 girls) were attributed to forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (4) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

99. A total of 48 verified attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (26) were attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (16), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (1) and unidentified perpetrators (31), including crossfire between LNA-affiliated groups and forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (8).

100. The verified abduction of seven children (3 boys, 4 girls) was attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (Ninth Brigade, also known as Al-Kaniyat) (3), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (3) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

101. One verified denial of humanitarian access was attributed to forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord.

Developments and concerns

102. I welcome the efforts of the Government to mitigate the effect of landmines and explosive remnants of war, and I call upon Libya to become a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V). I call upon the Government to enforce laws on weapons and ammunition and to reinforce the implementation of the ceasefire agreement with emphasis on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children.

103. I am concerned about the prevalence of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. I call upon parties to cease the recruitment and use of children and their trafficking across borders from the Syrian Arab Republic to Libya. I am concerned over the risk of sexual violence against children.

104. I welcome the initial efforts by the Government to facilitate the return of women and children allegedly associated with ISIL in Libya and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of these children, in line with international law principles, including the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child.

105. I urge the Government to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent violations against children, and to ensure that child protection provisions are included in ceasefire and peace processes. I reiterate my concern about the abuse of refugee and migrant children, including through trafficking in persons, the deprivation of liberty, torture and sexual violence. I call upon the Government to take immediate action to end child detention and to pursue alternatives to detention and facilitate United Nations and other humanitarian agencies access to detention centres. The denial of humanitarian access to children, including those in detention, is deeply concerning.

Mali

106. The United Nations verified 809 grave violations against 535 children (394 boys, 135 girls, 6 sex unknown) which occurred during the reporting period. In addition, 204 grave violations against 183 children (145 boys, 38 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

107. Some 284 children (221 boys, 63 girls) were recruited and used by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (141), including Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (70), Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (45) and Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (26); Platform (70), including Ganda Lassal Izo (31), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (15), Ganda Koy (15) and Mouvement pour le Salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (9); Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (19), Front de libération du Macina (FLM) (17), unidentified perpetrators (13), Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) (1) and the Malian armed forces (23). Most children were recruited in the Kidal (112) and Gao (74) regions. Children were used in combat roles (120) and support roles and were subjected to sexual violence. In addition, the recruitment and use of 170 children (137 boys, 33 girls) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date. Perpetrators were Platform (84) (GATIA (38), Ganda Koy (18) and other Platform members (28)), CMA (44) (MNLA (31) and other CMA members (13)) and other armed groups (42).

108. Eleven boys were arrested by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (10) and Operation Barkhane (1)¹⁴ for alleged association with armed groups. They were released after periods ranging from 1 to 21 days, except for one boy held by the national authorities for five months. Of the 17 children held in government detention since 2019, 15 remained detained as at December 2020.

109. A total of 173 children (115 boys, 52 girls, 6 sex unknown) were killed (87) and maimed (86), mostly in the Mopti region (134), as a result of attacks on villages, crossfire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. The perpetrators were unidentified (116), Fulani armed elements (19), Dogon armed elements (8), Dozo traditional hunters (7), Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (6), Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (5), joint JNIM/Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (2), joint Dozo traditional hunters/FLM (1) and ISGS (1). Seven child casualties were attributed to FDSM and the maiming of a boy to Operation Barkhane. In addition, the killing (5) and maiming (2) of seven children by unidentified perpetrators (6) and DNA (1) in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

110. Sexual violence affected 12 girls, attributed to unidentified perpetrators (10) and the Malian armed forces (2). In addition, sexual violence against 24 girls by GATIA (10), MNLA (9) the Malian armed forces (3) and MSA (2) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

111. A total of 61 attacks on schools (36) and hospitals (25) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (57) and to JNIM, ISGS, DNA and the Malian armed forces (1 each). In addition, one attack on medical personnel by unidentified perpetrators in 2019 was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

112. Four schools were used for military purposes by unidentified perpetrators (3) and Dozo traditional hunters (1) in the Mopti region.

113. A total of 80 children (48 boys, 32 girls) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (63), DNA (6), Dogon armed elements (5), Dozo traditional hunters (4)

¹⁴ The status of the victim was misrepresented at the moment of arrest.

and Fulani armed elements and Malian Defence and Security Forces (1 each) for sexual violence (8), retaliation (3) and unknown purposes (65). Four children were killed. The abduction of two boys by Dozo traditional hunters (1) and FLM (1) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

114. The United Nations verified 199 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by unidentified perpetrators, mostly in the Mopti (60), Gao (39) and Ménaka (35) regions.

Developments and concerns

115. I welcome the Government's issuance of orders to military commanders prohibiting the use of children under 15 and curbing the presence of children around military barracks. I note the release in 2020 of 23 children recruited and used by the Malian armed forces. I call upon the Government to take measures to end and prevent sexual violence against children, to continue reinforcing systems to prevent child recruitment and use by armed forces, and to swiftly finalize the revision of the Child Protection Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those aged 15 to 17, as well as to release children detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups.

116. I welcome advances in the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, including on a draft law on the protection of education from attacks, the swift adoption and implementation of which I encourage.

117. I am alarmed by the elevated numbers of grave violations against children, particularly recruitment and use, killing and maiming, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denials of humanitarian access. I urge all parties to immediately prevent and put an end to violations and call upon armed groups to respect the protocol on the release and transfer of children associated with parties signed in 2013. I am gravely concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children by CMA and Platform. I call upon CMA to continue implementing its 2017 action plan, and I call upon Platform to adopt and swiftly implement an action plan addressing child recruitment and use.

118. I reiterate my recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Mali ([S/2020/1105](#)).

Myanmar

119. The United Nations verified 1,039 grave violations against 1,012 children (920 boys, 88 girls, 4 sex unknown). In addition, two grave violations against two girls which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

120. The recruitment and use of 790 children (778 boys, 12 girls), mainly in Rakhine (698) and Kachin (49) States, was attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi (726), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (62) and the Arakan Army (AA) (2). Of those attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi, 7 children were recruited and released in 2020, 22 children were recruited between 2010 and 2019 and were still being used in 2020, 697 children were used in Rakhine (689) and Shan (1) States, including as guides or porters, for camp maintenance or agricultural work, or in unsafe mine clearance. With regard to cases attributed to armed groups, 36 children (27 boys, 9 girls) were released by KIA, including 26 children following engagement between KIA and the United Nations.

121. The detention of 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) for up to 10 months by the Tatmadaw Kyi, for alleged association with AA was verified in Rakhine State. Subsequently, the children were released.

122. The killing (56) and maiming (160) of 216 children (138 boys, 74 girls, 4 sex unknown) was verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (152), including from crossfire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and armed groups (20), Tatmadaw Kyi (62), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (1) and KIA (1). Child casualties occurred in Rakhine (155), Chin (29), Shan (24), Kayin (5) and Kachin (3) States. Most resulted from landmines and explosive remnants of war (74), shelling (62), air strikes (33) and crossfire (23).

123. The rape of one girl by SSA in Shan State was verified. In addition, the rape of two girls by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) (1) and the Tatmadaw Kyi (1) that occurred in previous years was verified by the United Nations.

124. The United Nations verified 11 attacks on schools (10) and hospitals (1) attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi (6) and unidentified perpetrators (5), including resulting from crossfire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and AA (2) in Rakhine (9) and Chin (2) States.

125. The United Nations verified the military use of 30 schools and 1 hospital by the Tatmadaw Kyi in Rakhine (30) and Shan (1) States. Facilities were vacated after one day to a month.

126. The abduction of 17 children (16 boys, 1 girl) by the Tatmadaw Kyi (10), Shan State Army (SSA) (3), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) (2), AA (1) and KIA (1) in Rakhine (13), Shan (3) and Kachin (1) States was verified. Children abducted by the Tatmadaw Kyi were used, including as human shields (7) and guides (2). All children were released, except one child whose whereabouts remain unknown.

127. Humanitarian access in Rakhine and Shan States deteriorated, despite an informal ceasefire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and AA in Rakhine State in November and December. Movement restrictions in areas affected by the Tatmadaw Kyi-AA conflict in seven townships prevented over 100,000 people from accessing assistance. Continued onerous and unpredictable travel authorization requirements continued, particularly in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine States.

Developments and concerns

128. I note the ratification by the Government of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138) in June 2020 and the establishment of a national complaint mechanism to eliminate forced labour, prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in February 2020. I call upon all parties to respect international standards on impartiality, victim protection and the best interests of the child in the implementation of these standards.

129. I commend the November 2020 signature of a joint action plan between the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the first action plan with an armed group in Myanmar. I am encouraged by the engagement between KIA and the United Nations on recruitment and use resulting in the release of 26 children. I encourage other armed groups to continue to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

130. I condemn all grave violations committed against children by all parties to conflict, and reiterate my call for the accountability of perpetrators.

131. I call upon the Tatmadaw Kyi to continue implementing the joint action plan on non-recruitment of children signed in 2012. I am gravely concerned and alarmed by the continued use of children by the Tatmadaw Kyi, predominantly in Rakhine State. I am disappointed at the failure of the Tatmadaw Kyi to immediately cease the use of children and again urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to cease this practice and to comply with the Joint Action Plan by swiftly implementing its road map, in line with the Child

Rights Law. While I note the issuance of four military directives on the use of children and the development of a road map by the Tatmadaw Kyi and the United Nations to end and prevent the use of children, I am concerned that these directives have not led to a significant decrease in the use of children during 2020. I urge the release of all children within the framework of the Joint Action Plan, and I welcome the release of 32 children and young men by the Tatmadaw Kyi in 2020. I urge the immediate clearance of 156 pending cases of suspected minors.

132. I am gravely concerned by the increase in the killing and maiming of children, including by landmines, explosive remnants of war and shelling, and the continuous attacks on schools and their use for military purposes. I reiterate my call to the Tatmadaw Kyi to sign a joint action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. I call upon Myanmar to become a party to the Ottawa Convention and to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

133. I am worried by persistent restrictions to humanitarian access and call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to United Nations and child protection actors.

134. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), pending a review of the situation in 2021 owing to the brutal violence taking place in Myanmar since February 2021.

Somalia

135. The United Nations verified 4,714 grave violations against 3,810 children (3,038 boys, 772 girls).

136. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,716 children (1,655 boys, 61 girls) by Al-Shabaab (1,407); government security forces, including the Somali Police Force (101), the Somali National Army (62) and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (5); regional forces, including Jubaland forces (36), Galmudug forces (31), Puntland forces (21), Jubaland police (3), Puntland police (2) and Galmudug police (1); and clan militia (47). Children were used in support roles (255) or in combat (165).

137. A total of 212 children (211 boys, 1 girl) were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (127), the Somali National Army (40), Jubaland forces (27), Puntland forces (8), Galmudug forces (1), Jubaland police (4), Galmudug police (3) and Puntland police (2). Some 128 children were released, whereas 83 remained in detention and 1 child is not accounted for.

138. The killing (206) and maiming (881) of 1,087 children (825 boys, 262 girls) was attributed to Al-Shabaab (329), government security forces (including the Somali National Army (70), the Somali Police Force (56) and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (1)) and regional forces (including Puntland forces (28), Jubaland forces (14), Galmudug forces (1), Puntland police (24), Jubaland police (1), Galmudug police (1), and Southwest forces (8)). Violations were also attributed to clan militia (90), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (8), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (455) (including from air strikes (4)). The four main causes of child casualties were crossfire between armed forces and groups (318), gunshots (183), improvised explosive devices (173) and physical assault (119). The majority of casualties occurred in Banaadir/Mogadishu (236), Shabelle Hoose (171) and Juba Hoose (155).

139. Some 406 children (6 boys, 400 girls) were raped and were victims of other forms of sexual violence by government security forces, including the Somali National Army (21) and the Somali Police Force (19), and regional forces, including Jubaland forces (8), Puntland forces (4), Jubaland police (2) and Puntland police (2).

Al-Shabaab (60), clan militia (55) and unidentified armed elements (235) were responsible for the remaining incidents. The violations included rape (272), attempted rape (59), forced marriage (44), sexual harassment (20) and sexual assault (11).

140. The United Nations verified 58 attacks on schools (53) and hospitals (5), attributed to Al-Shabaab (55), the Somali Police Force (1), and clan militia (2).

141. A total of 1,430 children (1,348 boys, 82 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (1,413), clan militia (9), unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Westland armed group (1). Children were abducted for recruitment and use (868), alleged association with armed forces (174) and non-compliance with Al-Shabaab-imposed codes (93). Some 136 children were released 52 escaped and 42 were rescued, whereas 1,168 remained held, 6 were killed and 26 are unaccounted for.

142. The United Nations verified 17 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by Al-Shabaab (12), government security forces, including the Somali National Army (2) and the Somali Police Force (1), clan militia (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

Developments and concerns

143. I reiterate my call upon the Government to expedite the implementation of the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and of the 2019 road map, including at the federal member states level. While I recognize the steps taken by the Government in implementing the action plans, I am concerned at the increase in violations attributed to the Somali Police Force and the federal member states forces and especially urge that implementation be expedited, including at the federal member states level.

144. I call upon the Government to provide more information on the integration of Ahl al Sunna wal-Jama'a into the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces to enable the United Nations to conduct a screening.

145. I am seriously concerned at the staggering numbers of grave violations by all parties to conflict, in particular the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children. I am concerned at the rising levels of sexual violence against children, in particular the cases attributed to the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces. I urge the Government to immediately cease this violation and request my Special Representative and the United Nations country task force to engage to secure a rapid development, signature and implementation of an action plan to that effect. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

146. I reiterate my call to the Government to treat children formerly associated with armed groups according to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), endorsed by Somalia, and to apply the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups to child protection actors, endorsed in 2014.

147. I urge the 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, to fast-track the endorsement of the child rights bill and to ensure that any sexual violence legislation is in line with human rights commitments and meets regional and international standards. In this regard, I call for the immediate adoption of the 2018 sexual offences bill and urge the endorsement by the Cabinet of the juvenile justice bill and the age verification guidelines.

148. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)).

South Sudan

149. The United Nations verified 165 grave violations against 154 children (125 boys, 28 girls, 1 sex unknown). In addition, 11 grave violations against children that occurred in 2019 were verified at a later date.

150. A total of 62 children (61 boys, 1 girl) were recruited and used by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) (55), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces (6), and the South Sudan National Police Service (1). Violations occurred in Central Equatoria (31), Unity (17), Western Equatoria (9), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (2), Jonglei, Lakes and Warrap (1 each) states. Children were used as combatants, bodyguards and servants.

151. The killing (22) and maiming (41) of 63 children (53 boys, 9 girls, 1 sex unknown) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (54), including from explosive remnants of war (47); crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and armed Misseriya cattle keepers (5) and between SPLA-IO and forces loyal to General Ochan Puot (2); the National Salvation Front (NAS) (6); and SPLA-IO (3). In addition, the maiming of 11 boys by explosive remnants of war in December 2019 was verified at a later date.

152. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 17 girls were attributed to SPLA-IO (10), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (4), NAS (2) and forces loyal to General Ochan (1). Four girls were also abducted, and one girl was also recruited and used.

153. Four attacks on hospitals were verified and attributed to NAS (2) and SPLA-IO (2). Incidents included the looting of facilities. In addition, the military use of 10 schools and 1 hospital by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (10) and SPLA-IO (1) was verified.

154. A total of 17 children (11 boys, 6 girls) were abducted by NAS (10), SPLA-IO (5) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2), including 4 girls who were abducted and subjected to sexual violence. Thirteen children were released or escaped, and four children are missing.

155. Two incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

Developments and concerns

156. I welcome the signature on 7 February 2020 of the Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations against Children by parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the establishment of national and state-level committees. I reiterate my call for the implementation of the Action Plan and call upon the Government to budget for its implementation.

157. I note the decrease in grave violations and the cooperation of parties to conflict with the United Nations, including joint efforts with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission resulting in the release of 44 children in 2020. I call upon the Commission to engage with NAS to ensure the demobilization and reintegration of associated children, and I underline the need for child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and demining processes and encourage international support in this regard.

158. I remain concerned that parties, including government security forces, continue to perpetrate grave violations against children. I call upon the Government and other parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and

international human rights law. I reiterate my concern over escalating intercommunal violence and am concerned over the increase in violations by NAS. I urge all parties to immediately release children recruited or abducted. I encourage the international community to support gender-sensitive and survivor-centred reintegration and assistance programmes, including for survivors of sexual violence.

159. I urge the Government to remedy the prevalent impunity for grave violations and to hold perpetrators accountable. I encourage the Government to endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and to submit its initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

160. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan ([S/2020/1205](#)).

Sudan

Darfur

161. The United Nations verified 292 grave violations against 274 children (143 boys, 131 girls). In addition, 24 violations against 19 children (14 boys, 5 girls) in December 2019 were verified at a later date.

162. Thirteen boys were verified as recruited and used by the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC) (12) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) (1).

163. Seven children (6 boys, 1 girl) were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Sudanese Armed Forces and later released.

164. The killing (53) and maiming (120) of 173 children (116 boys, 57 girls) was attributed to government security forces (35) (including the Rapid Support Forces (20), the Sudanese Armed Forces (13) and the Sudan Police Force (2)); the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) (33) (including SLA-AW splinter groups (32); and unidentified perpetrators (105). Five children were killed (1) and maimed (4) during crossfire in fighting between SLA-AW splinter groups in Jebel Marra and intercommunal violence in West Darfur. In addition, the killing (7) and maiming (9) of 16 children (14 boys, 2 girls) by the Rapid Support Forces was verified at a later date.

165. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 57 girls were attributed to government security forces (15) (including the Sudanese Armed Forces (12), the Rapid Support Forces (2) and the Sudan Police Force (1)); SLA-AW (15); and unidentified perpetrators (27). In addition, the rape of and sexual violence against three girls in December 2019, attributed to unidentified perpetrators, were verified at a later date.

166. The United Nations verified 13 attacks on schools (6) and hospitals (7), attributed to the Central Reserve Police (1); SLA-AW (1); and unidentified perpetrators (11). In addition, five attacks on schools by the Rapid Support Forces in December 2019 were verified at a later date.

167. The military use of four schools and two hospitals by the Sudanese Armed Forces (4), the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Central Reserve Police (1) was verified. Except for one school, all facilities continued to be used as at December 2020. The military use of three schools by government security forces (including the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and SPF (1)), previously verified, continued in 2020.

168. A total of 31 children (14 boys, 17 girls) were abducted by government security forces (12) (including the Rapid Support Forces (9) and the Sudanese Armed Forces

(3)); SLA-AW (11); and unidentified perpetrators (8). Children were abducted for sexual purposes, recruitment or ransom.

169. Five incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (4) and Military Intelligence (1).

South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei

170. The United Nations verified 25 grave violations against 19 children (15 boys, 4 girls).

171. The killing (13) and maiming (4) of 17 children (14 boys, 3 girls) was attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2), unidentified perpetrators (15), explosive remnants of war (8), stray bullets (1) and intercommunal violence between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya tribes (6).

172. Six attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (2) attributed to unidentified perpetrators were verified, as was the military use of one school by the Rapid Support Forces.

173. The verified abduction of two children (1 boy, 1 girl) was attributed to Misseriya tribe gunmen.

Developments and concerns

174. I welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October 2020 and the improvement of humanitarian access in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, while noting that access restrictions hindered monitoring and reporting by the United Nations. I take note of the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians, adopted in 2020.

175. I am concerned about the continuing grave violations, in particular the prevalence of the killing and maiming of children by government security forces and armed groups, and the recruitment drives by signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent all grave violations against children and to release all children from their ranks and hand them over to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in coordination with the United Nations. I further call upon the Government to refrain from any excessive use of force against children, cease the military use of schools and strengthen accountability for perpetrators of grave violations.

176. I call upon the Government to end all grave violations and to engage with the United Nations on a national prevention plan to prevent all grave violations and sustain the gains of the action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children. I encourage the Government to continue to make use of the National Council for Child Welfare and the Technical Committee for the Protection of Children from Violations. I further call upon SLA-AW, including its factions, to engage with the United Nations to sign an action plan, and upon JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Malik Agar factions to recommit to their existing action plans with the United Nations through road maps for implementation. I further urge the transitional Government and armed groups to agree upon handover protocols for children associated with them.

177. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)).

Syrian Arab Republic

178. The United Nations verified 2,388 grave violations against 2,250 children (1,618 boys, 419 girls, 213 sex unknown). In addition, 51 grave violations against 51 children (39 boys, 10 girls, 2 sex unknown) that occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

179. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 813 children (777 boys, 36 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (390); Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (170); the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (119) under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); pro-government militia (42); Ahrar al-Sham (31), Nur al-Din al-Zanki (3) and Army of Islam (Jaysh al-Islam) (3), all nominally operating under the umbrella of the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) since October 2019; the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) (30); the Internal Security Forces (13); Hurras al-Din (6); ISIL (4); and Syrian government forces (2). Cases were verified mainly in Idlib (477) and Aleppo (119). Of those, 99 per cent (805) were used in combat. In addition, the recruitment and use of 24 children (20 boys, 4 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (7), Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (6), YPG/YPJ (8), ISIL, pro-government militia and the Kurdish Revolutionary Youth (1 each) were verified at a later date.

180. The deprivation of liberty of 870 children (642 boys, 2 girls, 226 sex unknown) was verified and attributed to SDF (777), the Internal Security Forces (91) and the Syrian government forces (2) in Hasakah (868), Damascus (1) and Dayr al-Zawr (1). In addition, over 64,000 women and children with suspected family ties to ISIL and from an estimated 60 countries of origin continued to be held in the Hawl and Rawj camps in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic at the end of 2020.

181. The United Nations verified the killing (512) and maiming (699) of 1,211 children (765 boys, 233 girls, 213 sex unknown) attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (568) (including government and pro-government air forces (465)); SDF (37); Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (26); ISIL (22); joint operations of Syrian armed opposition groups and Turkish armed forces (10); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (7); and unidentified perpetrators (541). Casualties resulted mainly from air strikes (472); explosive remnants of war (288); improvised explosive device attacks (231); and shelling (139). Most occurred in Idlib (496) and Aleppo (359). The first quarter of 2020 witnessed a spike in child casualties in the north-west. As of March 2020, attacks using explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices became the primary cause of child casualties. In addition, the killing (6) and maiming (12) of 18 children (15 boys, 3 girls) by pro-government air forces (11) and unidentified perpetrators (7) were verified at a later date.

182. Seven children (2 boys; 5 girls) were subjected to sexual violence by ISIL (4) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3). In addition, sexual violence committed by ISIL affecting one girl was verified at a later date.

183. The United Nations verified 90 attacks on schools (61) and hospitals (29), including on protected personnel, attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (77), including government and pro-government air forces (61), unidentified perpetrators (7), SDF (4), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1) and ISIL (1). Most attacks occurred in Idlib and were conducted by air strikes (62) and shelling (17).

184. The military use of 30 schools and 4 medical facilities was verified and attributed to SDF (15), Syrian armed opposition groups (10), Syrian government forces (6) and Turkish armed forces (3).¹⁵ In addition, the military use of five schools by YPG/YPJ was verified at a later date.

185. The United Nations verified the abduction of 219 children (74 boys, 145 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (211), ISIL (4), YPG and YPJ (2), Syrian government forces (1) and Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (1). Only 10 children

¹⁵ My Special Representative was informed by the Government of Turkey that it had repaired and made 426 schools operational in the Ra's al-Ayn and Tall Abyad area, which provided education for approximately 45,000 students.

were released or escaped. In addition, the abduction of eight children (6 boys, 2 girls) by YPG/YPJ (6), ISIL (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified at a later date.

186. There were 48 denials of humanitarian access verified and attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (9), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (9), joint operations of Syrian armed opposition groups and Turkish armed forces (8), the self-administration in the northern and eastern parts of the country (4), Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (4); SDF (2); and unidentified perpetrators (12). Incidents included attacks (24), interference (14) and attacks on or disruption of water facilities (10).

Developments and concerns

187. I note the dialogue between the Government and the United Nations on humanitarian and child protection issues, including on access to education and education curricula in areas outside of government control, and the situation of foreign and Iraqi women and children in the Hawl and Rawj camps. I note the vacating of 11 schools by the Government. I call upon the Government to engage with the United Nations and with my Special Representative to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through the signature of a joint action plan to prevent violations for which the Government is listed.

188. I note the progress in the implementation of the June 2019 action plan signed by SDF that resulted in the disengagement of 150 children from SDF ranks and the screening out of 908 children. SDF established an age assessment committee. A child protection committee and a "child protection office" were created to resolve complaints regarding incidents of recruitment. In December 2020, SDF and the United Nations agreed to a road map to accelerate implementation of the action plan. The former issued a military order to prohibit military use of schools and vacated 18 schools.

189. I note that SNA issued a statement prohibiting recruitment under the age of 18 by its forces, including accountability measures. I encourage armed groups, including those operating under the SNA umbrella, to engage with the United Nations to adopt action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

190. I am appalled by the persistent high levels of all violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic by all parties to the conflict, particularly the continued high numbers of recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, and related gaps in accountability. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

191. I remain alarmed by the deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with parties to conflict. I welcome the access to them provided to child protection actors by SDF and call upon other parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to also facilitate United Nations access to children deprived of liberty. I reiterate my call to treat them primarily as victims, and that deprivation of liberty should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time possible and should be in line with international juvenile justice standards.

192. I remain seriously concerned by the humanitarian situation of women and children in the Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children currently in these camps, including those with suspected family ties to ISIL, consistent with the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for family unity and the best interest of the child, and in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, adopted in 2020.

193. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2021/398](#)).

Yemen

194. The United Nations verified 4,418 grave violations against 1,287 children (944 boys, 343 girls). In addition, 63 grave violations against 54 children (43 boys, 11 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

195. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 163 children (134 boys, 29 girls) by Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (115), the Yemen Armed Forces (34), the Security Belt Forces (10) and unidentified perpetrators (4). Most children (92) were used in combat roles, and a third of these children were victims of other violations during their association with parties to conflict, including killing and maiming. In addition, the recruitment and use of 9 boys by the Houthis (8) and the Yemen Armed Forces (1) in previous years was verified at a later date.

196. The deprivation of liberty of 14 boys for their alleged association with parties, some for up to two years, was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (11), the Houthis (2) and the Security Belt Forces (1).

197. The United Nations verified the killing (269) and maiming (855) of 1,124 children (816 boys, 308 girls) attributed to the Houthis (255), the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (194), the Yemen Armed Forces (121), the Security Belt Forces (49), Islamic State in Yemen (11), Popular Resistance (8), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (2) and unidentified perpetrators (484), including in crossfire, mainly between the Houthis and the Yemen Armed Forces (228) and between other parties (43). The main causes for child casualties were mortar and artillery shelling (339), gunshots and crossfire (305), explosive remnants of war (212) and air strikes (150). Most casualties occurred in Hudaydah (242), Ta'izz (239), Ma'rib (132) and Jawf (129) Governorates. In addition, the killing (14) and maiming (27) of 41 children (32 boys, 9 girls) in previous years was verified at a later date and attributed to the Coalition (20), the Houthis (10) and other perpetrators (11).

198. Sexual violence against seven children (3 boys, 4 girls) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (4), the Yemen Armed Forces (1), the Security Belt Forces (1) and the Salafists (1). In addition, incidents of sexual violence affecting three children (1 boy, 2 girls) that occurred in previous years and attributed to the Houthis were verified at a later date.

199. There were 36 verified attacks on schools (16) and hospitals (20) attributed to the Houthis (24), the Yemen Armed Forces (7), Popular Resistance (2), the Coalition (1), the Security Belt Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, one attack on a school by the Houthis that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date.

200. The military use of 34 schools and 1 hospital was verified and attributed to the Houthis (30) and the Yemen Armed Forces (5).

201. A total of 55 children (53 boys, 2 girls) were abducted by the Yemen Armed Forces (27), the Houthis (22), the Hadrhrami Elite Forces (3), the Security Belt Forces (2) and the Yemeni Islah party (1), including 12 boys also recruited. The abduction of nine boys that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date and attributed to the Houthis (5) and the Yemen Armed Forces (4).

202. A total of 3,033 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children were verified and attributed to the Houthis (2,502), the Yemen Armed Forces (479) and unidentified perpetrators (52). Incidents included attacks, restrictions of movements in and out of Yemen, and interference in implementation. Incidents were prevalent in Amanat al-Asimah (1,048), Sa'dah (597), Aden (378) and Hudaydah (371) Governorates.

Developments and concerns

203. I welcome the continued commitment of the Government to protecting children, including through the implementation of the 2014 action plan and the 2018 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, and welcome efforts to apply the presidential directive of 12 February 2020 and the military directive of 3 March 2020, including plans to establish child protection units. I note the significant decrease in the recruitment and use of children in 2020. I encourage the Government's engagement with the United Nations on priority actions, including to restore the interministerial committee, to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children and to implement measures to prevent violations against children, such as reinforced training of its Armed Forces in the prevention of violations, including the recruitment and use of children. I am concerned at the noticeable increase in the killing and maiming of children attributed to government forces and urge the Government to put in place immediate measures to mitigate and reduce this trend.

204. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition with my Special Representative to sustainably end and prevent grave violations against children in Yemen, and I call upon the Coalition to pursue the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2019 and the related programme of time-bound activities endorsed in January 2020. I urge the Coalition to continue to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Although their numbers have decreased, I remain concerned by incidents of air strikes resulting in child casualties, including those being investigated by the Coalition. I commend the Coalition for the swift investigation of two of these incidents that took place in 2020 and I urge it to swiftly conclude these investigations and to ensure that investigations are undertaken for all incidents with child casualties. I also urge the Coalition to expedite justice, accountability and redress to child victims and their families. I welcome the training and high-level workshop on child protection conducted in March and May 2021 by the Office of my Special Representative with the Coalition. Continuous monitoring and engagement to ensure the sustained implementation of the programme of time-bound activities and the further decrease in the number of affected children, as verified by the United Nations, is expected and will be closely observed. Any failure in sustained progress in this regard will lead to relisting.

205. I note the continued dialogue between the Houthis and the United Nations to develop an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I urge the Houthis to promptly finalize and sign it. I welcome the handover protocol signed in April 2020, as well as the release of 68 children, and urge the protocol's continued implementation and the release of additional children.

206. I am gravely concerned by the continuing rise in the number of grave violations, including the recruitment of children, particularly by the Houthis; by the persistent high numbers of children killed and maimed; and by the increase in denials of humanitarian access. I am also concerned about the persistent level of grave violations by the Government.

207. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I also urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

208. I call upon parties to the conflict to declare a nationwide ceasefire and to continue their engagement with my Special Envoy for Yemen towards the resumption of an inclusive political process to reach a comprehensive negotiated settlement, with a view to ending the conflict and bringing lasting peace to Yemen. I also call upon them to include child protection concerns in the peace process.

B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations

Burkina Faso

209. The United Nations verified 171 grave violations against 83 children (45 boys, 37 girls, 1 sex unknown). Most violations occurred in the East (62), Central North (52) and Sahel (36) regions.

210. Four children, all boys, were recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators in the Sahel region.

211. Ten boys, including nationals of Mali, the Niger and Nigeria (1 each), have been detained in Ouagadougou since 2018 for alleged association with armed groups. One boy associated with an armed group was released and placed in a transit centre.

212. The United Nations verified the killing (24) and maiming (30) of 54 children (27 boys, 26 girls, 1 sex unknown) attributed to JNIM (29), unidentified perpetrators (17), ISGS (5), the Defence and Security Forces (2) and Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (1). Child casualties resulted from gunshots (33), including 22 during crossfire between the Defence and Security Forces and armed groups, and improvised explosive devices (15).

213. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting three girls were verified and attributed to JNIM (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

214. A total of 80 attacks on schools (70) and hospitals (10) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (30), ISGS (44) and JNIM (6).

215. A total of 22 children (14 boys, 8 girls) were abducted for unknown purposes by unidentified perpetrators (16), JNIM and ISGS (3 each). Twenty of the children were released.

216. The United Nations verified eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4), JNIM (3) and ISGS (1).

Developments and concerns

217. I welcome the development of a handover protocol between the Government and the United Nations for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, and I call upon the Government to endorse and implement it, in cooperation with the United Nations, and to release all children from detention. I also call upon the national authorities to treat these children primarily as victims and to uphold international juvenile justice standards.

218. I am alarmed at the elevated number of attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals by armed groups. I call upon the parties to conflict to end such attacks.

219. I am concerned by the killing and maiming of children. I urge all parties not to target children and to minimize the effect of their operations on children. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations. I urge the Government to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are held accountable.

Cameroon

220. The United Nations verified 285 grave violations against 232 children (118 boys, 92 girls, 22 sex unknown), in the Far North (161), North-West (83) and South-West (41) Regions.

221. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 15 children (10 boys, 5 girls) in the Far North by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (15), including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (3) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (12). Eight boys were used in hostilities and seven children as carriers of improvised explosive devices.

222. A total of 16 boys were detained by security forces on national security-related charges in the South-West (11), North-West (3), West (1) and Far North (1) Regions. The United Nations could not establish their status as at December 2020.

223. A total of 165 children (87 boys, 66 girls, 12 sex unknown) were killed (77) and maimed (88) by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (97), including JAS (37) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (60); unidentified armed groups in the North-West (3); unidentified perpetrators (50) (including 5 during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces); and the Cameroon Armed Forces (15). Casualties occurred in the Far North (97), South-West (35) and North-West (33) Regions and resulted from gunshots, suicide attacks and explosive remnants of war.

224. The attempted rape of one girl by unidentified perpetrators was verified in the North-West Region.

225. A total of 26 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (6) were verified in the North-West (18), South-West (4) and Far North (4) Regions and were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (22) (including 1 that occurred during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces) and to Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (4), including JAS (2) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (2).

226. The United Nations verified 19 incidents of military use of schools attributed to the Cameroon Armed Forces in the Far North. Schools continued to be used as at December 2020.

227. The United Nations verified the abduction of 68 children (32 boys, 26 girls, 10 sex unknown) attributed to Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (45), including JAS (37) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (8), and to unidentified perpetrators (23), occurring in the Far North (45) and North-West (23) Regions. Of those, 32 children were released or escaped, while the status of 36 children is unknown.

228. Ten incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (8) (including 1 during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces) and to the Cameroon Armed Forces (2).

Developments and concerns

229. I welcome the creation of a commission of inquiry following the attack in Ngarbuh, North-West Region, on 14 February 2020, which resulted in 14 children killed. In June 2020, the Government announced the arrest of two Cameroon Armed Forces soldiers and a gendarme, whose trial began in December. I also welcome the conviction of members of a vigilante committee for the killing in April 2015 of two children allegedly associated with Boko Haram in the Far-North Region. I call upon the Government to pursue its efforts towards accountability for all grave violations against children.

230. According to the Government, 72 children (34 boys, 38 girls) formerly associated with Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups, were released in 2020 and transited through a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centre in Méri, Far North Region. I welcome this development and call upon the Government to transfer the children to civilian child protection actors and to ensure that children have access to child- and gender-specific disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and that their rights are protected.

231. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups and on national security-related charges. I call upon the Government to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups as victims, in line with international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and to release all detained children. I urge authorities to adopt a protocol for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

232. The brutality of grave violations perpetrated by JAS and other Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups remains a grave concern, notably the use of children, particularly girls, as carriers of improvised explosive devices. I am deeply concerned by the grave violations in the North-West and South-West Regions, including denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools, resulting in the killing and maiming of children. I urge all parties in Cameroon to immediately cease all violations against children.

India

233. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of two boys by unidentified perpetrators. The United Nations is reviewing reports of the use of three boys by Indian security forces for less than 24 hours.

234. Four children were detained by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir for alleged association with armed groups.

235. A total of 39 children (33 boys, 6 girls) were killed (9) and maimed (30) by pellet guns (11) and torture (2) by unidentified perpetrators (13) (including resulting from explosive remnants of war (7), crossfire between unidentified armed groups and Indian security forces (3), crossfire between unidentified armed groups, and grenade attacks (3)), Indian security forces (13), and crossfire and shelling across the line of control (13).

236. The United Nations verified the use of seven schools by Indian security forces for four months. Schools were vacated by the end of 2020.

237. The United Nations did not verify grave violations in the context of the Naxalite insurgency.

Developments and concerns

238. I welcome the positive engagement of the Government with my Special Representative to put in place national preventive and accountability measures for all grave violations.

239. I remain concerned by grave violations against children in Jammu and Kashmir and call upon the Government to take preventive measures to protect children, including by ending the use of pellets against children, ensuring that children are not associated in any way to security forces, and endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles. I am alarmed at the detention and torture of children and concerned by the military use of schools. I urge the Government to ensure that children are detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and to prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention. I also urge the Government to ensure the implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, to address the use of children for illegal activities and the situation of detained children.

Lake Chad basin

240. The United Nations verified 762 grave violations against 685 children (382 boys, 260 girls, 43 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in the Far North Region of Cameroon (161), Lac Province in Chad (145), Diffa Region in the Niger (206) and north-east Nigeria (250). Violations were perpetrated primarily by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.¹⁶ Information on violations in the Far North Region of Cameroon and north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections.

241. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 73 children in Chad (40: 35 boys, 5 girls) and the Niger (33: 26 boys, 7 girls) by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.

242. A total of 21 children were detained by the respective Governments in Chad (11) and the Niger (10) for alleged association with armed groups. In Chad, the whereabouts of the detained children remain unknown. In the Niger, three boys were detained for 11 months.

243. The United Nations verified the killing (46) and maiming (13) of 59 children in Chad (28: 2 boys, 26 sex unknown) and the Niger (31: 21 boys, 10 girls) attributed to Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (55). A case of maiming was attributed to the Niger Armed Forces (1). Three casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators during crossfire between unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups and armed forces in the Niger (2) and Chad (1).

244. The United Nations verified rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups, against 23 girls in Chad (6) and the Niger (17). In the Niger, the 17 girls were also abducted.

245. The United Nations verified seven attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (6) in the Niger, all attributed to Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.

246. A total of 188 children (95 boys, 85 girls, 8 sex unknown) were abducted in Chad (70) and the Niger (118) by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (149), and by unidentified perpetrators in Chad only (39). The whereabouts of most of the children are unknown, although 13 children were rescued by the Chadian National Army (9) or escaped (4).

247. The United Nations verified one incident of denial of humanitarian access in Chad by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter group.

Developments and concerns

248. I welcome the interest and action of the Government of the Niger in relation to the protection of schools, and I note the efforts undertaken by the Government of Chad to train armed forces during 2020 and ask that these efforts be sustained. I call upon the Government of Chad to release all children in detention, in line with the protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors adopted in September 2014, and to provide access for the United Nations to children detained or in centres. I note the adoption in 2017 of the handover protocol in the Niger and call upon the Government to continue implementing it, including through the release of all children in detention. Children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces and groups must be treated primarily as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international juvenile justice standards.

¹⁶ Including JAS and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

249. I am gravely concerned at the scale of grave violations perpetrated by Boko Haram, including affiliated or splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin region, notably the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, sexual violence and abduction. I call upon the groups to immediately cease all grave violations and release all children.

Nigeria

250. The United Nations verified 250 grave violations against 208 children (114 boys, 92 girls, 2 sex unknown) in North-East Nigeria. Most violations occurred in Borno State.

251. Seven children (4 boys, 3 girls) were recruited and used by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups, including JAS (4) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (1); and by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (2). Two girls were used in combat. Two boys were used by CJTF at a checkpoint.

252. The Nigerian authorities released 230 children (215 boys, 15 girls) held for periods ranging from one week to several years for alleged association with armed groups. Nine other children (4 boys, 5 girls) remain detained as at December 2020. The United Nations was unable to verify the number of children in detention, as access to detention facilities was denied.

253. The United Nations verified the killing (77) and maiming (47) of 124 children (83 boys, 39 girls, 2 sex unknown) by JAS (46); ISWAP (30); unidentified perpetrators (27), including 9 in crossfire between the Nigerian Security Forces/CJTF joint operations and ISWAP; and the Nigerian Security Forces (21).

254. Ten girls were raped by JAS (9), following their abduction, and by CJTF (1).

255. The United Nations verified 15 attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (10) attributed to JAS (9) and ISWAP (6).

256. A total of 76 children (27 boys, 49 girls) were abducted by JAS (63) and ISWAP (13) for sexual violence (9) and unknown purposes (67). The whereabouts of 73 children are unknown, while 3 children escaped.

257. The United Nations verified 18 incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to ISWAP (11), JAS (5) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

Developments and concerns

258. I commend CJTF efforts to implement the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, including the separation of 2,203 children in previous years, and I note the significant decrease in recruitment. I welcome the Government's constructive role in the implementation of the action plan. I encourage CJTF to ensure the sustainability of the action plan, by creating child protection units in all its formations, instituting accountability mechanisms and enforcing zero tolerance of child recruitment and use. I note the Government's investigation into the sexual violence case attributed to CJTF.

259. While the release of 230 children is encouraging, I am concerned about the children remaining in detention for alleged association with armed groups. I reiterate my call upon Nigerian authorities to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody. I reiterate my call upon the Nigerian authorities to adopt a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, and to immediately provide access for the United Nations to all detained children.

260. I remain seriously concerned about grave violations perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP, in particular the abduction of children, attacks on schools and the killing and

maiming of children. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

Pakistan

261. A total of 39 children (6 boys, 6 girls, 27 sex unknown) were reportedly killed (8) and maimed (31) by unidentified perpetrators in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (16), Pakistan-administered Kashmir (13) and Balochistan (10). Incidents included clashes across the line of control (13) and improvised explosive devices (6).

262. One attack on a school was reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when unidentified perpetrators placed an improvised explosive device. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative reported 127 incidents by unidentified armed elements.

Developments and concerns

263. I welcome the engagement of the Government with my Special Representative to develop preventive measures to protect children. I reiterate my call for the Government to better protect children through the endorsement of international commitments such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

Philippines

264. The United Nations verified 60 grave violations against 57 children (34 boys, 23 girls). In addition, nine grave violations against nine children (5 boys, 4 girls) that occurred before the reporting period were verified at a later date.

265. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 12 children (5 boys, 7 girls) attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) in Misamis Oriental (4), Davao Oriental (2), Negros Oriental (2), Leyte (2), Bukidnon (1) and Negros Occidental (1) provinces. At least three of the children were used in combat. All children were separated from the group. In addition, the recruitment and use and the subsequent release of one boy by NPA in Samar province was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

266. The United Nations verified the detention of five children (2 boys, 3 girls) by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Misamis Oriental (3) and Zambales (2) provinces. Three children remained detained as at December 2020.

267. The killing (14) and maiming (31) of 45 children (28 boys, 17 girls) were verified and attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (14), NPA (6), AFP (9) and unidentified perpetrators (16) as a result of crossfire and shelling between AFP and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (12), explosive remnants of war (3) and improvised explosive devices (1). Child casualties occurred in Maguindanao (15), Sulu (14), Surigao del Sur (5) and other provinces (11). In addition, the killing (2) and maiming (4) of six children (4 boys, 2 girls) by NPA (5) and AFP (1) that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

268. No incidents of sexual violence were verified. Sexual violence affecting two girls attributed to AFP (2) that occurred in 2018 and 2019 was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

269. Two attacks on schools were verified and attributed to NPA (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in Bukidnon (1) and Agusan del Sur (1) provinces.

270. The United Nations verified the abduction of one boy by NPA in Agusan del Sur province.

Developments and concerns

271. I welcome the adoption by the Government of a protocol on handling children in situations of armed conflict in September 2020. I encourage the Government to

implement the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. I urge AFP to sign a strategic plan to halt, prevent and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflict, as agreed in November 2019.

272. I am concerned over child casualties in the context of military operations against BIFF, ASG and Islamic State-inspired groups, and over the impact of improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war on children.

273. I call upon the Government to continue its collaboration with the United Nations to address violations against children, to support the implementation of national child protection procedures and guidelines and to facilitate access to conflict-affected areas for child protection actors. I also call upon the Government to implement the Ottawa Convention and become a party to Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and to endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles.

274. I remain concerned about the attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools, particularly in indigenous communities. I reiterate my call upon the Government to implement the 2019 National policy framework on learners and schools as zones of peace and to better protect children through the Safe Schools Declaration.

275. I urge NPA and other armed groups to immediately end the recruitment and use of children and to release children. I call upon listed armed groups to engage in dialogue with the United Nations with a view to developing action plans to end and prevent child recruitment and use.

276. I call upon the Government and armed groups to integrate the protection of children into peace negotiations.

277. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Philippines ([S/2020/777](#)).

IV. Recommendations

278. I welcome the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and commitments to protect children in armed conflict. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement protocols for the handover of children to civilian child protection actors. I request my Special Representative, in support of the country task forces, to engage with parties to prevent grave violations, including through engagement with regional organizations, and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in coordination with United Nations system entities.

279. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in line with the 2017 policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in early warning, conflict analysis, peace processes, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. My Special Representative will continue to disseminate and encourage the use of the Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

280. I call upon Member States to respect the rights of the child, including by becoming parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I welcome the widespread ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention,

1999 (No. 182), and call upon States parties to implement their obligations under the Convention. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

281. I remain concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations committed against children. I call upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and to immediately end and prevent grave violations.

282. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation criminalizing violations of the rules of international law pertaining to the protection of children in armed conflict and encourage Member States to adopt national accountability measures and to cooperate with relevant international accountability mechanisms. I call for the inclusion of accountability provisions in action plans signed between the United Nations and parties listed in the annexes, and for their implementation.

283. I am deeply concerned at the numbers of children held in detention, and I reiterate that this should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible and that children should never be detained solely for their or their parents' association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims, to give child protection actors access to them and to continue to search for solutions towards voluntary repatriation and reintegration of these children, including those with alleged links to ISIL being held in camps in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. I am concerned about the impact of counter-terrorism operations on the protection of children.

284. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, as well as access to services by children, in order to provide assistance to children, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that hospitals, schools and their personnel should be protected. Furthermore, I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

285. I am deeply concerned about the adverse impact of the pandemic on conflict-affected children and urge all parties to adhere to my appeal for a global ceasefire. I call upon Member States to take into account child protection concerns in the design of pandemic response measures and in recovery plans.

286. I call upon the donor community to provide urgently needed financial support and technical assistance for sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive, survivor-centred and inclusive reintegration, services and assistance programmes for children, including for survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence. I encourage the international community to provide funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children.

287. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to strengthen child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations in order to improve analysis, develop strategies to prevent grave violations, and foster partnerships on child protection.

V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report

288. Following an increase in child casualties in Afghanistan, the Afghan National Army has been listed under section B of annex I for the killing and maiming of

children; the listing reflects the measures that it put in place during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, two armed groups have been listed: CODECO has been listed under section A of annex I for the killing and maiming of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals, following a substantial increase of these violations since my previous report, in which they were referred to as the Lendu militia. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale has been listed for the recruitment and use and the abduction of children, following a substantial increase of these violations since my previous report, in which they were referred to as the Twa militia. I urge both parties to eradicate these practices, including by swiftly engaging with the United Nations through action plans.

289. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi, including the integrated border guard forces, has been relisted under section B of annex I for the recruitment and use of children, following its failure to end and prevent the ad hoc use of children in non-combat roles. I urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to take immediate action to address the implementation gaps of the joint action plan to sustainably end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to immediately refrain from the continued use of children. The Tatmadaw Kyi will continue to be listed under section A of annex I for the violations of killing and maiming children and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. I urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to engage in ending these violations, including through the development of a joint action plan to this effect. In Somalia, the violation of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children has been added to the listing of the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces under section B of annex I, following an increase of this violation. I urge the Government of Somalia to implement the provisions relating to rape and other forms of sexual violence contained in the road map signed in 2019 and in the joint communiqué on the prevention of sexual violence signed in 2013. I further urge the federal member states of Somalia to immediately address the patterns of grave violations against children, specifically the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children committed by the Jubaland, Galmudug and Puntland forces and to engage with the United Nations in developing and implementing a prevention plan. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a result of the continuous increase in cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové armed group, the party has been listed under section A of annex I for this violation.

290. In Afghanistan, the Afghan National Police has been delisted for the violation of recruitment and use of children owing to the sustained progress in the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to the significant continued decrease in cases under this violation. This delisting is conditioned on the finalization of all pending action plan activities and the continued decrease in the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Police, failure of which will lead to its relisting in my next report. In Nigeria, the CJTF armed group has been delisted following a significant decrease in the recruitment and use of children through the continued implementation of its action plan, which was signed with the United Nations in 2017. I urge the party to complete its obligations under the action plan, as well as to develop and implement prevention measures in coordination with the United Nations and my Special Representative. Such measures should include swiftly implementing the remaining activities of the action plan, namely establishing child protection units in all CJTF formations in Borno State and training the units on children's rights, establishing accountability mechanisms and subjecting CJTF members to disciplinary measures when standing orders that are in line with the action plan are violated and raising awareness among CJTF and community members through outreach activities. A lack of progress in this regard may lead to the relisting of the party for that violation in my next report.

291. There have been technical delistings of some of the listed parties following their dissolution or cessation of activities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Kamuina Nsapu and the Bana Mura militias have been removed, as these armed groups are no longer active. I urge the Government and relevant partners to ensure the swift demobilization of all children formerly associated with these groups, or with their residual elements, and to ensure accountability for those who committed violations against children. Nduma défense du Congo has been removed, as the armed group is no longer active and its former leader, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, was convicted by a Congolese military court in November 2020. The Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine) has been removed, as the group ceased to exist. In Mali, the Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest has been removed, as the armed group ceased to exist.

292. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or from changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain armed group will be listed in section B of annex I, following the signing of a road map in 2020 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations. Both the Mai-Mai Mazembe and Raia Mutomboki armed groups have been relisted under section A of annex I, the former for the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children and the latter for the recruitment and use and the abduction of children; both groups have been relisted owing to the lack of action in implementing signed commitments and because the parties were the main perpetrators of grave violations against children in 2020.

293. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the name of parties more accurately. In Myanmar, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council armed group is now listed as Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council to accurately represent the party's name. In the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North armed group is now listed as two separate entities, namely the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction, to accurately represent the separate chains of command of the two groups. I urge both parties to grant access to the United Nations to the areas under their respective control and to implement the action plan signed in 2016, which is now applicable to both. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by the Nusrah Front (Levant Liberation Organization) is now listed as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to accurately reflect the name of the armed group in the current context. In Nigeria, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram, is now listed as Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, as it more accurately reflects the structure and organization of the armed group. In Yemen, the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) is now listed as the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah).

Annex I

Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council*

A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children

Parties in Afghanistan

Non-State actors

1. Haqqani Network^{a,b}
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar^{a,b}
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province^{a,b,d}
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups^{a,b,d,e}

Parties in Colombia

Non-State actors

Ejército de Liberación Nacional^a

Parties in the Central African Republic

Non-State actors

1. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka^{a,b,c}
2. Lord's Resistance Army^{a,b,c,e}

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Non-State actors

1. Allied Democratic Forces^{a,b,d,e}
2. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)^{b,d}
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi^{a,c,d,e}
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri^{a,c,d,e}
5. Lord's Resistance Army^{a,b,c,e}
6. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale^{a,e}
7. Mai-Mai Mazembe^{a,b,e,f}
8. Mai-Mai Simba^{a,c}
9. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové^{a,b,c}
10. Nyatura^{a,c,e}
11. Raia Mutomboki^{a,c,e,f}

Parties in Iraq

Non-State actors

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant^{a,b,c,d,e}

Parties in Mali

Non-State actors

1. Ansar Eddine^{a,c}
2. Platform, including affiliated groups^a

Parties in Myanmar

State actors

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces^{b,c}

Non-State actors

United Wa State Army^a

Parties in Somalia

Non-State actors

1. Al-Shabaab^{a,b,c,d,e}
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a^a

Parties in the Sudan

Non-State actors

1. Justice and Equality Movement^{a,f}
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid^a
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi^{a,f}
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction^{a,f}
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction^{a,f}

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

State actors

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias^{a,b,c,d}

Non-State actors

1. Ahrar al-Sham^{a,b}
2. Army of Islam^a
3. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham^{a,b}
4. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant^{a,b,c,d,e}
5. Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army)^a

Parties in Yemen

Non-State actors

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula^a
2. Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)^{b,d}
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees^a
4. Security Belt Forces^a

B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children

Parties in Afghanistan

State actors

Afghan National Army^b

Parties in the Central African Republic

Non-State actors

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition^{a,b,c,d,f}

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

State actors

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo^{c,f}

Non-State actors

Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain^a

Parties in Iraq

State actors

Popular Mobilization Forces^a

Parties in Mali

Non-State actors

Mouvement national de libération de l’Azawad^{a,c,f}

Parties in Myanmar

State actors

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces^{a,f}

Non-State actors

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army^{a,f}
2. Kachin Independence Army^a
3. Karen National Liberation Army^a
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council^a

5. Karenni Army^a
6. Shan State Army^a

Parties in Somalia

State actors

Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces^{a,b,c,f}

Parties in South Sudan

State actors

South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces^{a,b,c,d,e,f}

Non-State actors

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar^{a,b,e,f}

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

Non-State actors

Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)^{a,f}

Parties in Yemen

State actors

Government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces^{a,f}

Non-State actors

Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)^a

* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

^a Party that recruits and uses children.

^b Party that kills and maims children.

^c Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

^d Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

^e Party that abducts children.

^f Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions [1539 \(2004\)](#) and [1612 \(2005\)](#).

Annex II

Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations*

A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children

Parties in Nigeria

Non-State actors

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province^{a,b,c,d,e}

Parties in the Philippines

Non-State actors

1. Abu Sayyaf Group^a
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters^a
3. New People's Army^a

B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children

None

* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

^a Party that recruits and uses children.

^b Party that kills and maims children.

^c Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

^d Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

^e Party that abducts children.

^f Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).