



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

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL - OPEN DEBATE

CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT BY GEORG SPARBER, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

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Mr. President,

Liechtenstein aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict. The Children and Armed Conflict agenda is sadly of particular relevance today. The ongoing erosion of the respect for international humanitarian law has a particular impact on children, as evidenced in the increasing number of attacks on children living in conflict zones and other grave violations of their rights. We reiterate our strong support for the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict. Protecting the independence and integrity of her mandate, including her reporting on violations, is crucial to its effectiveness and credibility.

Mr. President,

The monitoring mechanism established by Security Council Resolution 1612 to document grave violations is critical for the protection of children's rights during armed conflict. Attacks on schools and hospitals are one of the six grave violations identified under the mechanism. Such attacks have become a disturbing trend as documented in the latest report of the Secretary General. In the past six months alone, over 500 schools were attacked. These are just the verified incidents pointing to a probably much higher actual number of total incidents

worldwide. The Special Representative's latest report furthermore documents attacks on schools in nearly all reported country situations, with an alarming trend of air strikes being used as a method for attacks. Another disturbing development is the increasing use of schools for military purposes, in violation of relevant rules of international humanitarian law.

Liechtenstein strongly condemns all attacks against schools and hospitals as well as their use for military purposes. We urge all conflict parties to respect the principle of distinction and other basic rules of international humanitarian law. Where the principles of international humanitarian law are violated, accountability of the perpetrators must be ensured. We endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and call upon other Member States, especially Security Council members, to follow suit. The right of children to education must be preserved also during armed conflict in order to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Mr. President,

A decade ago the international community adopted the Paris Principles and Commitments to ending the recruitment of child soldiers. And yet, this type of recruitment continues to this day and constitutes a devastating reality for far too many children. A particularly concerning trend is the exploitation of children by violent extremists and non-state armed groups like Da'esh and Boko Haram. It is well documented that, among other purposes, armed forces or groups, including groups involved in violent extremism, recruit both girls and boys for sexual purposes. Moreover, men and boys often represent the majority of detainees during armed conflict and are highly vulnerable to sexual violence. In post-conflict situations, they need our full and sustained support to be reintegrated into society. We also call on States to prosecute those who have been associated with child recruitment and violence against children in order to end the impunity gap that persists in many conflict and post-conflict societies.

I thank you.