

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Richard Galbavý,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations
in the Open debate of the Security Council
on Children and Armed Conflicts
9 July 2018, New York**

Madam President,

My delegation align itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the European Union.

Madam President,

Slovakia condemns in strongest terms the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict. Military exploitation of children is not only completely wrong and unjustifiable; it is also illegal. Children simply have no role in warfare.

We call for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Protocol to do so without delay.

Madam President,

I would like to express our appreciation for Sweden's leadership in negotiating an important resolution on Children and Armed Conflict today, which my country readily co-sponsored. The resolution builds upon commitments from last year, which stressed that the protection of children should be part of a comprehensive strategy to resolve conflict and sustain peace. We are optimistic that awareness is further growing that protection of children needs to be better connected to conflict prevention and sustaining peace efforts. Ultimately, our goal must be to prevent armed conflicts from happening in the first place.

Madam President,

Despite progress in protecting children in armed conflict, general situation remains grave and unacceptable. According to the 2018 annual Secretary-General's report on Children in Armed

Conflict there was a 27 percent increase in grave violations of children's rights verified by the UN last year over 2016. We are deeply concerned about reported cases of denial of humanitarian access as a weapon of war and increased attacks on schools and hospitals.

Madam President,

We appreciate the tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (Ms. Virginia Gamba). She has an important role to play in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Effective implementation of her mandate requires support from us all to achieve this goal.

Furthermore, I should like to reiterate the crucial importance of child protection advisers in mainstreaming child protection and in monitoring, reporting and prevention efforts in peace operations. Child protection must remain at the heart of UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding and receive adequate support. Where necessary the number of Child Protection Advisers should be increased in field operations.

As has been said, last year over 10,000 children were released as a result of the implementation of Action Plans signed with armed forces. Recent Arria Formula Meeting in May, highlighted the important position of Action Plans in the Council's framework for ending and preventing grave violations against children. The meeting also highlighted key challenges and priorities for Action Plans in the coming years that should be followed, both at headquarters and in the field.

Finally, I wish to stress that failing to incorporate the security sector in the solution on the recruitment and use of children can lead to renewed conflict and use of child soldiery. The SC Resolution 2151 encourages nations rebuilding after conflict to take appropriate measures to protect children and ensure security sector actors are equipped to do so.

Thank you for your attention.