

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Michal Mlynár, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the UN
Open debate of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflicts**

Mr. President,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statements of the European Union and of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

We thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the impact of armed conflict on children and for providing clear recommendations. We appreciate the briefings by the Special Representative Virginia Gamba and the Executive Director of UNICEF Henrietta Fore as well as their tireless work for children.

Slovakia ratified Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, endorsed the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration as well as the Vancouver Principles and we call on others to join us in this regard.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict this year, there is no better time to reiterate the call for its universal ratification and we encourage those States that have not yet signed or ratified the Protocol to do so without delay.

This year, we also celebrate 15th anniversary of the landmark resolution 1612 (2005) on Children and Armed Conflict, establishing the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) and the Working group of the Security Council on CAAC. The MRM, together with the Secretary-General's annual report and its annex have been useful to deter grave violations against children.

23 June 2020

Regrettably, numbers of grave violations committed against children are still not decreasing, and the Secretary-General's latest report highlights that they have tripled in the last decade. There is still a huge lack in compliance with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. Criminalization and accountability are key elements to eliminate these grave violations and member states have to ensure them proactively on national level as well as by deeper cooperation on the international level. Therefore, it is important that naming perpetrators, as an important but only the first step, is followed by the more important one – accountability.

Another worrying trend is the growing number of children in detention as a result of often allegations of those children being associated with armed forces or groups. These children need to be treated first and foremost as victims. All member states should support the release and reintegration of child soldiers through Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration programs. We urge the UN and its member states to develop reintegration programs, in collaboration with host communities, that emphasize psycho-social support, education and training opportunities. In this regard, we welcome the efforts of the Global Coalition for Reintegration of Child Soldiers as well as the *ACT to Protect Children Affected by Armed Conflict* campaign.

Thank you, Mr. President.