

**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**

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Monsieur le Président,

La Slovaquie s'accorde avec les interventions au nom de l'Union Européenne et du Groupe des Amis des Enfants et Conflits Armés.

Nous remercions la représentante spéciale du Secrétaire général Virginia Gamba, la directrice exécutive de l'UNICEF Henrietta Fore et les représentants de la société civile pour leurs interventions et pour le travail qu'ils font pour les enfants du Monde. Nous saluons l'adoption de la déclaration présidentielle, préparée par le Niger et la Belgique, et aussi la première Journée internationale pour la protection de l'éducation contre les attaques, que nous avons marqué le 9 Septembre 2020.

Mr. President,

Slovakia, as an endorsing state of the Safe Schools Declaration, considers schools and education as untouchable no matter if it's peace or war time. Therefore, we are gravely concerned by any reports of attacks on school facilities, and we are saddened that in 2019, state security forces were responsible for more than half of these attacks, including attacks on hospitals. In this respect, we would like to call on member states to pay a proper attention to the outcomes of international conferences on Safe schools, which serve as a unique tool to achieve our common goal – the right to education for all children.

Education is a cornerstone of all societies, in the north and the south, developing and developed countries, as well as a fundamental human right and essential for exercise of other human rights. An educated society can better overcome crises, including political, economic or health crisis as the current COVID-19 pandemic with its deep socioeconomic effects. Education brings stability and makes a significant contribution to peacekeeping. In addition, access to safe, quality education for children affected by armed conflict has an important role in their reintegration. And yet, it is often one of the main targets.

**10 September 2020**

Strengthened monitoring, reporting, and accountability for attacks on education and of military use of schools, including by disaggregating data by gender, is indispensable and we urge all to do better in this regard. The UN bears a particular role, as its Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism proved to be useful in deterring grave violations against children. A single, complete list of perpetrators that is evidence-based and accurately reflects data collected and verified by the MRM should be published in the annexes every year and all perpetrators of grave violations against children must be held to the same standard regardless of whether they are state forces, or non-state armed groups.

As girls' schools are often targeted, and girls face specific consequences of attacks, including rape and pregnancy from rape, forced marriage, and the resulting stigma and serious health concerns, they are among the most vulnerable. All this further impedes their continued education, and prospects of better lives and therefore they deserve a special attention of international community.

Slovakia reiterates its call to all parties to armed conflict, to respect and comply with the norms of international humanitarian law and human rights law, particularly those enshrined in the **Second Optional Protocol** to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in **Armed Conflict**, and to put in place, fully implement and report on concrete and time-bound measures to protect children. We also call to end all grave violations, including attacks on schools and hospitals; and further call on parties with existing action plans to take timely steps towards more effective implementation and to report on their progress.

Merci, Monsieur le Président.