Commemorating 35 Years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Joint Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

As we mark the 35th anniversary of the adoption of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, we come together to celebrate this milestone in the advancement of the rights of children around the world. This landmark treaty, adopted in 1989, represents a global commitment to view children as individual rights holders and uphold their dignity and wellbeing. Its enduring legacy has fundamentally reshaped international law and policy, ensuring that the survival, development and empowerment of children are at the forefront of the global agenda. Furthermore, the CRC provides a guiding framework for advocacy and action, reminding us of our collective responsibility to protect children from harm and ensure their voices are heard in peace processes, humanitarian responses, and accountability mechanisms.

With 196 States Parties, the CRC remains the most widely ratified international human rights instrument, demonstrating a global consensus on the importance of safeguarding children's rights. It is not only a legal document but also a powerful moral compass, guiding governments, international institutions, and civil society in their work for children, including in times of conflict. It has led to critical improvements in the lives of millions of children, empowering them to claim their rights to education, health, protection, and participation, and enabling them to flourish in environments that nurture their potential.

However, while much has been achieved, challenges remain. Children continue to face violations and abuses of their rights—particularly in situations of conflict, compounded by displacement, poverty, and inequality. Children affected by armed conflict are subjected to grave violations of their rights such as recruitment and use by armed forces and groups, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abduction. In addition, their schools and hospitals are often attacked or used for military purposes, and children are frequently denied access to humanitarian assistance by parties to conflict.

As we underscore the significance of this 35th anniversary, we reaffirm our commitment to all the rights in the Convention and stand united in our shared determination to make the promises of the Convention a reality for every child. This anniversary is not just a time for reflection, but a call to action. It is a reminder that we must continue to work collaboratively to create a world where every child—regardless of their circumstances—has the opportunity to thrive.

In this spirit, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Office of the Secretary General on Children in Armed Conflict entered in September 2024 in a co-operation agreement. Through this framework, we will continue to advocate for enhanced protection for children, greater investments in children’s rights, and deeper commitments to their inherent dignity and their equal treatment as members of the human family. Let us take this moment to renew our collective commitment to the promise of the CRC, ensuring that every child, everywhere, can live free from violence, exploitation, and injustice—and have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential.

Together, we can make a world where children's rights are not just protected in law, but realized in practice—today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Note to editor:

The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict monitors and reports on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict and engages with parties to conflict towards ending and preventing them.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child monitors States parties' adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols on involvement of children in armed conflict, and on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Convention to date has 196 States parties. The Committee is made up of 18 members who are independent human rights experts drawn from around the world, who serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of States parties.