



PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

*Office of the Permanent Representative
Ambassador Olof Skoog*

New York, 20 December 2018

H.E. Mr. Kacou Houadja Léon Adom
President of the Security Council

cc. H.E. Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Excellency,

As my time as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is coming to an end, I would like to share some reflections building on our experiences.

We are pleased to see that there has been significant and increased attention paid to the plight of children affected by conflict around the world, including in the Security Council. Progress has been made as regards the recruitment of child soldiers and how children's rights are protected in some peace agreements, e.g. in Colombia. Action plans have been entered into and important conclusions have been adopted.

But unfortunately, we have also witnessed a continued and in some cases worsening disregard for international humanitarian law and human rights law including an increase in violations and abuses against children in many conflicts around the world. 350 million children are affected by armed conflict today and we are not doing nearly enough to protect them. This reality demands an even stronger engagement in the United Nations - in the field and at headquarters - in dialogues with States and within the Security Council.

How we treat children affected by armed conflict has a bearing on their future and the future of their communities and their countries. Shielding children from the worst effects of war will improve the chances of preventing new cycles of conflict and sustaining peace in the future. Building on the Secretary-General's prevention agenda, governments, the United Nations and civil society need to do more to promote the links between child protection and the rights of the child

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on the one hand and preventing conflict and sustaining peace, on the other.

The adoption of Security Council Resolution 2427 on 9 July 2018 with a record number of 98 co-sponsors shows the broad support that exists for this agenda. This resolution now needs to be translated into reality.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is now efficiently adopting Conclusions within a one to two-month frame and making regular field visits. We hope that we have left a solid base for the next Chair and other Security Council members to build on. But ambition inside the Working Group alone is not sufficient.

There needs to be a step change in how the Security Council deals with this agenda in its daily work. The rights of children need to be put at the center of all decisions and deliberations of the Council where relevant. Action needs to be consistent and without political prejudice. The plight of a child in Syria is of the same concern as the child suffering in Yemen, South Sudan or Myanmar. Resources must be devoted to put qualified experts on the ground including in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. UN Country Teams must be resourced to include monitoring- and reporting expertise. There must also be adequate resources for programming.

The Security Council may be divided on some issues. But one thing we all agree on is protecting children from the scourge of war. Building on this unity, I hope that further progress can be made in the coming years to make a real difference to children in countries affected by conflict.

In order to build on the momentum and translate political commitments to real and meaningful actions for the children we look to protect, I want to convey the following reflections.

Mainstreaming the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda in the Council:

- It is important that the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda is not “delegated” to the Working Group, nor that the Chair of the Working Group is seen as a “focal point” for Children and Armed

Conflict in the Council. The agenda needs the strong support of all Council members and initiatives by all Council members.

- Children and Armed Conflict should not just be on the Council's agenda during the Open Debate. It needs to be raised and discussed in all relevant geographic settings. As an example, during our presidency of the Council in July we organized the monthly Syria humanitarian meeting with a Children and Armed Conflict focus and invited SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict as a special briefer.
- The Council should continue to call for so called "AOB:s" on Children and Armed Conflict, including for briefings by SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict after her field visits.
- It is key to operationalize the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda across all of the Council's work, in particular adopting a child protection perspective in mandate renewals, PRSTs and other relevant decisions.
- It is up to all members of the Council to ensure the follow-up of the Conclusions adopted in the Working Group and make these concerns a central part of messaging during Security Council field visits to conflict affected areas etc., this is not solely the work of the Chair of the Working Group.
- Child Protection Advisors also need to be given the appropriate resources to carry out their important work in UN Missions.

Conflict Prevention and Children and Armed Conflict – implementing Resolution 2427

Security Council Resolution 2427 emphasized how the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda is integral to conflict prevention and sustaining peace, here are a few thoughts on how to further implement it:

- SVENSKT ARKIV
- First, children's needs are often overlooked when peace is negotiated. To provide tools for actors involved in mediation and peace processes, and in response to the request made in the Statement by the President of the Security Council on 31 October 2017 (S/PRST/2017/21), a process to develop practical guidance on the integration of child protection issues in peace processes was officially launched by the Secretary-General and Prime Minister Löfven on 6 July 2018 and SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict. This process is ongoing and needs to be followed-up.
 - Second, the resolution sets out a framework for the reintegration of children associated with armed forces or armed groups. Here the new Global Coalition for Reintegration will be key to implementation.
 - Third, the resolution recognizes that access for all girls and boys to education and health care, including mental health, in conflict is essential and we all need to step up our efforts to make sure this becomes a reality, including by asking for reporting on this from the Secretariat in relevant conflicts.
 - Fourth, for the first time, the resolution distinguishes between girls and boys and makes the point that their needs and vulnerabilities are different. The Council needs to ensure that Council mandated DDR-processes and SSR is both child- and gender-sensitive.
 - Fifth, the resolution links the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda to the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve the 2030 Agenda, we must make sure that no child is left behind and the linkages between the Children and Armed Conflict Agenda and development need to be explored more.
 - Sixth, the resolution states, for the first time in a Council resolution, the central principle that children affected by armed conflict should be treated primarily as victims. We need to uphold a clear child rights perspective in discussions in CTC and CTED.

- SVENSKT ARKIV
- Finally, the Working Group can also play a larger role in prevention, not least through early warning and the Global Horizontal Note. As an example, in 2017, together with France, we called for an AOB in the Council on the situation of children in Kasai after a briefing based on the Global Horizontal Note in the Working Group. This was a good example of how an issue can be lifted from the Working Group to the Council.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict:

- The Working Group should be able to adopt at least six to seven conclusions per year.
- The Chair should, in consultation with the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, decide on a yearly work plan so that the Working Group can plan the introduction of six to seven reports per year.
- Follow-up could be further increased by more frequent use of VTC and other updates from the field and press statements.
- UNICEF and Country Teams should be invited for more regular follow-up sessions after Conclusions to update the Working Group, perhaps within six or twelve months after the adoption of new conclusions.
- The World Bank and other donors could also be invited to follow-up sessions.
- The practice of joint meetings with relevant sanctions committees should be continued.
- Field visits are essential and we would recommend conducting one field visit per year, ideally, it would be timed with other engagements and visits, such as negotiation of conclusions in the

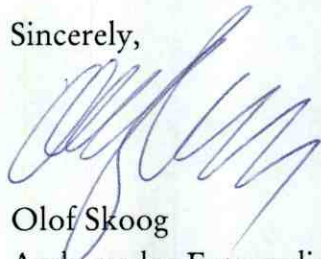
Working Group and visits by the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict.

- Unfortunately, the lack of a budget for the field visits of the Working Group means that it is difficult for many Council members to join. We would encourage the incoming Chair to continue discussions on how this issue could be solved.

I should be grateful if you could have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Olof Skoog', written over a circular stamp.

Olof Skoog
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative