



Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. During a closed meeting on 8 November 2022, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict examined the eighth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2022/745](#)), covering the period from April 2020 to March 2022, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo also addressed the Working Group (see annex).

2. The members of the Working Group expressed deep concern at the six grave violations which continue to be committed against children affected by the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; they were particularly concerned by the persistently high number of violations and abuses and of children affected, the large majority of which were committed by a large number of armed groups, noting that the number of parties to conflict responsible for violations and abuses against children had increased from 58 in the previous report of the Secretary-General ([S/2020/1030](#)) to 78 in the current report, and further expressed concerns at the context of growing intercommunal conflict, which takes a heavy toll on children. They urged all parties to the conflict to end and prevent violations and abuses against children and respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable. The Group welcomed the continued commitment of the Government to consolidate the gains of its 2012 action plan to sustainably end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its armed and security forces and urged it to swiftly, fully and effectively implement all aspects of the action plan, in particular those related to sexual violence against children. The Group recognized the important efforts made by the Government on prosecuting perpetrators of the six grave violations against children and encouraged the Government to continue to prioritize accountability. The Group acknowledged efforts of the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and noted that security constraints, armed groups' activities and military operations and the impact of public health threats posed challenges for access and verification of incidents, which negatively affects the protection of children in armed conflict. The Group also addressed the importance of supporting the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular socioeconomic reintegration programmes to prevent child recruitment and re-recruitment.



3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General. Further to the meeting, and subject to and consistent with applicable international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#), [2427 \(2018\)](#) and [2601 \(2021\)](#), the Working Group agreed to the direct action as set out below.

Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group

4. The Working Group agreed to address the following message to all parties to armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through a public statement by its Chair:

(a) Strongly condemning all violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the high number of violations in North Kivu and Ituri identified by the Secretary-General; expressing concern at the negative impact of challenges caused by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children, urging all parties to the conflict to immediately end and prevent all violations and abuses involving the recruitment and use of children, abduction, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access and to comply with their obligations under applicable international law; noting with concern that the ability of the country task force to verify violations was affected by the volatile security situation, armed groups' activities and military operations, the "state of siege" in North Kivu and Ituri and public health threats, including the Ebola outbreak in North Kivu;

(b) Calling upon all parties to the conflict to further implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/AC.51/2020/10](#));

(c) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict and also stressing that all perpetrators of such acts must be swiftly brought to justice and held accountable, without undue delay, including through timely and systematic investigation, prosecution and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction, noting that some of the above-mentioned acts are prohibited and criminalized under Law No. 09/001 on the protection of the child, adopted by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 10 January 2009, including the recruitment and use of children by national armed forces or non-State armed groups, and noting that armed groups were the main perpetrators of recruitment and use; welcoming the ongoing efforts of the Government to hold perpetrators of the six grave violations against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo accountable, and further stressing the need to ensure that all survivors have access to justice, including the medical and support services that they need;

(d) Further noting that, on 19 April 2004, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo referred the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and that some of the acts mentioned in paragraph 4 (a) of the present conclusions may amount to crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to which the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a State party;

(e) Stressing that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and that the particular needs and vulnerabilities of girls and boys, including children with disabilities and forcibly displaced children, should be duly considered when planning and carrying out actions concerning children in situations of armed conflict;

(f) Condemning the recruitment and use of a high number of children and expressing concern that, despite a decrease in recruitment and use compared with the previous reporting period, such incidents were committed by a high number of armed groups; noting that children were used in active combat roles, as well as in support roles; urging all parties to the conflict to immediately and without preconditions release all children associated with them, hand over all children within their ranks to civilian child protection actors for their full reintegration through family- and community-based reintegration programmes and end and prevent further recruitment and use of children, including the re-recruitment of children who have been released, consistent with their obligations under international law, including, as applicable, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(g) Expressing deep concern at the killing and maiming of children, in particular the increase in incidents involving this violation in the previous reporting period, including as a result of hostilities between parties, military operations, attacks on civilian communities, explosive devices, including explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, and in the context of intercommunal violence, urging all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction and proportionality and the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid and in any event minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects, and noting the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and Their Destruction;

(h) Expressing grave concern about the ongoing prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children perpetrated by armed groups and government security forces; noting that such acts included gang-rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage; strongly urging all parties to the armed conflict to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by members of their respective forces or groups; stressing the importance of accountability for those who commit sexual and gender-based violence against children; noting with concern the underreporting of the prevalence of cases of sexual violence against children owing to fear of retaliation by perpetrators, who sometimes live in or near the community, stigmatization and rejection by families and communities, continued widespread impunity and lack of adequate services for survivors; stressing the importance of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services to survivors of sexual violence, including mental health and psychosocial support, health, including sexual and reproductive health services, and legal and livelihood support and services;

(i) Condemning attacks on schools and hospitals, including the destruction of related infrastructure and facilities and attacks on personnel; expressing concern at the sharp increase in such attacks as compared with the previous reporting period; urging all parties to armed conflict to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, as such, and to immediately end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools, as guided by the Safe Schools Declaration, which was endorsed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in July 2016;

(j) Condemning instances of abduction of children, the overwhelming majority of which were committed by armed groups, including for the purposes of recruitment and use, rape and other forms of sexual violence, or to obtain a ransom; noting that there were instances of children abducted in neighbouring countries and trafficked into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and noting the significant increase of cases in Ituri and South Kivu during the reporting period; urging all

relevant parties to immediately release without preconditions all abducted children to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(k) Expressing grave concern at incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian personnel and facilities, noting that the majority of incidents were committed by armed groups, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access, and recalling also the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance adopted in General Assembly resolution 46/182, as well as the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies, and their humanitarian partners, without adverse distinction;

(l) Urging those who are or will be engaged in peace talks and agreements to ensure that child protection provisions, including the release and reintegration of children, as well as provisions on the rights, well-being and empowerment of children, are integrated into the peace talks and agreements, as appropriate, with the support of the United Nations and guided by, inter alia, the *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict*;

To the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

(m) Welcoming the continued commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consolidate the gains of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children and the other four grave violations against children, to sustainably prevent the recruitment and use of children by its armed and security forces, including through the institutionalization of measures and mechanisms therein; welcoming the support provided by national and international actors aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) to prevent and end the six grave violations against children, urging the Government to accelerate the implementation of all aspects of the action plan, in particular those related to sexual violence against children, given that, while armed groups were the main perpetrators, FARDC and other security forces remain significant perpetrators of this violation; and recognizing in this regard the prosecution of some perpetrators of the six grave violations against children, in particular recruitment and use and sexual violence, and noting that prosecutions have included members of the government security forces;

(n) Expressing concern about the continued deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with armed groups, stressing the need to immediately hand over children formerly associated with armed groups to child protection actors to facilitate their return and full integration; also stressing that children associated or allegedly associated with armed groups, including those arrested during military operations, should be treated primarily as victims; urging in this regard the Government to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular stressing that the arrest, detention and imprisonment of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international law, and calling upon the Government to prioritize their reintegration through family- and community-based reintegration programmes, guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), which it has endorsed, and that alternatives to judicial proceedings should be sought for children;

(o) Recalling the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed

Conflict by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calling for their swift implementation;

(p) Emphasizing the importance of long-term and sustainable reintegration opportunities for children affected by armed conflict through family- and community-based reintegration and rehabilitation programmes that are gender- and age-sensitive, including equal access to health care, including mental health and psychosocial support, and education programmes, as well as raising awareness and working with communities to avoid stigmatization of these children and facilitate their return;

To armed groups, including Nyatura, Mai-Mai Mazembe, Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Mai-Mai Apa na Pale, Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), Raia Mutomboki, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR-FOCA) and Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)

(q) Expressing its deep concern about the continued presence and ongoing destabilizing activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a large number of armed groups and their harmful impact on children;

(r) Further calling upon all non-State armed groups to publicly express their commitment to end and prevent all violations and abuses committed against children, and to expeditiously develop, adopt and implement action plans in line with Security Council resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#) if they are listed in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict; welcoming in this regard the communication between the country task force on monitoring and reporting and armed groups' commanders that has resulted in the release of hundreds of children; commending the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for supporting such communication; and acknowledging the signature of a new unilateral declaration and road map by 12 commanders of armed groups and factions committing to end and prevent child recruitment and use and other instances of the six grave violations against children;

(s) Recalling in this regard that several of those non-State armed groups have been listed in annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict for at least five consecutive years, including Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), Forces combattantes abacunguzi, Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituria (FRPI), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), Nyatura, Raia Mutomboki, Mai-Mai Simba and the Lord's Resistance Army;

(t) Recalling that the Security Council, by its resolution [2528 \(2020\)](#), renewed until 1 July 2021 the measures as set out in paragraphs 1 to 6 of resolution [2293 \(2016\)](#) and reaffirmed that measures described in paragraph 5 of resolution [2293 \(2016\)](#) shall apply to individuals and entities as designated by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1533 \(2004\)](#) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as set forth in paragraph 7 of resolution [2293 \(2016\)](#) and paragraph 3 of resolution [2360 \(2017\)](#), which include individuals or entities operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who are involved in acts which include:

- (i) Recruiting or using children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law;
- (ii) Involvement in planning, directing or participating in committing acts that constitute human rights violations or abuses or violations of international humanitarian law, as applicable, including those acts involving the targeting of

civilians, including killing and maiming, rape and other sexual violence, abduction, forced displacement and attacks on schools and hospitals;

(iii) Obstructing the access to or the distribution of humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(u) Recalling the Working Group's readiness to communicate to the Committee pertinent information with a view to assisting the Council in the imposition of targeted measures on persistent perpetrators.

5. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to community and religious leaders:

(a) Emphasizing the important role of community and religious leaders in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict;

(b) Urging them to publicly condemn and continue to advocate ending and preventing violations and abuses against children, in particular those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, abductions, attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals, and to engage with the Government, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the release and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict in their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid stigmatization of these children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

6. The Working Group agreed to recommend the following to the Security Council:

(a) Ensuring that the situation of children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be duly taken into consideration by the Council, including in the context of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) transition;

(b) Ensuring the continuation of adequate child protection capacities, in particular in the context of discussions with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the MONUSCO transition strategy, especially with regard to monitoring, reporting, training and mainstreaming, as well as dialogue on action plans and support in their implementation, including through sustained engagement with all parties to the conflict;

(c) Ensuring in particular that, in the context of discussions on the MONUSCO transition, the important role of the dedicated child protection component of the Mission continues to be taken into consideration and that the objective and measurable progress on child protection will inform decision-making on future child protection capacity to ensure that gains made are sustained and consolidated and that child protection data, capacities and knowledge are preserved;

(d) Communicating the present document to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1533 \(2004\)](#) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

(a) Stressing the primary role of the Government in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and recalling that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(b) Welcoming the continued commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consolidate the gains of its action plan signed in 2012, and to sustainably prevent the recruitment and use of children by its armed and security forces, including through the collaboration established between the United Nations and FARDC through the joint technical working group on children and armed conflict chaired by FARDC and through joint screening mechanisms in FARDC recruitment and training camps to prevent the enlistment of children; and urging it to accelerate the implementation of all aspects of the action plan, in particular those related to sexual violence against children as FARDC and other security forces remain significant perpetrators of this violation;

(c) Calling upon the Government to immediately release children detained for their actual or alleged association with armed groups and hand them over to child protection actors to facilitate their return and full integration; stressing that children associated or allegedly associated with armed groups, including those arrested during military operations should be treated primarily as victims; urging in this regard the Government to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular that the arrest, detention and imprisonment of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international law;

(d) Also calling upon the Government to take the necessary measures to end and prevent the killing and maiming of children, in particular in the context of armed clashes among armed groups or military operations by FARDC, while noting that armed groups were responsible for a large majority of the child casualties verified in the report, and recognizing the efforts made by the Government, through the joint technical working group, to limit threats posed to children during military operations in Ituri and North Kivu;

(e) Urging the Government to implement its commitments to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against children by members of its security forces, and noting with concern the underreporting of the prevalence of cases of sexual violence against children, including owing to fear of retaliation by perpetrators, who sometimes live in or near the community, stigmatization and rejection by families and communities, impunity and the lack of adequate medical and support services for survivors;

(f) Recognizing the efforts of the Government to ensure accountability, and the progress made in relation to prosecuting perpetrators of the six grave violations against children, in particular recruitment and use and sexual violence; noting that prosecutions have included members of the Government security forces; urging the Government to continue to pursue its efforts towards accountability, including through comprehensive, independent, timely and systematic investigation, and, as appropriate, prosecution, conviction and punishment, of anyone found to be responsible, including those in positions of command, and to provide access to gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, in particular health, including mental health and psychosocial support, legal and livelihood support and services to survivors;

(g) Encouraging the Government to continue to strengthen the implementation of a vetting mechanism to ensure that no perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children from its forces are integrated or recruited into the national armed and security forces and to systematically withdraw all perpetrators, irrespective of their rank, and to hold them accountable;

(h) Encouraging the Government to focus on long-term and sustainable reintegration opportunities for children affected by armed conflict through family-

and community-based reintegration and rehabilitation programmes that are gender- and age-sensitive, including access to health care, including mental health and psychosocial support, and education programmes, guided by the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), which it has endorsed; also encouraging the Government to raise awareness and work with communities to avoid stigmatization of these children and facilitate their return, while taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, to contribute to the well-being of children and to sustainable peace and security; welcoming the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, and calling upon the Government to ensure that, in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and peace agreements with armed groups, the rights and protection needs of children are made a priority, including the unconditional release of children by armed groups, with the best interests of the child as a primary consideration;

(i) Recalling the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calling for their swift implementation, and encouraging the Government to ensure that attacks on schools are investigated and that those responsible are duly prosecuted;

(j) Expressing its deep concern about the continued presence and ongoing destabilizing activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a large number of armed groups and their harmful impact on children, in particular Nyatura, Mai-Mai Mazembe, Apa Na Pale, Kamuina Nsapu, Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD) and M23;

(k) Welcoming the communication between the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting and armed groups' commanders that has resulted in the release of children; commending the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for supporting the task force's communication with armed groups' commanders that has resulted in the release of children; and acknowledging that this led to the signature of a unilateral declaration and a road map by 12 commanders of armed groups and factions committing to end and prevent child recruitment and use and other instances of the six grave violations against children;

(l) Encouraging the Government to facilitate the work of the country task force on monitoring and reporting regarding dialogue with armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the development of an action plan to end and prevent all violations and abuses against children.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Secretary-General:

(a) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other relevant United Nations agencies continue and strengthen their efforts to support, in line with their respective mandates, including in the context of the MONUSCO transition, the Congolese authorities in fighting impunity, including through the strengthening of the criminal justice system, in implementing the standard operating procedures for age assessment in the national armed and security forces to prevent the recruitment and use of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in mainstreaming the specific needs of children affected by armed conflict and the protection of their rights in all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, including through the development of a gender- and age-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and in security sector reform, in providing long-term reintegration programmes and opportunities to children formerly associated with national armed forces and non-State armed groups and training of the national armed and security forces on the

protection of children, in bolstering the education and health system and in establishing standard operating procedures for the handover of children formerly associated with national armed forces and groups and for the protection of children in the course of military operations, and to give full attention to violations and abuses against children in the application of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support for non-United Nations security forces;

(b) Further requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting continues its advocacy for the release and reintegration of children associated with non-State armed groups and armed forces and of children detained on charges related to their alleged or actual association with non-State armed groups and on national security grounds, and prioritizes its efforts to ensure that all aspects of the action plan, including those relating to sexual violence and other grave violations against children by the national armed and security forces, signed on 4 October 2012 by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are fully implemented, and to engage with non-State armed groups, with a view to developing action plans to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, and attacks on schools and hospitals, in violation of applicable international law, as well as rape and other forms of sexual violence against children and to address other violations and abuses committed against children, secure concrete commitments and advocate appropriate response mechanisms, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(c) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and also to ensure that sufficient child protection capacities are available, including in the context of the MONUSCO transition, recognizing the security and logistical constraints on monitoring and reporting activities;

(d) Noting the various measures taken by MONUSCO and troop- and police contributing countries to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, while expressing grave concern that sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers continued to be a protection concern, calling for the continued implementation by United Nations peacekeeping operations of the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as requiring full compliance of their personnel with United Nations policies and procedures, and reiterating its request to the Secretary-General to continue to take all necessary measures in this regard and to keep the Security Council informed;

(e) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that, in the context of the MONUSCO transition strategy, decision-making on child protection capacity takes into account objective and measurable progress on child protection, that any measures taken ensure the preservation and adequate funding of child protection functions, as mandated, including the management of the monitoring and reporting mechanism database, and to further ensure that the need for and the number and roles of child-protection advisers and associated logistical requirements are systematically assessed during the discussions on the future United Nations presence;

(f) Welcoming the deployment of East African Community forces to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and stressing the importance of following a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as ensuring full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution [1533 \(2004\)](#) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

(a) Recalling paragraph 9 (c) of resolution 1998 (2011), by which the Security Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and relevant Security Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violation and abuses committed against children in armed conflict;

(b) Recalling also paragraph 17 of resolution 1698 (2006), by which the Security Council requested the Working Group, the Secretary-General, and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, within its capabilities and without prejudice to the execution of the other tasks in its mandate, to assist the Committee in the designation of individuals referred to in paragraph 13 of the same resolution, by communicating to the Committee any useful information without delay;

(c) Encouraging the Committee to continue considering the designation for sanctions of other individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee, and stressing that the measures imposed by the Committee are not intended to have adverse humanitarian consequences for the civilian population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in this regard also encouraging the continued exchange of pertinent information between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Committee;

(d) Welcoming in this regard the briefing to the Committee by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on 20 May 2021 and further encouraging strengthened information-sharing between the Working Group, the Special Representative and the Committee.

Direct action by the Working Group

10. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group addressed to the World Bank and donors:

(a) Expressing grave concern at the severe lack of funding for long-term sustainable reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, thus increasing the risk of re-recruitment; and calling upon the donor community together with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to increase funding for sustainable, long-term, timely and appropriate socioeconomic reintegration for children to ensure that every child affected by armed conflict receives appropriate support and livelihood opportunities to lessen the risk of re-recruitment;

(b) Requesting donors to provide funding and assistance to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and relevant humanitarian and development partners in implementing the standard operating procedures on age assessment by the national armed and security forces to prevent the recruitment and use of children, in sustaining ongoing national programmes for the strengthening of the criminal justice system, in training of the national armed and security forces on the protection of children, in providing long-term reintegration programmes that are gender- and age-sensitive to children formerly associated with national armed and security forces or non-State armed groups, in ensuring timely and appropriate care for child survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, including sexual and reproductive health services, through facilitating the provision of services for victims and in bolstering the education and health systems, and to keep the Working Group informed, as appropriate;

(c) Calling upon donors to provide the necessary financial resources in support of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the full implementation of all aspects of the action plan, including those relating to sexual violence against

children by the national armed and security forces signed on 4 October 2012 by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(d) Requesting donors to provide long-term and sustainable funding for mental health and psychosocial programming in humanitarian contexts and ensuring that all affected children receive timely and sufficient support, and encouraging donors to integrate mental health and psychosocial services in all humanitarian responses;

(e) Further calling upon donors to support the Government's efforts in the promotion of birth and late-birth registration, especially for those forcibly displaced, as a means to prevent recruitment and use of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to guarantee the comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children associated with national armed and security forces or non-State armed groups;

(f) Requesting donors to fully fund appeals for child protection in the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and at a minimum ensure that child protection is funded at the same level as the overall appeal.

Annex

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict*

[Original: French]

Madam Chair,

First of all, I would like to join previous speakers in thanking you for having organized this meeting on the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2022/745](#)), which covers the period from April 2020 to March 2022.

Allow me also to congratulate you, in your capacity as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, for the dedication and skill with which you are leading the deliberations of the Working Group and the tireless efforts you are dedicating to it.

Before continuing, I would like to thank you for having invited my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to this meeting, which gives me the opportunity to speak on the issue that concerns you, in order to shed light on the efforts that my country has made to put an end to the violations and share the results we have achieved thus far.

I welcome the presence in this room of Ms. Virginia Gamba, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and would like to express our appreciation for her commitment and dedication to the cause of children. My delegation appreciates the valuable contribution of the United Nations, and of each and every one of you, to the improvement of the situation of children in my country.

Madam Chair,

The report under review covers a period marked by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the Ebola virus disease epidemic, the Nyiragongo volcanic eruption and the resurgence of armed groups that led the President of the Republic to declare, on 6 May 2021, a state of siege in the Provinces of Ituri and North Kivu.

It is worth recalling here that, for more than a decade, the eastern part of my country has been affected by recurrent armed conflicts, resulting in numerous deaths and material losses. This state of war is at the root of the sexual violence and the violations and abuses that the children in that part of my country have experienced and continue to experience.

The various armed groups continue to recruit children to serve as combatants, miners, messengers, sex slaves, spies or ammunition carriers.

The presence of the armed groups that are still operational in some parts of the country exacerbates the phenomenon, since, as the Secretary-General has indicated in his report, more than 80 per cent of child rights violations are committed by armed groups.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

Madam Chair,

Aware of this unacceptable situation and seeking to comply with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on this situation, the Government continues to respect the commitment it made through its ongoing implementation of the action plan, signed in October 2012, to prevent and combat the use and recruitment of children, as well as other grave violations of the rights of the child committed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the security services.

In other words, Madam Chair, the issues of sexual violence, child soldiers and children in situations of armed conflict remain priority programmatic areas for my Government.

Since the signing of the action plan and the removal of FARDC from the list of parties that recruit and use children, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to make every effort to sustain the gains made under the plan.

With the support and assistance of international partners, the Government has been able to take various actions, including:

1. Operational standards to determine and assess a person's age, to avoid recruiting children into the army, have been established. The standards are reinforced by a tried-and-tested technological process for the biometric registration of all our soldiers (elements of FARDC), along with the formal and compulsory use of banking services.

2. Two important directives have been signed by the Minister of National Defence and the General Administrator of the National Intelligence Agency (Agence nationale de renseignements).

The first directive, to the Armed Forces, instructs commanders of military training centres to facilitate access to military quarters for the United Nations Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and child protection agencies, in order to allow them to conduct the necessary verification. This same directive requests the military hierarchy to punish with disciplinary action and bring to justice any soldier under its command who is guilty of grave violations of children's rights. It also requires that awareness-raising campaigns and training be held in all the country's garrisons to allow all military personnel to become familiar with the action plan and the obligations thereunder.

The second directive, which applies to the intelligence services, allows members of the United Nations Task Force and child protection agencies to have easy access to persons, documents, sites and facilities of the intelligence services. The same instruction also authorizes the release of all children associated with armed groups and their handover to child protection agencies.

3. Two coordination bodies have been established and made operational: an interministerial committee on children and armed conflict, with members including representatives of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund, which is tasked with monitoring the implementation of the action plan; and a joint technical working group, with members including government experts and members of the United Nations Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, which is tasked with implementing the action plan. The scope of action of the working group covers all of the country's provinces.

4. To help fight impunity, new courts have been established with the mission of punishing serious crimes against children. As a sign of its firm commitment to cracking down on these crimes, the Government has decided to stop allowing into the

army any person found guilty of six grave violations of children's rights in time of conflict.

5. In this same context, on 18 May 2021 the Minister of Defence signed a directive reminding the security forces of the need for troops to adopt a preventive approach to child protection during military operations, in accordance with the commitments made by the Government in the framework of the 2012 action plan.

6. As part of the drawing up of the road map of priority actions to combat child recruitment, training sessions on operational standards relating to age were organized for the general and senior officers of FARDC and of the Congolese National Police responsible for recruiting civilian and military law officers, as well as for members of civil society. These sessions were held in Lubumbashi in the Province of Katanga, Kananga in the Province of Kasai Central and Tshikapa in the Province of Kasai.

7. The Echoes programmes of the technical group have been resumed with a view to disseminating information on the implementation of the action plan.

8. Attacks on schools and hospitals have been prohibited, as has the use of schools by the army in areas where military operations are taking place.

9. A field mission to designate focal points for the Beni and Butembo subgroups of the joint technical working group has taken place.

10. Awareness-raising on child protection has been conducted generally, and in particular during the resurgence of Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).

11. A workshop was held in Goma to revise the operational framework for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children and adapt it to the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

Special attention will be paid to children and their needs under the new Programme, which will be implemented in close collaboration with the United Nations.

The problem of the lack of exit certificates for children released from armed groups has been resolved in both Ituri and North Kivu through alternative solutions, pending the issuance of a model tailored to the current context by the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

With regard to combating impunity, the military justice system continues to punish the perpetrators of recruitment and use, sexual violence and other grave violations against children, in order to hold them accountable for their actions. Thanks to the financial support of the Government of Belgium, 300 military justice actors, some lawyers and members of partner non-governmental organizations responsible for victim and witness protection have been trained and have received technical support to conduct joint investigations, under the aegis of the Child Protection Section of MONUSCO.

Madam Chair,

In the light of the aforementioned actions, it is worth recalling that the Government has made undeniable progress in the implementation of the action plan.

However, the significant progress made by my country in this struggle must not blind us to the remaining major challenges, which we must all work together to overcome. These include:

- The lack of funding for reintegration activities as part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children, which is now done through the

Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, and the lack of funds for children's complete care

- The lack of a specific budget for the technical working group and its provincial branches
- The weakness, in conflict areas, of the system for the civil registration of children at birth
- The inadequacy of the financial and logistical resources at the disposal of the military justice system to enable it to hold mobile courts
- The concern about the increasing number of abductions by armed groups for recruitment purposes. Children are being recruited in this way by M23 and other armed groups operating in North Kivu
- The continued presence of foreign and domestic armed groups in the eastern part of the country

As long as there is no lasting peace in the eastern part and negative forces remain active there, children in that area risk remaining at their mercy. That is why we must join our efforts to eradicate those forces completely.

To conclude, Madam Chair,

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is determined to continue its efforts to put an end to this phenomenon. It is worth recalling the appeal made by the President of the Republic to the foreign and domestic armed groups still active in the east of the country to respond favourably to the Nairobi talks, to lay down their arms unconditionally and to surrender to the Congolese authorities in order to be repatriated to their own countries, in the case of foreigners, or enrolled in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme in the case of Congolese nationals.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is committed to continuing to build on its achievements under the action plan, and to preventing the recruitment and use of children by its armed and security forces in a sustainable manner, including by mainstreaming the measures and mechanisms associated with the plan.

Lastly, my delegation would like to endorse the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report, and to reiterate its willingness to work in collaboration with bilateral and multilateral partners of the United Nations system to put an end to the recruitment of children by armed groups and to ensure better protection of children against the grave violations committed against them in armed conflicts.

My Government would like to thank all the international partners who have always provided assistance and support to my country in this difficult work.

I thank you, Madam Chair.
