



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8889th meeting

Friday, 29 October 2021, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Kimani (Kenya)

Members:

China	Mr. Zhang Jun
Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
France	Mr. De Rivière
India	Mr. Raguttahalli
Ireland	Mr. Flynn
Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
Niger	Mr. Maman Sani
Norway	Ms. Juul
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. King
Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Mills
Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Ukraine, Uruguay and Zambia.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2021/893, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chad, Chile, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, The Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Namibia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines,

San Marino, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Timor-Leste, Tunisia, Tuvalu, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zambia.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, Niger, Norway, Russian Federation, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam

The President: The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2601 (2021).

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements after the voting.

Ms. Juul (Norway): Let me start by thanking all Council members for their contributions and constructive spirit in the lead-up to today's adoption, with 98 sponsors. I must also, of course, thank our dear co-penholder, the Niger, for its great cooperation and long-standing commitment to addressing this topic.

We also sincerely thank our education partners from civil society and non-governmental organizations who have supported the work on resolution 2601 (2021) and who, every day, make a difference by providing education opportunities for children in armed conflict. We are confident that the resolution is a strong contribution to the Council's clear voice on addressing the disruption of education.

Education is under attack around the world. More than 11,000 attacks, harming more than 22,000 students and educators in at least 93 countries, were reported between 2014 and 2019. The destruction of educational facilities and the denial of access to education have immediate, as well as long-term negative impacts on the lives of children and youth, their communities and society as a whole. And this has been recognised by the Council today.

For the first time, the Security Council has adopted a resolution uniquely dedicated to the protection of

education. The resolution calls upon Member States to protect schools and education facilities from attacks, and recognizes the need for concrete measures to mitigate the negative consequences caused by the military use of schools. It also places an important emphasis on the vulnerability of girls.

A few days ago, we — the members of the Security Council — visited the Sahel. From this experience, I am convinced that this resolution could not be more timely. Four thousand schools in the Sahel countries are closed and more than 13 million children are deprived of their right to education.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has worsened risks and increased protection needs, and threatens to undo gains previously made in ensuring access to education and the protection of children in armed conflict.

Our work as the Council clearly does not end today. We must ensure that the resolution is fully implemented and that we use this momentum to move forward. We must do more to safeguard educational institutions from military use and attacks and ensure the continuation of education during conflicts, including by investing in education in situations of crisis and conflict.

Mr. Maman Sani (Niger) (*spoke in French*): The Niger is proud to submit, alongside Norway, a Security Council resolution exclusively devoted to the protection of education in armed conflict. Resolution 2601 (2021) was adopted with the support of 15 members of the Security Council. We would also like to thank the 98 Member States that sponsored the resolution, which demonstrates the broad interest in this issue.

Partners in the protection of education and children in armed conflict, in particular the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, United Nations agencies — including UNICEF — as well as civil society organizations, have contributed to the establishment of an efficient monitoring and reporting system, and their support remains one of the vital elements of this agenda.

The protection of education is a collective responsibility, and access to quality education for all remains an essential condition both for achieving the objectives of sustainable development and for establishing lasting peace and security, particularly in areas affected by conflict and complex humanitarian crises. Children whose lives have been darkened by

conflict have an equal right to education, which is a human right recognized by international conventions.

Sadly, around the world, more than 75 million children have seen their education disrupted by conflict. With the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, education has been cut short for almost all of the world's children and youth. Attacks on schools and school infrastructure have increased alarmingly around the world, with more than 11,000 attacks perpetrated between 2014 and 2019, affecting nearly 22,000 students and teachers in 93 countries. In the Sahel region, the number of schools closed due to the security crisis and attacks on schools by terrorist groups has increased sixfold since 2017, with nearly 5,000 schools closed, disrupting the education of more than 700,000 children and depriving more than 20,000 teachers of the opportunity to exercise their profession.

Girls are particularly vulnerable. In countries affected by conflict, girls are half as likely to attend school as those living in countries at peace. When schools are attacked in conflict contexts, girls are usually the first to drop out of their education. They are also more at risk of not continuing their education when schools close.

Schools have become the target of armed terrorist groups because they constitute a melting pot of knowledge. Schools shed light, while the ideology of violence promoted by terrorist groups feeds on ignorance and obscurantism.

During the annual debate on children and armed conflict, His Excellency the President of the Republic of the Niger affirmed that, “[e]very school that closes is a door of opportunity that closes” (S/2021/617, annex VI). We have an obligation to reopen these doors of opportunity. Because education offers a window on a brighter future for children in armed conflict; because it allows them to learn, to broaden their horizons in a healthy and secure environment and to lay the foundations for the future; and quite simply because it is a fundamental right, education must be protected.

That is why the resolution — the very first of the Security Council to establish a link between the protection of education and international peace and security — is aimed at making a substantial contribution to the international normative framework, with appropriate, contextual and sustained responses at its heart. Beyond that, the Security Council is in a unique position to facilitate the establishment of more effective

protection and prevention policies and mechanisms on a global scale.

For my country, the Niger, in the heart of the Sahel and with one of the youngest populations in the world, the protection of education and access to education is not just a concept but an imperative necessity at the heart of our national policies and the priorities of our mandate on the Security Council. We have worked to inject new political impetus into international cooperation for the protection of education and the protection of children in armed conflict, as evidenced by, among other things, the presidential statement on the protection of schools (S/PRST/2020/8), presented by the Niger and Belgium last year, which served as an important springboard for the resolution adopted today.

This resolution makes an important contribution in many ways. It establishes an unequivocal link between the protection of education and international peace and security, with a strong call for a remobilization for the protection of education and to facilitate the continuation of learning in conflict contexts. It emphasizes the prevention of attacks on schools, with appropriate measures at the local, regional and global levels, while calling for more respect for the civilian character of schools. It underlines the increased risk for children in armed conflicts of not resuming their education after the closure of schools, especially girls, which makes them more vulnerable to gender-based violence.

The resolution also calls on Member States to provide the necessary assistance to children who find themselves in situations of heightened vulnerability, in particular internally displaced persons, refugees, children with disabilities and children separated from armed groups.

It is alarming to note that the combined effects of economic precarity, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, conflict, climate-related security risks and humanitarian crises threaten to reverse the remarkable hard-won progress. If current trends persist, by 2030 80 per cent of the world's poorest will live in fragile contexts, and the majority of extremely fragile contexts are also conflict-affected States.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to close the gap of inequality of access to digital and computer education among countries in order to facilitate, whatever the circumstances, the continuation of the learning for all. Moreover, so long as health-care and protection systems remain unequal, the basic right

of access to education is threatened. Thus, worldwide systemic change, including in our efforts to protect children, is needed.

The resolution calls our attention to the fact that education must be protected in a cross-sectoral manner, based on existing regional and national mechanisms. Faced with multiple challenges, we must recognize the imperative responsibility both to respond to current challenges and to take resilient measures to prepare our global community to further protect education in a present and future marked by intensified crises and forced displacement, exacerbated by climate change, which, moreover, constitutes an immediate risk for access to education. It behoves us to put greater emphasis on education in crises and emergencies, as the resolution underlines.

A young Nigerien woman who addressed the Council reminded us that we must put in place a strategy that guarantees the access of children, and particularly girls, to school because “when a school is attacked ... everything is unjustly affected” (S/PV.8756, p.5). She was right to say that to claim the right to education for children living in crisis situations is to defend the rights to survival.

My final point is a call for a remobilization of our multilateral system to put the issue of education protection more firmly at the heart of global priorities. We have a responsibility to ensure that education — which is a human right, the link that connects all the other development goals, and the bedrock of peacebuilding and inclusive and sustainable development — is protected. .

I end my remarks with a saying in the Hausa language, which tells us, “*Ilimi Hasken Rayuwa*” which translates as, “Education is simply the light of life”. May this resolution be a springboard towards the realization of this saying for all the children and young people of the world, especially those affected by armed conflict, and a definite step forward in strengthening the international system.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I take the floor to explain India's position on resolution 2601 (2021), which was just adopted.

Allow me at the outset to thank the Niger and Norway for their efforts. India strongly supports facilitating the continuation and protection of education in armed conflict. The best interests of the

child are at the forefront of our national development endeavours. The right to education is a fundamental right, as entrenched in the Constitution of India, and all children up to 14 years of age are entitled to free and compulsory education.

We understand and recognize that the resolution just adopted refers only to facilitating the continuation and protection of education in situations of armed conflict. The resolution should not be interpreted as

being applicable to non-armed conflict situations. Such a narrative would be detrimental to the working of other organs of the United Nations, and we should avoid transgressing into issues that do not pertain to the mandate of the Security Council.

We supported and voted in favour of the resolution on this premise.

The meeting rose at 10.35 a.m.