



Security Council

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Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Iraq

1. At its formal meeting on 1 March 2022, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict of the Security Council examined the fourth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2022/46), covering the period from 1 August 2019 to 30 June 2021, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group.

2. The members of the Working Group welcomed the overall decrease in incidents of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict while also expressing deep concern and condemning the violations and abuses which continue to be committed against children affected by armed conflict in Iraq. The members expressed grave concern about the continuing incidents of killing and maiming of children and the impact of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, which are the leading cause of child casualties. They also expressed concern at denials of humanitarian access and the increased number of children in detention. They expressed support for the stability, prosperity and security of Iraq, in particular in the light of the territorial victory of Iraq over Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh). They welcomed the continued commitment of Iraq to working towards developing an action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children. They discussed several other issues, including the drafting of a comprehensive child rights law, the issuance of civil documentation, the importance of accountability for violations and abuses against children, reintegration programmes, military use of schools, issues related to rape and other forms of sexual violence, children born of rape, and the child protection capacity and efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in support of the Government of Iraq.

3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General. In accordance with 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 the armed conflict in Iraq, in particular Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),



also referred to as Da'esh, while it also concerns all other parties mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), through a public statement by its Chair:

(a) Strongly condemning all violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in Iraq, and noting with concern the disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children, which further exacerbated existing challenges; and demanding that all parties to conflict immediately end and prevent all abuses and violations against children, including those involving killing and maiming of children, the recruitment and use of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction and the denial of humanitarian access, and comply with their obligations under international law;

(b) Calling upon all parties to further implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq ([S/AC.51/2020/4](#));

(c) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, and stressing that all those responsible must be brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely and systematic investigations and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction;

(d) 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 those disproportionately affected, should be duly considered when planning and carrying out actions concerning children in situations of armed conflict;

(e) Welcoming the significant decrease in cases of recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict identified in the report; and urging all parties to release immediately and without preconditions all children who may be associated with them, to hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors in coordination with the respective Iraqi authorities and to end and prevent the further recruitment and use of children, 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;

(f) Expressing concern about the increasingly high number of incidents of deprivation of liberty of children for their association or alleged association with armed forces or armed groups, or for such association or alleged association of their parents or relatives, including with terrorist groups who are designated as such by the Security Council, primarily Da'esh; noting the significant challenges faced by those detained in gaining access to legal, social and other services; urging all parties to conflict to treat associated children, including those who may have committed crimes, primarily as victims of recruitment and use, to work to ensure their full reintegration through family- and community-based reintegration programmes, including access to health care, mental health and psychosocial support and inclusive, equitable and quality education programmes, as well as by raising awareness and working with communities to avoid stigmatization of these children and facilitate their return, to provide access to the United Nations to all detention centres and any other facilities in which children are held, in coordination with the respective Iraqi authorities, and to ensure that, where children face prosecution for allegedly committing crimes, those prosecutions are carried out with respect for the rights of the child, and that alternatives to judicial proceedings should be sought for children, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and urging the relevant parties and Governments, including the countries of origin of foreign children deprived of liberty in Iraq, to cooperate with the United Nations and the Iraqi authorities to seek rights-based durable solutions;

(g) Expressing grave concern at the incidents of children killed and maimed, noting that the majority of cases were caused by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices and that children were harmed while herding livestock in areas surrounding villages or while playing predominantly in areas that had previously been under Da'esh control, urging all parties to take all necessary action to better protect children and prevent such acts, especially with a view to ensuring that children are protected from explosive remnants of war, and calling upon 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;

(h) Expressing deep concern at cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, noting that incidents of sexual violence continue to be underreported and that none were verified during the reporting period; expressing deep concern at the lack of access to appropriate services for survivors, and also expressing concern that movement restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have increased vulnerabilities and risk factors for survivors and victims of sexual violence; 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 and stressing the importance of accountability for those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children; and stressing the importance of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, including mental health and psychosocial support, health, including sexual and reproductive health services, legal and livelihood support and services to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence;

(i) Strongly condemning the attack on a health centre, verified during the reporting period; expressing deep concern at the numbers of incidents of military use of schools and the disruption caused to the education of Iraqi children; calling upon all parties to the 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 end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions and their personnel, as well as the military use of schools and hospitals in violation of applicable international law; and calling upon all parties to take concrete measures to facilitate the continuation of education of Iraqi children, consistent with Security Council resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#);

(j) Expressing deep concern at the abduction of children, and calling upon the concerned party to cease the abduction of children and immediately release all abducted children;

(k) Strongly condemning incidents of denial of humanitarian access, and calling upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unhindered humanitarian access to children, including to children in internally displaced persons camps or detention independent of their legal status, consistent with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid, to respect international humanitarian law and to respect the work of all United Nations agencies and their humanitarian partners without adverse distinction;

(l) Underlining the importance of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognizing that a strong focus on combating poverty, deprivation and inequality is needed to prevent and protect children from all violations and abuses in the context of armed conflict in Iraq and to promote the resilience of children, their families and their communities and the importance of promoting education for all and peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable

development, and calling upon the international community to remain strongly committed to providing support to Iraq for its humanitarian, stabilization, reconstruction and development efforts;

Da'esh

(m) Condemning in the strongest possible terms the abhorrent violations and abuses and extreme violence committed against children, including children belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, by Da'esh, including their killing and maiming, abduction, rape and other forms of sexual violence, noting that such violations and abuses may amount to war crimes or crimes against humanity; and furthermore reaffirming that terrorism in all forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations, whenever and by whomsoever committed;

(n) Strongly urging Da'esh to immediately:

(i) Cease all attacks directed against civilians and civilian objects, including those resulting in the killing and maiming of children, and comply fully with international humanitarian law by, inter alia, putting an end to any targeting of the civilian population, especially children, as well as to disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks in populated areas, including through terror tactics, attacks by suicide bombers or any other forms of extreme violence or the indiscriminate use of weapons, in particular improvised explosive devices, and any use of weapons prohibited by international law;

(ii) End and prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including through abduction, end the military training of children and release without preconditions all children who remain under their control;

(iii) Cease the rape of and other forms of sexual violence against children, such as child, early and forced marriage, sexual slavery and human trafficking for sexual exploitation, including against children belonging to ethnic and religious minorities;

(iv) Cease the abduction of children and all violations and abuses committed against abducted children, notably girls who face higher rates of abductions in Iraq, release without preconditions all abducted children, and allow for swift family reunification in the best interests of the child or provide information as to their fate if no longer alive.

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 community and religious leaders to strengthen community-level protection and 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, attacks and threats of attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and denial of humanitarian access, and to engage with the Government, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the 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) To continue to ensure that the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict continue to be taken into consideration by the Security Council, including when reviewing the mandate of UNAMI and its activities;

(b) To ensure the continuation of and support for the mandate of UNAMI to assist the efforts of the Government of Iraq to strengthen child protection, including by ensuring the continuation of and support for the child protection capacity of UNAMI, especially with regard to monitoring and reporting on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict, as well as preventing such violations and abuses, including through training on and mainstreaming of child protection;

(c) To communicate the present document to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities.

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter, addressed to the Government of Iraq, referring to the Group's public statement on the violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children in Iraq:

(a) Recognizing the efforts by the Government of Iraq to address the security threats and challenges in maintaining law and order in the country;

(b) Stressing that the Government retains the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians, including children, noting in this regard that Iraq is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and other relevant human rights and international humanitarian treaties, including those prohibiting torture, and noting in this regard, in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration;

(c) Welcoming the collaboration of the Government of Iraq with the United Nations to strengthen the protection of children and the ongoing dialogue on an action plan on ending and preventing recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces, and calling upon the Government to finalize the adoption of the action plan and prioritize its implementation;

(d) Welcoming the significant decrease in cases of child recruitment and use by the Popular Mobilization Forces; calling upon the Government to release any children who may be found to be associated with its forces, including the Popular Mobilization Forces, to develop and adopt appropriate handover protocols, to ensure their reintegration in cooperation with civilian child protection actors, and to engage with religious leaders; and also calling upon the Government, including through engagement with the United Nations, to develop a comprehensive national strategy to prevent all six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict;

(e) Commending the Government's continued cooperation with the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting, and welcoming further the continued cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict;

(f) Welcoming the steps taken towards the development of a comprehensive child rights law, inter alia criminalizing child recruitment and use, and calling for its swift adoption; calling upon the Government to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including those relating to the establishment

of a minimum age of criminal responsibility, and also calling upon the Ministry of Defence to develop and enforce age verification procedures for recruitment by government forces and government-affiliated armed groups;

(g) Commending the Government's efforts to address the needs of the victims and survivors of atrocities committed by Da'esh, welcoming the adoption of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law and encouraging the Government to continue to engage with the United Nations on its implementation, and also encouraging the Government to consider similar provisions to address the needs of other minorities and of male victims and survivors;

(h) Urging the Government to strengthen the provision of and access to specialized and gender-sensitive services for victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence in armed conflict, including those from ethnic and religious minority groups, and to fight and prevent stigmatization of victims, and stressing the importance of accountability for those responsible for sexual and gender-based violence against children;

(i) Commending the release by the Government of children from detention between March 2020 and June 2021 following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and calling upon the Government to consider non-judicial measures as alternatives to prosecution and detention that focus on the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups, including psychosocial support; urging the Government to treat these children, including children who may have committed crimes, primarily as victims of recruitment and use, to provide unimpeded, regular and confidential access to children in detention for the United Nations in coordination with the respective Iraqi authorities, and to ensure that, where children face prosecution for allegedly committing crimes, those prosecutions are carried out with respect for the rights of the child, as well as international standards of due process and the right to fair trial, and guarantees in this regard; and calling upon the Government to comply with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, taking into account that the deprivation of liberty for children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period;

(j) Commending the Government of Iraq for the initial return of Iraqi families, including the significant number of children from neighbouring countries;

(k) Calling upon the Government, in close coordination with and with the support of the United Nations and relevant child protection actors, to ensure the reintegration of children formerly associated with parties to the conflict, including children associated with Da'esh, and to treat them primarily as victims;

(l) Calling upon the Government, without prejudice to children's association or alleged association with armed groups, to issue civil documentation, such as birth certificates and identification cards, so as to enable children to have access to public assistance and basic services, including access to formal schooling, and to identify practical solutions to overcome existing administrative and security barriers; welcoming the Government's special administrative process to register children born of rape and encouraging its deployment, without delay, at the national level;

(m) Expressing grave concern over the allegations of mistreatment of children in detention for association or alleged association with armed groups or on national security charges, and recalling the international obligation of the Government to ensure adherence to the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;

(n) Calling upon the Government to fully implement its obligations under legal instruments on anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and explosive remnants of war, in particular the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling,

Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V); and also calling upon the Government to continue the promotion and scale-up of the survey and clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war, mine risk reduction and mine risk education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction, including prior to any movement by internally displaced persons back to contaminated areas, in close coordination with and with support from the United Nations and international and regional stakeholders, and welcoming in this regard the close cooperation between the Government of Iraq and the Mine Action Service and implementation of the mine action programme strategy (2020–2023);

(o) Recalling the endorsement by the Government of Iraq of the Safe Schools Declaration in May 2015, and encouraging the Government to implement it and to ensure that attacks on schools and military use of schools in violation of international law are investigated and that those responsible are duly prosecuted, as appropriate, and to take concrete measures to facilitate the continuation of education of Iraqi children, consistent with Security Council resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#);

(p) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children, and urging the Government to end impunity for violations and abuses against children by ensuring that all such perpetrators, including members of its own security forces and the Popular Mobilization Forces, are brought to justice without undue delay through timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction, and to exclude those found guilty from any government security forces;

(q) Calling upon the Government to ensure that all children, irrespective of their perceived status or affiliation, benefit from humanitarian access without discrimination and according to the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality and independence, including by reducing bureaucratic impediments to access, and that children in detention benefit from specific individualized care and protection, including access to food, to medical, mental health and psychosocial care, and to fundamental rights and services, including international standards of due process, as well as fair trial guarantees;

(r) Inviting the Government to keep the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict informed of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

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

(a) Encouraging the Secretary-General to continue to call upon all parties engaged in armed conflict in Iraq to fully respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law and international refugee law, as applicable; and noting the Secretary-General's global call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, as supported in Security Council resolutions [2532 \(2020\)](#) and [2565 \(2021\)](#);

(b) Welcoming the efforts of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNAMI, and the United Nations Children's Fund to highlight the plight of children affected by armed conflict in Iraq, and welcoming their efforts to strengthen child protection in Iraq;

(c) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the country task force on monitoring and reporting in Iraq and other relevant United Nations agencies continue

their engagement and efforts to support the Government of Iraq to address violations and abuses committed against children in Iraq;

(d) Recognizing the importance of the monitoring and reporting of violations and abuses against children, and requesting the Secretary-General to ensure the continued effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the six grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, as established by the Security Council in its resolution 1612 (2005) and further developed in subsequent resolutions, as well as the monitoring of the detention of children for actual or alleged association with armed groups;

(e) Requesting the Secretary-General to continue highlighting the impact on children of the contamination of Iraqi territory by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosives, to ensure that the country task force on monitoring and reporting in Iraq and other relevant United Nations agencies continue their work and engagement in this area, for greater international awareness, adequate funding and support for Iraq in promoting mine clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction;

(f) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure support for the mandate of UNAMI to assist the efforts of the Government of Iraq to strengthen child protection, including the reintegration and rehabilitation of children, to continue to give priority to the child protection capacity of UNAMI and to ensure that information and analysis on the six grave violations against children affected by armed conflict are specifically included in his future reports, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions.

Direct action by the Working Group

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

(a) Stressing the critical child protection needs in Iraq, and calling upon the international community to support the Government in implementing national programmes and initiatives to enhance the protection of children and to support monitoring and reporting activities by the United Nations and its partners to inform and identify child protection priorities and enhance child protection programming;

(b) Emphasizing the importance of international support towards enhancing the institutional capabilities of the Government, and in this regard calling upon the World Bank and donors to consider providing flexible, timely and sufficient funding and support to the Government of Iraq towards strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including:

(i) Supporting the implementation of the national child protection policy and sustainable multisectoral release and reintegration programmes, that are gender- and age-sensitive, for all children formerly associated with parties to the conflict, including access to civil documentation, health care, 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, for all children formerly associated with parties to the conflict, emphasizing the importance of socioeconomic reintegration and the need to support viable and sustainable alternative livelihoods in order to prevent the re-recruitment of children;

(ii) Supporting the provision of access to adequate health care, emphasizing the importance of continued investment in service delivery and mental health and psychosocial programmes addressing the needs of children affected by armed conflict;

- (iii) Supporting the provision of and access to specialized services for child survivors and victims of sexual violence in armed conflict, including timely and non-discriminatory medical, mental health and psychosocial assistance to child victims, including from ethnic and religious minority groups, of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed in armed conflict;
- (iv) Supporting the efforts to address the impact on children of the contamination of Iraqi territory by explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, including programmes and initiatives of mine clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction;
- (c) Inviting the World Bank and donors to keep the Working Group informed on their funding and assistance efforts, as appropriate.

Annex

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict

Madam Chair,

At the outset, I wish to congratulate your Excellency on chairing the Working Group and thank you and the members of the Working Group for the invitation to attend today's meeting. I also would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba, for presenting the Secretary-General's fourth report on children and armed conflict in Iraq and for all the efforts in this regard.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our meeting today, for my Government and me personally as representative of Iraq, as a father, and as human, is of great significance, where we will discuss one of the most critical topics and crises, not only because of the negative and devastating effect on children's lives, the number one priority, but also because of the consequences it brings, in the long run, to the future of the whole country and its people.

Therefore, and in order to address the matter constructively, we need to take a step back, look at the picture as a whole, and consider the situation in the country, facts, and realities on the ground, which I will go over next:

1. The total number of internally displaced persons as at December 2021 is 1.18 million, including over 400,000 children. This massive number is only for people in acute humanitarian need.

2. The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq (para. 9) shows a figure of 5,453 children for the families of Da'esh, and this number is growing over time because Iraq is continuing to fulfil its legal and moral commitments towards the repatriation of all Iraqi nationals detained in Hawl camp in Syria (para. 28), the numbers are not the only fact here, it's the capacity that the Government requires to deal with every single child and his or her particular case, it's the communities and their ability to overcome the recent past and reconcile with their killers, and it's the families of Da'esh needs and their reintegration process back into society. Those children and their families are in the thousands if you compare them to far fewer numbers of foreign fighters' children and families that Iraq and the United Nations spent years negotiating their repatriation because their countries can't deal with them for various reasons.

3. Iraq is one of the most explosive ordnance-contaminated countries in the world. It has approximately 2,850 square kilometres of recorded contaminated areas, including extensive and complex contamination in the areas liberated from Da'esh. The Government is leading and coordinating a national mine action response supported by multi-donor contributions and Mine Action Service-Iraq through support, advisory and technical capacity to the Iraqi national authorities and national operators to lead the implementation of its programme strategy 2020–2023.

4. The issue of humanitarian denial incidents is being considered and addressed on a case-by-case basis. Most of the denials occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result of the confusion on implementing the stay-at-home order and other precautionary measures. The Government reviews the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) authorizations protocols periodically to facilitate their work throughout the country. Still, some NGOs are not legally registered in Iraq or sometimes use local contractors to deliver the goods and services on their behalf using

their authorizations. These are only a few examples of the incidents that could happen daily; stating that, this does not mean that there are no mistakes or illegal denials, and those are being reported and dealt with accordingly. The last item on the matter of the denial is that the Government is working to the best of its ability, considering the challenging and complicated situation on the ground, to live up to its responsibility in vetting and checking the status of every entity that provides any service, in order to protect the recipients' lives and security. Not to mention that sometimes there is a need to protect the humanitarian actors from being caught in an unsafe situation.

5. On the matter of the number of children in detention, there is a historic misunderstanding between Iraq and the United Nations when it comes to the interpretation of the status of the children in some of the holding facilities in Iraq. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior run all the detention centres in Iraq. The unfortunate thing about this is that the dominant majority of the people working for both Ministries at the children's facilities wear security forces outfits, not civilian ones. Moreover, some of the holding facilities are not fit for children. In light of this, the United Nations team considers that every child is a detainee, and every holding facility is a prison.

Madam Chair,

A significant number of the children in the Ministry of Justice either have no family members any more, or their families don't want to take them in because of their ties to Da'esh, and some of their families are convicted or awaiting trial. On the other hand, Iraq has a serious shortage of children's homes and orphanages simply due to the fact that nobody anticipated these large numbers of children. In collaboration with civil society and private donors, the Government plans to establish new care homes for the children in Baghdad, Basrah, Kirkuk and Mosul to accommodate the increasing number of orphans and provide the necessary services.

6. On the use of schools for military purposes, Iraq joined the Safe Schools Declaration in 2015, all the security forces have been instructed to leave any building of educational purposes effective immediately since 2015, and the report is being considered for the proper action by the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

7. Lastly, the action plan and the latest progress. The Iraqi Government finalized its draft of the plan in April 2021 and conveyed, in writing (note verbale No. 458 dated 2 May 2021) and verbally through the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in his last meeting with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative in Iraq, the readiness of the Government to negotiate the final version of the action plan and still didn't receive any reply on the way forward.

Madam Chair,

Lastly, through Your Excellency and the esteemed members of the Working Group, I would like to ask Ms. Gamba to help Iraq's children and the Iraqi Government to fulfil its commitments under international law by sharing the information regarding the following:

1. The exact locations and names of the schools used by the security forces.
2. The locations and dates of the humanitarian denials.
3. The information about the recruited child by the PMF.

Even if that information had been shared with Iraqi authorities before, it would be in the children's best interest to share it as much as it takes to stop the reoccurrence of any violations and hold the perpetrators accountable.

Madam Chair,

Ladies and gentlemen members of the working group,

To conclude, I would like to highlight and reiterate my Government's position and understanding of the matter at hand; children are victims. It is our human, moral and legal obligation to spare no effort to save their lives and future according to our national laws and international commitments.

One last item, I wish, on behalf of my Government, to invite Ms. Gamba to visit Iraq to witness for herself the situation on the ground, meet the Iraqi officials, and visit the children's facilities throughout the country.
