



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SECURITY COUNCIL- OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT BY H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr. President,

The latest report by the Secretary-General reiterates the unconscionable suffering of children in armed conflict which sadly has increased over the past year. We are particularly concerned about the significant rise of sexual violence cases against boys and girls – as also documented by the All Survivors Project. Educational institutions are increasingly used for military purposes and subject to targeted attacks – such as in Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. And young girls in particular face a heightened risk of abduction in or on the way to school – such as in the Lake Chad Basin region. In the same vein, pandemic-related school closures increased the potential for recruitment of child soldiers, as children outside of school are easy targets.

The war in Ukraine adds another shocking dimension to the appalling scale of the grave violations committed against children in conflict. According to UNICEF and OHCHR, nearly two thirds of Ukraine’s children have been displaced, and around 300 have died as a result of the Russian aggression. Reports on the forced separation of families as well as the alleged abduction and forced deportation of Ukrainian children in high numbers to Russian territory are particularly alarming and constitute yet another serious violation of international humanitarian and human rights law committed by Russia.

Mr. President,

Strengthening accountability at the national and international level is crucial to also end impunity for grave violations against children. In response to the surge of violence reported by the Secretary-General, criminal investigations and prosecutions should adopt child-sensitive approaches as well as dedicated resources, capacities and skills to enable the safe and meaningful participation of victims and survivors in such legal processes. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court – with its groundbreaking verdicts on the use of child soldiers for example – could serve as a model in this regard: It requires the Chief Prosecutor to appoint advisers with legal expertise on violence against children and the ICC to take measures to protect the safety, physical and psychological well-being, dignity and privacy of victims and witnesses, and to have regard to age in this respect.

Mr. President,

The Rome Statute mandates the ICC Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute the conscription, enlistment and use of child soldiers. Those who recruit children or use them to take active part in hostilities are committing serious international crimes and must be held to account. The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) to the Convention of the Rights of the Child is another meaningful instrument and ratified by 172 countries. Despite this broad support and the solid legal framework, the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict continues unabated today. In order to safeguard children and protect them from the physical and mental trauma inflicted by conflict, we need to redouble our efforts to promote the strict adherence to both the OPAC and other instruments, including the Paris and Vancouver Principles as well as the Safe Schools Declaration. The UN Security Council, in line with resolution 2068 of 2012 moreover must adopt targeted sanctions against parties that persistently violate the rights of children in armed conflict. And we continue our strong support of the mandate of the SRSB on Children and Armed Conflict. Its independence and integrity is crucial to its effectiveness and credibility, which also includes the objective, consistent and transparent

practice of listing parties that have committed grave violations against children.

I thank you.