



**Statement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the occasion of the
Protection of Civilians Week**

**Accountability for grave violations against children is crucial for realizing their
rights in armed conflict.**

New York/Geneva, 22 May 2023

At a time when the international community discusses how to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict, the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes that ensuring accountability for grave violations against children is crucial for realizing their rights.

Despite efforts have been made at the international and domestic levels to hold individuals, States, and non-State armed groups to account for grave violations against children, impunity persists. There are over 440 million children living in conflict affected situations. Children have been recruited and used in hostilities, abducted, killed, injured and victims of sexual violence. Schools and hospitals have been destroyed and humanitarian relief has been denied on arbitrary grounds, thus affecting children's access to essential services.

Children have unique vulnerabilities. They are affected differently by armed conflict and human rights violations. Even though children constitute a significant part of the affected populations, and are protected under international law, they often remain invisible, and their perspectives are not given due consideration. It is essential that children have access to robust accountability mechanisms that effectively responds to violations of their rights and holds perpetrators accountable. Moreover, children should be recognized not only as victims of violence; they should also be involved in solutions to achieve peace, justice, and accountability.

Towards these goals, all accountability and transitional justice mechanisms should include a child rights-based approach and be supported by dedicated child rights-specific expertise. It is crucial to ensure that there is a focus on preventing violations and crimes affecting children, that children are not treated as one homogenous

group, and that offences against them are effectively documented, investigated, and prosecuted.

Too often, child rights-specific expertise is inadequate and does not recognize the additional and intersecting obstacles that impact children, leading to an accountability system that denies them access to justice. The Committee on the Rights of the Child strongly encourages that States provide necessary support for integrating the child rights-based approach into the accountability and transitional justice mechanisms supported by child rights-specific expertise in collecting, documenting, and analyzing evidence of grave violations of children's rights.

The Committee also highlights the importance of dialogue and complementarity between the existing accountability and transitional justice mechanisms, and the cooperation between international organizations, States, and civil society organizations. Collaboration between all relevant mechanisms is an essential component to preserve safeguarding and protection of child victims and survivors, prevent re-traumatization, and ensure the quality of evidence and testimonies.

Background:

The [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) monitors States parties' adherence to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and its Optional Protocols on involvement of [children in armed conflict](#), and on [sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#). The Convention to date has [196 States parties](#). The Committee is made up of [18 members](#) who are independent human rights experts drawn from around the world, who serve in their personal capacity and not as representatives of States parties.
