
Advance edited version

Distr.: General
1 September 2025

Original: English

Human Rights Council**Sixtieth session**

8 September–3 October 2025

Agenda items 2 and 3

**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

**Rights of the child and violations of the human rights of
children in armed conflicts****Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights****Summary*

The present report, prepared in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 55/29, contains an examination of the rights of the child and violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts. It highlights the impact of armed conflicts on the human rights of children, the relevant international legal frameworks for protecting children from human rights violations in armed conflicts and the remaining barriers to their implementation. It provides specific recommendations on how to integrate a child rights-based approach to prevent and respond to violations of the human rights of children in armed conflicts.

* The present report was submitted to the conference services for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

I. Introduction

1. In the present report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights draws on submissions from States, United Nations entities, international and regional organizations, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and children themselves.¹
2. To shape the recommendations in this report, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in partnership with Child Rights Connect, developed a toolkit to support facilitators in gathering children's views.² In addition, OHCHR convened expert group meetings in May 2025 involving relevant stakeholders.
3. The report sets out the legal framework governing the protection of children's rights in armed conflict and describes the barriers to effective protection for children and challenges in relation to the fulfilment of and respect for their rights during armed conflict. It includes recommendations for States and protection actors to prevent and put an end to human rights violations, strengthen protection, support the recovery and reintegration of child victims and ensure accountability for violations of international human rights law.

II. Voices of children

4. In preparing the report, focus group discussions and surveys were conducted with 837 children in 13 countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Colombia, Jordan, Lebanon, Mexico, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Ukraine and State of Palestine.
5. Children described armed conflict as stripping them of everything: their loved ones, homes, schools, ability to meet basic needs, safety, freedom and hope – in essence, their childhood. As one child noted: “Children have no reason to know about wars, about deaths, it is unfair for us. We are children who are just living, and it seems to me an injustice that also our lives are taken at such a young age.”
6. Alongside urgent calls for food, shelter, water, medical assistance and family reunification, children expressed a longing to return to school, to reclaim a normal life. As one child observed: “Our biggest worry should be homework and exams, not war and destruction.” Children feared that missing years of education would leave them trapped in poverty and vulnerable to exploitation. In the words of one child: “Before the war, we dreamed of becoming doctors, teachers and engineers. Now our only dream is to live for tomorrow. We do not know if the future will even exist for us. Every day, life feels like it is slipping away little by little.”
7. Children expressed deep concern about their mental health, highlighting the persistent trauma of fear, sadness and anger caused by war. As one child stated: “Seeing killings and blood makes us imagine that this will happen to us.” They called for psychosocial support, safe spaces and opportunities for play. They voiced empathy for children with disabilities and those who were separated from families, displaced or marginalized, as they faced greater challenges accessing care and protection.
8. The call from children was clear: they want real participation in advocacy spaces – a voice and a vote – to help build a world without violence against children. Children demand genuine and meaningful participation, with a real voice and agency, in all decisions affecting them, including those taken to prevent and respond to violations of their rights in armed conflict, as guaranteed by international law.

¹ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2025/call-inputs-rights-child-and-violations-human-rights-children-armed-conflicts>.

² See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/children/children-and-armed-conflict>.

III. Legal framework related to children in armed conflicts

9. Legal protections for children in armed conflict are rooted in foundational international instruments established to prevent the recurrence of wartime atrocities, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the Protocols Additional thereto.³ Special measures of protection and care for children are reinforced in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 24) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art. 10).

10. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 196 States, defines a child as a human being below the age of 18 years (art. 1).⁴ It requires Parties to respect both international humanitarian law and human rights law in safeguarding children affected by armed conflict (art. 38).

11. The Convention's prohibition of the recruitment and direct use of children under 15 in hostilities has been strengthened through the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which raises the minimum age for compulsory recruitment by armed forces to 18 years (art. 2) and prohibits all children's direct participation in hostilities as members of State armed forces (art. 1) and their recruitment and use by non-State armed groups (art. 4).

12. The prohibition of child recruitment and use in hostilities has become customary international law,⁵ is classified as a war crime,⁶ and is recognized as one of the worst forms of child labour.⁷

13. Under the Convention, States are obligated to ensure the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of armed conflict (art. 39). This duty applies regardless of whether the State bears direct responsibility for the child's victimization and must be fulfilled in a manner that respects the child's dignity, health and self-respect.⁸

14. The Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict requires States to ensure the demobilization or release of children recruited or used in hostilities and to provide assistance for their recovery and reintegration (art. 6).

15. Similar provisions are reinforced at the regional level, in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,⁹ the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa,¹⁰ and the Ibero-American Convention on the Rights of Youth.¹¹

16. Specific entitlements for the care and protection of children with disabilities in armed conflict are enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (arts. 7 and 11).

³ In particular, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention), arts. 23, 24, 38, 50, 76 and 89; the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I), arts. 70 (1) and 77; and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts (Protocol II), art. 4 (3).

⁴ Unless otherwise specified, articles in parentheses refer to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁵ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), "Study on customary international humanitarian law", rule 136, International Humanitarian Law Databases. Available at <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/customary-ihl/v1>.

⁶ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, art. 8 (2) (b) (xxvi) and (e) (vii).

⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), art. 3.

⁸ John Tobin and Chelsea Marshall, "Article 39: the right to reintegration and recovery", in *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Commentary* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 1593.

⁹ See https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36804-treaty-african_charter_on_rights_welfare_of_the_child.pdf.

¹⁰ See https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36846-treaty-kampala_convention.pdf.

¹¹ See <https://www.refworld.org/legal/agreements/radr/2005/en/71299>.

17. Where violations of their rights occur, children can demand accountability from States Parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure by submitting complaints directly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child or by using the inquiry procedure for allegations of grave or systematic violations of children's rights.

18. The Committee on the Rights of the Child affirms that children's rights in armed conflict must be understood through a whole-of-Convention approach and in the light of the comprehensive legal framework that reinforces children's agency and establishes a robust basis for protection and accountability.¹² The Convention on the Rights of the Child permits no derogation during armed conflict.¹³ States are legally obligated to protect all children under their jurisdiction or effective control without discrimination (art. 2) and to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to fully realize children's rights (art. 4).¹⁴

19. States are required to take all feasible measures to protect and care for children affected by armed conflict (art. 38).¹⁵ These obligations extend beyond States engaged in conflict to include States whose actions have an impact on conflict-affected children, including in asylum processes, arms exports, humanitarian aid, peacekeeping, military operations, repatriation, counter-terrorism and support for accountability mechanisms.¹⁶

20. International human rights law and international humanitarian law share foundational principles and must be applied in a complementary and mutually reinforcing manner during armed conflict.¹⁷ Where there is no specific conflict between legal norms, provisions of the Convention, such as the principle of the best interests of the child (art. 3), reinforce international humanitarian law protections for children.¹⁸

21. States are required to integrate the best interests principle into all legal and institutional frameworks, including those governing military operations.¹⁹ Any infringement of children's rights must be justified, with clear evidence that the principle has been considered and prioritized.²⁰ Children's views are crucial to the assessment of best interests.²¹

22. Reinforced safeguards for children under international humanitarian law²² include prohibiting child recruitment and use in hostilities,²³ continued access to education,

¹² CRC/C/10, para. 62.

¹³ Ibid., para. 67.

¹⁴ *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 1996*, p. 226, para. 25; *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136, para. 106; *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (Democratic Republic of the Congo v. Uganda), Judgement, I.C.J. Reports 2005*, p. 168, paras. 215 and 216; CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6, para. 5; CRC/C/SSD/CO/1, para. 4; and CRC/C/IRQ/CO/2-4, para. 4.

¹⁵ CRC/C/10, para. 68; ICRC, *Childhood in Rubble: The Humanitarian Consequences of Urban Warfare for Children* (Geneva, 2023), p. 19; CRC/C/ISR/CO/2-4, para. 26; CRC/C/TUR/CO/2-3, para. 69; CRC/C/SDN/CO/3-4, para. 73; CRC/C/PAK/CO/4, para. 87 (c); and CRC/C/PHL/CO/3-4, para. 71.

¹⁶ General comment No. 16 (2013), paras. 39–43; CRC/C/15/Add.153, para. 6; CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/3-4, para. 38; and OHCHR, *International Legal Protection of Human Rights in Armed Conflict* (Geneva, 2011), p. 43.

¹⁷ *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, paras. 103–106 and 113; and *Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo*, paras. 215–220.

¹⁸ ICRC, "Commentary on the Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War", paras. 99–105, International Humanitarian Law Databases. Available at <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciii-1949/introduction/commentary/2020>. See also ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, pp. 28 and 29.

¹⁹ General comment No. 14 (2013), para. 73; and CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6, para. 19.

²⁰ CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6, para. 51 (h).

²¹ Ibid., paras. 43–45.

²² ICRC, *Study on customary international humanitarian law*, rule 135; and ICRC, *Childhood in Rubble*, pp. 15 and 19.

²³ Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 77 (2); and Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 4 (3) (c).

healthcare, food and humanitarian aid,²⁴ evacuation from combat zones for safety,²⁵ family reunification,²⁶ protections against assault²⁷ and forced labour by occupying powers,²⁸ and special conditions of detention for children.²⁹ General prohibitions on discrimination, torture and cruel or inhuman treatment, including sexual violence,³⁰ and protections for healthcare³¹ and migrants,³² also apply to children.³³

23. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court strengthens protections for children in armed conflict by criminalizing serious violations of their rights. It recognizes the forcible transfer of children as an act of genocide (art. 6 (e)), enslavement, including child trafficking, as a crime against humanity (art. 7 (1) (c) and (2) (c)), and intentional attacks on schools and hospitals as war crimes (art. 8 (2) (b) (ix) and (e) (iv)). The Court's Policy on Children underscores the need to prioritize accountability for crimes against and affecting children.

24. International standards that enhance protection for children's rights in armed conflict include the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), the Safe Schools Declaration and corresponding Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, and the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement recognize displaced children's entitlement to special protection and assistance.

25. The Security Council has adopted 14 resolutions establishing a strong legal and institutional framework for protecting children's rights in armed conflict.³⁴ In resolution 1261 (1999), the Council identified six grave violations against children in armed conflict: recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction, attacks against schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access to children.

26. Actions 14, 34 and 35 under the Pact for the Future and Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirm that ending violence against children is essential to achieving peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

27. Regional frameworks protecting children's rights in armed conflict include the Policy on Children and Armed Conflict of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the revised European Union Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict and the updated Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict into the Common Security and Defence Policy Mission and Operations.

²⁴ Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 23 (1), 24 (1), 38 (5), 50, 89 (5) and 94; Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, arts. 70 (1), 77 (1) and 78 (2); and Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 4 (3) (a).

²⁵ Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 17, 49 and 82; Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, arts. 75 (5) and 78; Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 4 (3) (e); and ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law and the Challenges of Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, pp. 28–30.

²⁶ Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 24–26; Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 74; and Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 4 (3) (b).

²⁷ Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 77 (1).

²⁸ Fourth Geneva Convention, art. 51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, arts. 76 (5), 82, 85 (2), 89, 94, 119 (2) and 132 (2). See also Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 77 (3) and (4); and Protocol II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, art. 4 (3) (d).

³⁰ ICRC, Study on customary international humanitarian law, rules 88, 90 and 93.

³¹ ICRC, "Respecting and protecting health care in armed conflicts and in situations not covered by international humanitarian law" (Geneva, 2021).

³² Helen Obregón Gieseken, "The protection of migrants under international humanitarian law", *International Review of the Red Cross*, vol. 99, No. 904 (April 2017), pp. 121–152.

³³ ICRC, *Childhood in Rubble*, p. 15.

³⁴ See Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011), 2068 (2012), 2143 (2014), 2225 (2015), 2427 (2018), 2601 (2021) and 2764 (2024).

IV. United Nations mechanisms related to children in armed conflicts

28. United Nations human rights mechanisms monitor and investigate human rights violations committed by State and non-State actors during and after conflicts. OHCHR supports the implementation of the children and armed conflict mandate globally and regionally through its field presences and technical cooperation programmes. In United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions, child protection responsibilities are integrated into human rights components. Regionally, OHCHR works closely with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other partners to document grave violations, contribute to United Nations reporting, provide training and guidance and engage in joint advocacy.

29. Through resolution 51/77, the General Assembly established the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to, inter alia, strengthen the protection of conflict-affected children and report annually to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on this issue. In resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council endorsed the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict for the systematic documentation of information on the six grave violations against children during armed conflict to serve as the basis for the Secretary-General's annual and country-specific reports on children in armed conflicts. The resolution also provides the basis for the Secretary-General's decision to list parties to conflict that commit these grave violations in the annex to his annual report.³⁵

30. The Security Council urges listed parties to adopt United Nations-negotiated action plans to end and prevent grave violations. The Special Representative, working with the monitoring and reporting mechanism in-country, engages with parties to conflict to develop action plans and other protection commitments. Since 2000, over 210,000 children have been released and over 40 action plans signed.³⁶

V. Violations of the human rights of children in armed conflict

31. In 2024, armed conflict directly affected 473 million children, nearly one in six globally,³⁷ almost double the number from three decades ago, reflecting the escalating toll of modern warfare on children.

32. International human rights law applies during all armed conflicts, whether international or non-international.³⁸ While the Convention on the Rights of the Child does not define the term "armed conflict", the Committee on the Rights of the Child interprets articles 38 and 39 as protecting children subjected to serious rights violations by State or non-State armed actors, including organized criminal groups.³⁹ International humanitarian law applies to all de facto situations of armed conflict, irrespective of formal declarations of war.⁴⁰

A. Context of contemporary warfare

33. One of the most devastating trends in recent conflicts has been the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas. In 2023 and 2024, this practice caused catastrophic

³⁵ All six grave violations, except denial of humanitarian access, can trigger listing.

³⁶ See submission from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

³⁷ Save the Children, *Stop the War on Children: Pathways to Peace* (2024), pp. 8 and 13.

³⁸ OHCHR, *International Legal Protection of Human Rights in Armed Conflict*, p. 41.

³⁹ [CRC/C/HND/CO/4-5](#), para. 37; [CRC/C/ECU/CO/7](#), paras. 32 and 54; [CRC/C/MEX/CO/6-7](#), para. 31; [CRC/C/GTM/CO/7](#), para. 28; [CRC/C/GBR/CO/6-7](#), para. 34; [CRC/C/CRI/CO/5-6](#), para. 30; [CRC/C/SLV/CO/5-6](#), para. 22; and [CRC/C/COL/CO/4-5](#), para. 23.

⁴⁰ ICRC, "How is the term 'armed conflict' defined in international humanitarian law?" (Geneva, 2024), p. 5; and [A/77/895-S/2023/363](#), para. 3.

harm to children,⁴¹ who are especially vulnerable due to their smaller bodies, distinct physiology and limited access to paediatric care. Explosive injuries often require specialized treatment that is rarely available in conflict zones.

34. Explosive weapons also leave behind dangerous remnants. In 2023, children accounted for 71 per cent of casualties from remnants of cluster munitions.⁴² As conflicts end, children remain at high risk of injury and death from these devices due to their curiosity, size and lack of awareness.

35. Climate change compounds these risks.⁴³ Floods and other extreme weather events displace landmines and explosive remnants of war, turning safe areas deadly. Climate-induced resource scarcity and displacement also fuel armed violence, especially in vulnerable agricultural regions.⁴⁴ Military operations worsen environmental degradation, as they pollute water, soil and air, with lasting impacts on children.

36. Counter-terrorism discourse and the legal approaches of some States, particularly with regard to non-State armed groups, have in some circumstances produced discriminatory, harmful impacts on children affected by armed conflict.⁴⁵ This includes instances where children who are or are alleged to be associated with or born to members of non-State armed groups are denied the rights and protections guaranteed to them under international law.

B. Impact of armed conflict on the rights of the child

37. Armed conflict remains one of the gravest threats to children's rights, undermining nearly every protection guaranteed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its effects are widespread, devastating and enduring.

38. Children in conflict zones face extreme violence,⁴⁶ which violates their rights to life, survival and development (art. 6) and exposes them to torture,⁴⁷ ill-treatment and sexual violence (arts. 19, 34, 37 and 38). In 2024, violence against children rose by 25 per cent compared to 2023, with 22,495 children affected by violations.⁴⁸

39. Children's access to essential and life-saving healthcare is often obstructed, especially in areas under siege, blockade or movement restrictions,⁴⁹ thus contributing to preventable deaths.⁵⁰ Between 2021 and 2024, the United Nations verified a 126 per cent increase in the denial of humanitarian access to children.⁵¹ Disrupted food supplies have contributed to child malnutrition, which significantly increases risks of stunting, starvation and death.⁵² Chronic exposure to violence and distress causes toxic stress, which impairs brain development, resulting in lasting cognitive, emotional and social harm.⁵³

40. Forced displacement remains one of conflict's most damaging impacts. Though children make up 30 per cent of the global population, by 2023 they represented 40 per cent

⁴¹ ICRC, *Childhood in Rubble*, p. 17; A/HRC/56/26, para. 71; OHCHR, "The impact of the armed conflict and occupation on children's rights in Ukraine, 24 February 2022–31 December 2024" (March 2025), paras. 29, 47 and 48.

⁴² Cluster Munition Coalition, *Cluster Munition Monitor 2023*, p. 39.

⁴³ See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Climate Insecurity Impacts on Children and Armed Conflict" (New York, 2023).

⁴⁴ CRC/C/SSD/CO/1, para. 50.

⁴⁵ Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, "Punishing the innocent: ending violations against children in northeast Syria" (Geneva, March 2024), p. 14.

⁴⁶ A/HRC/58/27, paras. 27, 35 and 67–71; A/HRC/56/26, paras. 31 and 70; and OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", paras. 27 and 28.

⁴⁷ CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/3-4, para. 34; and CRC/C/MEX/CO/6-7 para. 31.

⁴⁸ A/79/878-S/2025/247, para. 5.

⁴⁹ A/HRC/56/26, para. 55.

⁵⁰ See <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240108462>.

⁵¹ A/76/871-S/2022/493, para. 4; and A/79/878-S/2025/247, para. 7.

⁵² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2024* (Geneva, 2024), p. 35; A/HRC/56/26, para. 102; and A/HRC/58/27, para. 74.

⁵³ ICRC, *Childhood in Rubble*, p. 31; and OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", paras. 67 and 68.

of the 117.3 million people worldwide forcibly displaced as a result of persecution and conflict.⁵⁴ Displacement significantly undermines children's rights to survival, health and an adequate standard of living, leading to a rise in preventable diseases (arts. 6, 24 and 27).⁵⁵

41. Attacks on education have surged. Between 2021 and 2024, attacks on schools rose by 166 per cent.⁵⁶ In 2024, over 52 million children in conflict-affected countries were out of school.⁵⁷ Schools, hospitals,⁵⁸ and other civilian infrastructure are frequently attacked or militarized, in violation of children's rights to life, health and education (arts. 6, 24 and 28) and often in breach of international humanitarian law protections for civilian objects and medical facilities.⁵⁹ These violations deprive children of access to essential services and expose them to direct harm. When homes, schools and playgrounds become unsafe, children cannot exercise their right to play and leisure, which is essential for their recovery and resilience (arts. 6, 31 and 39).

42. As of 2020, 160 million children were engaged in child labour globally, half in hazardous work.⁶⁰ Displacement, loss of livelihoods, disruption of education and the collapse of social protection systems and legal safeguards leave families in crisis, forcing children into exploitative situations (art. 32).⁶¹ Child marriage, sale and abandonment also increase as negative coping mechanisms amid crises.⁶²

43. Children continue to suffer disproportionate restrictions on their access to information (art. 17), which affects their ability to express themselves (arts. 12 and 13) and to make informed choices that could also contribute directly to their safety, well-being and protection.⁶³

C. Responsibilities of parties to armed conflicts

44. States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are required to uphold the rights of children affected by armed conflict through comprehensive protection frameworks grounded in non-discrimination (art. 2) and the best interests of the child (art. 3). These obligations extend across prevention, protection and remedial measures and must be implemented in accordance with both international human rights law and international humanitarian law.⁶⁴

45. Under Article 38, States must respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law prescribing that all military operations should adhere to the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.⁶⁵ This requirement, reinforced under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, includes upholding children's right to life (art. 6) by prohibiting indiscriminate attacks, refraining from using explosive weapons

⁵⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Global Trends Report 2023* (Copenhagen, June 2024), p. 3.

⁵⁵ A/HRC/58/27, paras. 29 and 52.

⁵⁶ See <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-of-the-Secretary-General-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict-2021-3.pdf>; childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict.pdf; and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Protect Schools and Hospitals* (New York, 2014).

⁵⁷ See United Nations, "2024 'one of the worst years in history for children in conflict'", 27 December 2024; A/HRC/58/27, para. 72; A/HRC/59/26, paras. 28–35 and 76–82; OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", paras. 52–55.

⁵⁸ OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", paras. 62 and 63.

⁵⁹ ICRC, Study on customary international humanitarian law, rules 7, 10, 14–24 and 28.

⁶⁰ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward* (Geneva, 2021), p. 8.

⁶¹ A/HRC/58/27, para. 45.

⁶² *Ibid.*, para. 73.

⁶³ OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", para. 108.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 125. See also A/HRC/59/26, para. 98 (l) and (m).

⁶⁵ OHCHR, International Legal Protection of Human Rights in Armed Conflict, p. 108.

in populated areas and anti-personnel mines,⁶⁶ investigating all unlawful killings and preventing harm to children in armed hostilities.⁶⁷

46. States are obligated to prohibit, prevent and punish serious violations of children's rights. This requires issuing unequivocal instructions to armed forces banning all forms of torture and ill-treatment,⁶⁸ including child recruitment and use. States and non-State armed groups that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict should adopt action plans with the support of the United Nations human rights mechanisms to put an end to and prevent the six grave violations,⁶⁹ and to ensure effective, rights-based protective measures.⁷⁰

47. Denial of humanitarian access may amount to a violation of children's rights, including to life and health (arts. 6 and 24). International humanitarian law requires parties to conflict to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief, including the delivery of fuel, food and medical supplies and evacuation for children and pregnant women in need of urgent care. Impeding humanitarian access also constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law and, in certain cases, may amount to collective punishment. International humanitarian law explicitly prohibits the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare.

48. In respecting children's right to life, health and education (arts. 6, 24 and 28), States must also prevent, to the greatest extent feasible, the military use of schools and hospitals and protect these facilities from attacks.⁷¹

49. States should take immediate measures, including to ensure that all children can return to school, receive adequate social support and be protected from recruitment and exploitation (art. 32).⁷² The provision of targeted financial and social support to vulnerable families is required to address the risk of families resorting to harmful coping mechanisms, such as child marriage or sale of children,⁷³ which violate children's right to be protected from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 35).

50. States must prevent arbitrary or forced displacement of children and ensure that displaced children have access to shelter, healthcare, psychosocial support and education (arts. 26–28).⁷⁴ All resettlement or return measures must uphold the best interests of the child, and returns must be voluntary and carried out in safety and dignity.

51. Environmental degradation caused by military activity should be assessed and remedied. States should ensure the prompt and safe clearance of unexploded ordnance and monitor environmental health indicators, including air, water and soil quality.⁷⁵

52. Counter-terrorism and national security laws must not be used to suppress children's rights.⁷⁶ Children should be treated primarily as victims of violations, and detention should be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time. Administrative detention is never in the best interests of the child. Children should not be deprived of liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily (art. 37), including for protective purposes.

53. States should conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations into all alleged violations of children's rights, ensure accountability and provide reparations for victims (art. 4).⁷⁷ Where appropriate, this should be done in cooperation with international

⁶⁶ OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", para. 125.

⁶⁷ [CRC/C/OPAC/USA/CO/3-4](#), para. 17.

⁶⁸ [CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6](#), para. 30 (b); and [CRC/C/RUS/CO/6-7](#), para. 46 (g).

⁶⁹ See Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015).

⁷⁰ See <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/action-plans/>.

⁷¹ [CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6](#), paras. 51 and 53; and [CRC/C/SSD/CO/1](#), para. 27.

⁷² See Security Council resolutions 2601 (2021) and 2573 (2021); and [A/HRC/59/26](#), paras. 98 (b) and (c) and 100 (b).

⁷³ ILO and UNICEF, *Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward*, p. 9.

⁷⁴ [CRC/C/SSD/CO/1](#), para. 41.

⁷⁵ Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

⁷⁶ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 26 (2023), para. 22.

⁷⁷ [CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6](#), para. 16 (b).

⁷⁸ General assembly resolution [60/147](#).

fact-finding bodies and the International Criminal Court. Children should have access to child-sensitive complaint mechanisms and legal support.

54. States must ensure the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of armed conflict (art. 39). Recovery measures should be gender-sensitive, survivor-centric and grounded in respect for the child's dignity.⁷⁸ This includes ensuring the availability and accessibility of trauma-informed, community-based mental health services.⁷⁹

55. Essential civilian infrastructure must be rebuilt to guarantee access to basic services. This includes the provision of inclusive, quality education (arts. 28 and 29) to uphold children's rights to development and recovery.⁸⁰ Children's right to play (art. 31) must be preserved. States should support afterschool programmes and community-based initiatives that promote well-being, social connection and cultural expression and are tailored to children's evolving needs and circumstances.

D. Children associated with armed forces and organized armed groups

56. Children who are or have been associated with armed forces or non-State armed groups must be treated primarily as victims of human rights violations.⁸¹ States are obligated to take all feasible measures to ensure the separation or release of such children and provide appropriate assistance for their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (Convention, art. 39; and Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, art. 6).⁸²

57. Unlawful recruitment and use in hostilities by any armed actor should be criminalized in respect of all children under 18 years (Optional Protocol, arts. 2, 4 and 6). Allegations of child involvement in conflict must be investigated, perpetrators sanctioned and victims granted remedies.

58. Children should be dealt with in specialized child justice systems (arts. 37 and 40).⁸³ States should not prosecute children for being associated with armed groups or for expressing their opinion.⁸⁴ Under no circumstances should children be tried in military or security courts or treated as security threats solely on the basis of perceived affiliations.

59. Children who are or are allegedly associated with or born to members of non-State armed groups are entitled to the full scope of rights and protections guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian law, without exception.⁸⁵ States should repatriate children stranded in conflict or post-conflict settings, in accordance with the principles of non-refoulement and the best interests of the child.⁸⁶ States must uphold children's rights and refrain from applying counter-terrorism measures in ways that override protections guaranteed by international human rights law.⁸⁷

60. In areas where organized criminal gangs or paramilitary groups operate, children face extreme violence, including killing, maiming, exploitation and abuse. States are obligated to adopt comprehensive, child rights-based strategies to prevent and respond to such harm

⁷⁸ CRC/C/SSD/CO/1, para. 4.

⁷⁹ CRC/C/ISR/CO/5-6, para. 38.

⁸⁰ A/HRC/59/33, paras. 56–66.

⁸¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 24 (2019), para. 100; Security Council resolution 2427 (2018), para. 20; and the Paris Principles, principle 3.6.

⁸² A/HRC/58/27, para. 102 (c).

⁸³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 24 (2019), para. 96; and CRC/C/EGY/CO/3-4, para 87 (f).

⁸⁴ Committee on the Rights of the Child, general comment No. 24 (2019), para. 101; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Children and justice during and in the aftermath of armed conflict", Working Paper No. 3 (New York, 2011); and the Paris Principles, principle 8.7.

⁸⁵ General assembly resolution 75/291, para. 53.

⁸⁶ Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, "Punishing the innocent", pp. 14 and 15; and Committee on the Rights of the Child, *P.N., K.K. and O.M. v. Finland* (CRC/C/91/D/100/2019), para. 13.

⁸⁷ General assembly resolution 49/20, paras. 24–28.

(arts. 19 and 34–38). This includes addressing underlying drivers such as poverty, social exclusion and inequality, which increase children’s vulnerability to coercion, exploitation and abuse by armed actors. Children coerced or exploited by these groups must be recognized and treated as victims, not perpetrators. To fulfil their obligations under the Convention, States are required to establish safe, voluntary reintegration programmes and early warning and protection systems and to explicitly prohibit the use of children as informants. Public education initiatives, including on social and digital platforms, should raise awareness about the risks of organized crime. They should be inclusive and developed with the participation of children.

61. Children in armed conflict are often deprived of liberty by both State and non-State actors on various grounds, including their actual or alleged association with parties to the conflict, for the purpose of administrative screening or protective custody, or because they are accompanying detained parents.⁸⁸ Many are held without legal basis, formal charges, trial or access to legal counsel or contact with family, sometimes amounting to enforced disappearance.⁸⁹ Detention conditions often fail to meet minimum standards, including access to essential services. In 2024, 3,018 children were detained for their actual or alleged association with parties to conflict.⁹⁰

62. Detention must be used only as a measure of last resort, for the shortest possible time and subject to regular review (art. 37), including in armed conflict.⁹¹ States must prohibit arbitrary detention, end the use of military or special security courts for children and ensure legal safeguards, contact with family and access to education, health care and psychosocial support. Militaries should implement handover protocols for the release of captured children to child protection actors.⁹² Child-friendly confidential complaint mechanisms must be available to report violations of children’s rights committed during their arrest and detention. States should monitor and report on detention conditions and collect disaggregated data on the number and treatment of children in custody.

E. Children in other vulnerable situations during armed conflicts

63. A non-discriminatory, rights-based approach to children affected by armed conflict (arts. 2 and 3) must consider intersecting factors such as age, gender, disability, ethnicity and migration status. Protection strategies should reflect this diversity to ensure that all children can fully enjoy their rights under the Convention.

64. Gender-sensitive responses are essential, as boys and girls experience conflict differently. Boys face higher risks of direct participation in hostilities, thus increasing their exposure to maiming and killing. Girls are disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence, often being recruited for sexual exploitation or domestic work.⁹³ Conflict also exacerbates existing gender disparities in education⁹⁴ and health, resulting in reduced literacy rates and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

65. Conflict-related sexual violence against children is increasing and has been used as a tactic of war to humiliate populations or to force displacement (arts. 19 and 34–36).⁹⁵ Between 2021 and 2024, the number of children subjected to rape or other forms of sexual

⁸⁸ A/74/136, paras. 66–71; and OHCHR, “Impact of the armed conflict and occupation”, para. 73.

⁸⁹ See submission from UNICEF; and OHCHR, “Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 August 2022–31 January 2023”, paras. 51 and 52.

⁹⁰ A/79/878-S/2025/247, para. 7.

⁹¹ OHCHR, “Impact of the armed conflict and occupation”, paras. 80, 81 and 127 (r).

⁹² See <https://watchlist.org/publications/operational-guidance-negotiating-and-implementing-handover-protocols/>.

⁹³ See Save the Children, “Weapon of war: sexual violence against children in conflict” (2021); and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, “The gender dimensions of grave violations against children in armed conflict” (New York, May 2022).

⁹⁴ See <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2021/01/right-education-girls-post-isil-iraq>.

⁹⁵ OHCHR, “Impact of the armed conflict and occupation”, para. 72; and A/HRC/58/27, paras. 26 and 58.

violence rose from 1,326 to 1,982, or a 49 per cent verified increase.⁹⁶ Consequences include long-term psychological trauma, sexually transmitted infections and child pregnancies. Children born of conflict-related sexual violence, along with their mothers, experience stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion, including barriers to birth registration and access to identity documents that undermine their right to legal identity and increase the risk of statelessness.⁹⁷ States must prevent statelessness by ensuring immediate, free and non-discriminatory birth registration, regardless of the child's or parents' immigration or legal status (arts. 7 and 8).⁹⁸

66. A disability rights framework is required to address the heightened risks that children with disabilities face, including neglect, injury, abandonment and violence, as well as their limited access to essential services.⁹⁹ Conflict-induced disabilities are compounded by collapsing health systems.¹⁰⁰ States have a duty to provide specialized, accessible and urgent support to children with disabilities (art. 23), supported by adequate resources, inclusive service delivery and targeted protection measures (art. 4).

67. Children fleeing conflict often face rights violations before, during and after displacement, including violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect.¹⁰¹ Unaccompanied children separated from their families are among the most vulnerable. By 2021, an estimated 25.2 million children were internally displaced – nearly half of the global internally displaced population. Many children experience repeated displacement, which severely disrupts access to education, healthcare and essential services and is further compounded by lack of identity documents.

68. Family separation occurs rapidly during evacuations, mass displacement and attacks, leaving many children orphaned, unaccompanied or without contact with their families.¹⁰² States have the obligation to prevent separation, urgently identify separated children, provide appropriate interim care and facilitate safe family reunification (arts. 9 and 10).¹⁰³ Unlawful forcible transfer or deportation of children from occupied territories constitutes a serious violation of both the Convention (art. 9) and of international humanitarian law and may constitute a war crime.¹⁰⁴ States should ensure the prompt return of unlawfully removed children and safeguard their identity, nationality and family ties (art. 8).¹⁰⁵

69. States are obliged to ensure family reunification and provide special protection and assistance to refugee and asylum-seeking children (arts. 10 and 22). This includes establishing early identification mechanisms for displaced, asylum-seeking and refugee children arriving from conflict zones,¹⁰⁶ and developing comprehensive referral and case management frameworks, with safeguards for unaccompanied and separated children. For children in need of international protection, States are required to facilitate access to the asylum system, guarantee respect for the principle of non-refoulement and uphold the best interests of the child in all procedures affecting their status and care (art. 22).

⁹⁶ See <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-of-the-Secretary-General-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict-2021-3.pdf> and <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Summary-of-the-Annual-Report-on-Children-and-Armed-Conflict.pdf>.

⁹⁷ A/HRC/58/27, paras. 62 and 71.

⁹⁸ CAT/C/IDN/CO/2, paras. 16 and 18.

⁹⁹ OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", para. 56.

¹⁰⁰ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Towards Greater Inclusion* (New York, December 2023).

¹⁰¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2022* (Geneva, 2022), p. 107; and Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *The Rights and Guarantees of Internally Displaced Children in Armed Conflict*, Working Paper No. 3 (New York, 2010).

¹⁰² A/HRC/56/26, paras. 33 and 72.

¹⁰³ OHCHR, "Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 1 February–31 July 2023", para. 143 (f).

¹⁰⁴ Fourth Geneva Convention, arts. 49 and 147; and Rome Statute, arts. 6 (e) and 8 (2) (a) (vii).

¹⁰⁵ OHCHR, "Impact of the armed conflict and occupation", paras. 80, 81 and 126 (i); and CRC/C/RUS/CO/6-7, para. 46.

¹⁰⁶ CRC/C/RUS/CO/6-7, para. 49 (e); CRC/C/15/Add.144 para. 43; and CRC/C/15/Add.153 para. 63.

VI. Barriers to respecting children's rights in armed conflict

70. Multiple, often overlapping, barriers hinder the full implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other protection frameworks for children in situations of armed conflict.¹⁰⁷ These barriers include ongoing insecurity, disrespect for legal obligations, resource constraints, weak national legal frameworks, limited political will, cultural resistance, and impunity. Often, they intersect and exacerbate each other, resulting in weakened protection of children in armed conflict.

71. In conflict settings, child protection is often deprioritized and essential services, such as education, healthcare and child protection interventions and support, are disrupted. Insecurity, displacement and the collapse of basic infrastructure, especially in rural areas, severely obstruct the delivery of essential child protection services.

72. Widespread violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by parties to conflict expose children to violations of their rights, including through the denial of humanitarian assistance.¹⁰⁸ Legal and policy frameworks in many States unevenly integrate the principle of the best interests of the child, and military doctrines often omit explicit child protection provisions. Where legislation exists, enforcement is weak and compliance by armed actors is inconsistent.

73. Limited governmental capacity and resources hinder implementation of reintegration and physical and psychosocial support programmes for children affected by armed conflict, in particular long-term services. States should allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to support the implementation of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. In parallel, the humanitarian response is often underfunded, further restricting comprehensive support to complement government efforts.

74. The lack of enforcement, erosion or suspension of national legal frameworks in armed conflict undermines children's legal protections, including those related to the criminalization of child recruitment and use, sexual violence against children, forced marriage and other violations and abuses against children. The lack of specialized administration of justice for children and situations where the age of majority is lower than the international standard have broad implications for children, notably with regard to protections from recruitment and use and from detention and prosecution for alleged or actual association with armed groups.

75. Where judicial systems are weak or non-functioning, conflict-related crimes against children often go unpunished. Inadequate law enforcement, failure to investigate violations and the absence of specialized mechanisms to receive and address children's complaints perpetuate impunity. Even in these volatile situations, States should continue their efforts to ensure accountability for grave human rights violations against children.¹⁰⁹

76. Stigma and fear of retaliation discourage victims from reporting violations and seeking support, especially children who have experienced sexual violence. Children formerly associated with armed actors often experience community resistance to their reintegration. Movement restrictions, particularly for women and girls, have a negative impact on their access to essential services.

77. The monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict is vital to accountability for violations of children's rights in armed conflict. Moreover, the data collected has also been the basis for engagement with parties to conflict on putting an end to and preventing grave violations and has supported effective and inclusive humanitarian action and health and child-specific services. However, the fact that United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions are in transition, in combination with funding cuts for programmatic response, poses serious challenges for the continuity of dedicated child protection expertise and the sustainability of child protection gains.

¹⁰⁷ See submission from UNICEF.

¹⁰⁸ See [S/2025/271](#).

¹⁰⁹ [S/2024/705](#), paras. 87 and 88.

VII. Promising practices

78. Despite persistent challenges, numerous States have provided input for the preparation of this report regarding promising efforts to uphold the rights of children affected by armed conflict, notably through the integration of the principle of the best interests of the child into national laws, policies and international cooperation frameworks.

79. Several States have embedded this principle into national legal systems, recognizing conflict-affected children as a vulnerable group entitled to special protections. States have adopted laws to support child survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, established reintegration programmes for displaced children and children detained for association with non-State armed groups, and enacted legal guarantees for displaced children's access to emergency services, shelter, education and healthcare. Specific protection measures have also been developed for children affected by organized criminal violence.

80. Legal prohibitions on recruitment of children by armed forces have been reinforced in the national laws of many States.¹¹⁰ In addition, through legal reforms, grave violations against children have been criminalized and arms exports to countries that recruit and use children in hostilities have been restricted. In some contexts, transitional justice frameworks incorporate child-specific approaches to truth, accountability and reparation, thus ensuring the participation of children.

81. Additional protection measures include age assessment procedures, separation of children from armed groups, access to detention centres by independent monitoring bodies and protocols for the handover of children associated with armed groups. Some States have issued command orders on children and armed conflict, appointed focal points within armed forces and established national strategies and coordination bodies to address child protection. Training and capacity-building efforts targeting officials, members of the armed forces and the judiciary have strengthened knowledge of and compliance with international law.

82. States also support protection of child rights in armed conflict through foreign policy, humanitarian aid and development cooperation. This includes financial support to the monitoring and reporting mechanism, reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and non-State armed groups, provision of education in emergencies, promotion of political commitments such as the Safe Schools Declaration, and support for international accountability through contributions to the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims.

VIII. Conclusions

83. **The rights of the child in situations of armed conflict are comprehensively protected under international human rights, humanitarian and criminal law. These frameworks remain relevant and adequate and, together with global and regional standards and commitments, provide a robust and coherent legal basis for preventing violations, ensuring protection and securing remedies for conflict-affected children.**

84. **The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict impose binding obligations on States to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all children in situations of armed conflict, including those allegedly or formerly associated with armed forces or non-State armed groups. These children must be recognized primarily as victims of gross violations of human rights, serious violations of international humanitarian law and, in some cases, war crimes.**

85. **While many States have aligned their national frameworks with international standards, codification and implementation remain inconsistent. This gap results in ongoing rights violations and widespread impunity, affecting the nearly half billion children living in or displaced by conflict.**

¹¹⁰ ICRC, Study on customary international humanitarian law, rule 136, section IV on State practice.

86. In armed conflict, children suffer first and suffer most from widespread and severe violence, with profound impact on their immediate safety and long-term well-being. A renewed global commitment is urgently needed to prioritize respect for children's rights under international law and fully implement existing legal protections.

IX. Recommendations

87. Recalling the responsibility of armed forces and non-State armed groups to respect the human rights of children during armed conflicts, the High Commissioner encourages Member States to implement urgent, coordinated and sustained preventive, protective and response interventions.

88. The High Commissioner also encourages Member States:

(a) To ratify and implement international and regional legal instruments and endorse higher standards upholding children's rights in armed conflict, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, the Geneva Conventions and the additional protocols thereto, the Rome Statute, the Safe Schools Declaration, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, and relevant United Nations resolutions;

(b) Integrate specific child protection provisions into military doctrine and the standard operating procedures and rules of engagement of the military and security forces and reinforce implementation through training;

(c) Strengthen accountability by monitoring and reporting all serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed by State and non-State actors; enhance child-sensitive investigation and prosecution capacity by collecting age- and gender-disaggregated data to better identify and respond to the needs of all children; and cooperate with international investigative and accountability mechanisms and grant them unhindered access to affected sites;

(d) Guarantee adequately financed and prompt gender- and age-sensitive reparation measures, including for physical and psychological recovery, social reintegration, education and mental health support;

(e) Ensure that United Nations peace operations and special political missions are equipped with strong child protection mandates, dedicated advisors and adequate resources, including during mission transitions, and provide financial resources to ensure the sustainability of this capacity in the United Nations country team following transitions;

(f) Recognize children allegedly or formerly associated with armed forces and non-State armed groups, including those designated as terrorist, primarily as victims, including by ensuring their swift release from the custody of parties to conflict and their handover to protection actors and by funding long-term, gender- and age-appropriate, community-based reintegration and recovery services;

(g) As appropriate, develop national preparedness plans that protect and reduce risks to children in the event of armed conflicts;

(h) Ensure safe, timely and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid, the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, and the provision of essential services to children, including education, healthcare and psychosocial support;

(i) Enhance coordination with and strengthen the capacity of national human rights institutions, community-level actors and civil society to implement risk mitigation and child protection strategies, including through the timely collection of disaggregated data;

(j) Establish mechanisms for children's safe, meaningful and systematic participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of prevention, protection, recovery and accountability measures, and ensure that all policies and responses are grounded in a child-based perspective by integrating the views and lived experiences of children, including those in situations of particular vulnerability, through child-friendly, age-, gender- and disability-sensitive consultation methods;

89. The High Commissioner recommends that the international community, including international organizations:

(a) Enhance coordinated action to prevent and protect children from violations of their human rights in armed conflict, including by reinforcing entity participation in the monitoring and reporting mechanism and further mainstreaming the rights of conflict-affected children in policies, programmes and actions;

(b) Strengthen coordination among national human rights institutions, civil society and international organizations to expand community-based efforts to prevent, address and ensure accountability for violations of children's rights;

(c) Continue to prioritize child protection funds and capacities amid resource constraints.

90. The High Commissioner recommends that the Human Rights Council:

(a) Systematically integrate child rights expertise, accountability and investigative mechanisms to ensure that violations of children's rights in armed conflict are accurately identified, documented and reported, and ensure that child rights expertise is integrated into the work of the special procedures as needed;

(b) Encourage, through the universal periodic review, the monitoring of States' implementation of recommendations related to the rights of children in armed conflict;

(c) Systematically mainstream the rights of conflict-affected children in relevant country-specific and thematic resolutions;

(d) Promote the exchange of promising practices among States and explore ways of meeting the need for technical guidance, through specific, practical recommendations, to address the challenges impeding respect for the rights of children affected by armed conflict, especially children in the most vulnerable situations, and to strengthen their protection and access to remedies;

91. The High Commissioner invites the Committee on the Rights of the Child to consider developing a general comment on the rights of children in armed conflict.
