



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**STATEMENT**

**by**

**H. E. Mr. Michal Mlynár**

**Permanent Representative of Slovakia  
to the United Nations**

**Arria-formula meeting of the Security Council  
on**

**Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations  
of armed conflict**

**7 May 2021  
New York**

Mr. President,

Slovakia aligns itself with the statements of the European Union and of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

We commend the organizers of this Arria Meeting and we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Virginia Gamba for preparing and publishing New Study on Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Children Affected by Conflict that clearly shows the importance of supporting United Nations and partners on the ground to address the CAAC agenda.

More than a year after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are in a position to look back and do a preliminary assessment of its impact on violations against children in situations of armed conflict. However, due to the backlogs in the verification process, we may get the full picture only later, or distorted as some violations are underreported due to their sensitive nature.

As outlined in the SRSG's Study, the pandemic exacerbated the already dire situation. In addition to the denial or limitation of humanitarian assistance, it puts millions of children at risk with possible long-lasting negative effects, extending beyond this generation and erasing decades of progress, while hitting those vulnerable the hardest.

Pandemic-related school closures increased military occupation of education facilities, or risks of such behaviour, making it more difficult for schools to reopen and for children to resume education activities. And if not because of the pandemic, then the attacks on schools contributed to the largest disruption to education in history affecting 1.6 billion learners world-wide.

Due to the extreme poverty, children were pushed in higher numbers to join armed groups and could remain recruited in their ranks for a long time. Girls, due to school closures, faced an increased risk of sexual violence, forced labour, child, early and forced marriage and may never return to school even when those will reopen.

To address all these issues, it is of utmost importance, that the UN Peace Operations and UN Country Offices have necessary personal resources, with child protection advisors at their centre and adequately funded. Their specialized expertise is

irreplaceable, and they also require sufficient support capacity from the UN headquarters. CAAC agenda must be mainstreamed into mission mandates and make part of all UN SC efforts and discussions. In addition to the violations, children may face the long-term effects of the pandemic and therefore would need psychosocial support.

Mr. President,

We once again reiterate our call for all parties to armed conflict to fully respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, and to end violations against children. Accountability for all of these crimes must be ensured, and perpetrators punished.

Having ratified Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, endorsed the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration as well as the Vancouver Principles, Slovakia calls on others to follow in this regard.

Thank you.