



**Statement of Mexico in the Arria meeting on “Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict”**

*Check against delivery*

New York, 7 May 2021

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mexico wishes to thank Estonia and the other co-sponsors for convening this meeting, as well as the briefers for their presentations, in particular the report by SRSG Gamba. I wish to recognize the UN Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting for the way they have resiliently adapted their working methods related to verifying grave violations against children.

As we face recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, we must be mindful that distribution of vaccines and other medical supplies has been particularly difficult in conflict settings. We stress that vaccines should be a global public good as called by the Secretary-General, the World Health Organization, and numerous other entities. We welcome recent announcements that will allow for wider accessibility and affordability of the vaccines and to fulfill the implementation of all aspects of resolution 2565.

We should strive to ensure an equal distribution of the COVID-19 vaccines to those living in conflict-related areas. When deemed safe for children, the vaccines should be made readily available to them. Until vaccines reach everyone, including in conflict and post-conflict situations, we will not be able, Mr. President, to assert that COVID has been defeated. Other vaccination campaigns that stalled due to COVID must also be restarted.

The Security Council should support the efforts of the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations to provide aid and promote access to vaccines in areas where access remains challenging.

Addressing the impact on the well-being of millions of children, especially girls, should be a priority. The pandemic has severely affected access to basic services such as education, health, food and water. Some of the most negative consequences of the pandemic involve its impact on the mental health and wellbeing of children, with our collective need to avoid trauma for younger generations.

The SRSG's report stressed that COVID-19 pandemic has affected the UN's capacity to monitor and verify grave violations against children in armed conflict and hampered ongoing efforts to engage parties to conflict to end and prevent them. We encourage

Member States and regional organizations with the support of humanitarian actors and civil society to focus on the reintegration of children into their families through tailored programs based on their needs.

States must consider the best interest of the child while enforcing measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 and ensure that child protection services continue despite the pandemic.

Mexico expresses its deep concern of the increased vulnerability of young women and girls to rape, and other forms of sexual violence exacerbated by the suspension of services, including sexual health and reproductive services. We also regret the sexual violence faced by boys and teenagers. We must work to eliminate stigma surrounding these cases by addressing them openly.

School closures have made children even more vulnerable to recruitment and use and sexual violence. Children in refugee camps or internally displaced are further at risk.

A particular vulnerable group are orphans, not only because of mental health impacts, but because of the recurring insecurity that leads to greater risk of being recruited by armed groups.

Consequently, we wish to emphasize that hospitals, other medical facilities and schools must remain safe at all times. That is why Mexico recently endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration and calls on others to join.

Finally, Mr. President, we reiterate our support to the call of the Security Council to respect the ceasefire promoted by the Secretary-General to address the pandemic, prevent attacks on hospitals and medical staff and grant access to humanitarian and healthcare assistance in accordance with resolution 2532.

Thank you.