



*The Permanent Mission of Portugal
to the United Nations*

Arria Formula Meeting of the United Nations Security Council

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

Friday, 07 May 2021 2 pm

Mr. Chair,

Portugal thanks Estonia and the co-sponsors for today’s Arria Formula meeting and for keeping high on the agenda the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

We welcome the study by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Children and Armed Conflict. And we thank the SRSG for her work as well as all child protection and humanitarian actors for their restless commitment and efforts, despite the challenging pandemic situation.

Mr. Chair,

The main findings of the study highlight alarming trends on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict, such as an increase in recruitmen, sexual violence and ill-treatment in detention.

The pandemic also had a severe impact on the UN’s capacity to monitor and verify grave violations and in the efforts to engage parties to conflicts. In addition, we are not able to have a clear picture of the current situation due to absence of accurate and updated data. It is disturbing to know that we are probably only looking at the tip of the iceberg.



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Therefore, today's meeting is of utmost importance to identify lessons learned and good practices to reverse the current situation. It is important to know how to ensure better child protection under similar circumstances in the future.

The closure of schools because of the pandemic and the consequent challenges in finding educational alternatives compromise the realization of the right to education.

We are also particularly concerned with the impact of the pandemic in limiting children's full enjoyment of the right to health, including mental health care.

Furthermore, let us not forget that girls are too often the ones in the most vulnerable situations, facing added risks related to sexual violence. We should pay attention to their specific needs and ensure a gender-perspective in all programmes and targeted actions.

Mr. Chair,

It is of utmost importance that all parties to armed conflicts fully comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, human rights law, and refugee law. Respect for international law linked to concrete prevention and sanctions measures are the only way to end grave violations against children.

Health and security conditions must be ensured to the staff of the UN Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict. Equally important is to resume disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities.

The long-term impact of the pandemic on children's rights demand long-term solutions. In this context, Portugal supports the call of the SRSG for increased political and financial support.

Thank you