

**United Nations Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting on  
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in  
situations of armed conflict**

Friday, 7 May 2021, 2:00 – 5:00 PM (New York time)

**Ambassador Permanent Representative of SPAIN**

Agustín Santos Maraver

- I thank Estonia, the Office of the Special Representative (SRSG) for Children in Armed Conflict (CAAC) and the other co-sponsors of United Nations Security Council Arria Formula for convening this Meeting, on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict.
- Spain fully aligns with the statement of the EU and the statement delivered by Canada on behalf of the CAAC Group of Friends.
- The latest report of the Office of SRSG Virginia Gamba on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in five country situations (Afghanistan, CAR, Colombia, DRC and Sudan) clearly shows that when protection officers cannot be deployed violations against children increase. Non state armed groups occupy their space and it becomes even more difficult for victims to denounce violations of their rights.
- The negative consequences of war in children, compounded with COVID-19 pandemic, have also increased the level of suicide in young girls; as we have unfortunately seen in Syria.

The lack of support and hope for a better life is ending lives.

- The rapid increase in sexual and gender-based violence during the pandemic is alarming. The situation in Tigray must alert us to remain vigilant, to condemn violations and to call for justice and reparation for victims.
- The closure of schools in the Sahel region during the pandemic had a terrible effect on children, most of them will never return to education.

Additionally, economic hardship and food insecurity has forced children to work, to early marriage or to recruitment by non-state actors.

- Attacks to healthcare are just too many. The fear of the pandemic has provoked an increase in attacks to medical convoys and practitioners. In Colombia, in 2020, more than 300 attacks occurred, the biggest number in 20 years.

- The recovery of COVID-19 will require all our efforts to finance and equip protection and human rights officers. We need to advocate for strong protection mandates and strong protection clusters.
- Member States, we should also explore how to continue strengthening the partnership between CAAC, UNICEF and the Department of Peace Operations; as well as the important role of NGOs working on child protection in the field.
- I want to conclude by saying that it is a humanitarian imperative to change the conduct of parties in armed conflict, to prevent violations of children's human rights and to comply with International law, including Human Rights law, Refugee Law and International Humanitarian Law.
- I thank you.

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