



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF
BULGARIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

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UN Security Council Arria Formula meeting “*The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against Children in situations of armed conflict*”

Delivered by Ambassador Lachezara Stoeva, Permanent Representative

New York, Friday, 7 May 2021

Mr. President,

I would like start by thanking Estonia and all the co-sponsors for this timely Arria formula meeting and for bringing to the attention of the UN Security Council an issue of such importance. I would also like to commend the efforts of all stakeholders who have contributed to the protection and promotion of children’s rights around the world, especially of those affected by conflicts. The work of the Special Representative of the UNSG on Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG), UNICEF, as well as the role of civil society, are indispensable, especially when facing the challenges posed by the pandemic.

In May 2020, the Group of Friends of Children and SDGs, which Bulgaria is co-chairing, presented a Joint Statement with the EU and GRULAC on children’s rights in the context of the COVID-19, which was endorsed by a total of 172 countries. The statement aimed to raise awareness about the adverse effects that the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to have on children’s well-being, development and protection, including their access to education, food, safety and health, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

One year later, the Office of the SRSG is presenting a detailed study on the effects of the pandemic on the violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The study could not have been more timely. The findings are rather

alarming and sobering. However, its conclusions might help us deal with this crisis and possibly with future ones.

The consequences of the pandemic not only disproportionately impact children, and especially girls, in vulnerable situations but also affect our ability to monitor and respond to their needs. The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening to undo recent progress in the fields of protection and human rights by exposing children and their families to risks like economic insecurity and poverty, as well as exposure to exploitative and hazardous relationships and reduced access to services and humanitarian assistance. Bearing in mind that violations are interdependent, we share the view that our responses should be coordinated and complementary and not in silos.

Bulgaria is convinced that a child-centered approach should be followed in all policies related to the response and recovery from COVID-19 by the UN and conflict affected countries.

Bulgaria also welcomes the recommendation of the study that resources should be made available for critical issues like child protection, including within UN field offices, while funds to support COVID-19 prevention and response interventions should not be diverted at the expense of child protection initiatives.

Last but not least, according to the study by the SRSG, the socioeconomic ramifications of the pandemic will continue to affect children in the coming years. Violations against the special status of schools and hospitals, as well as persons inside them, continue to be deeply concerning. School closures due to COVID-19 might have long-lasting consequences as many children do not have access to distance learning leading to dropping out. Therefore, one of our first objectives should be to ensure the access to education, as stated in the Safe Schools Declaration.

Thank you!