

**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Statement**  
**Children and Armed Conflict Arria format meeting, 7 May 2021**

*Check against delivery*

- Good Afternoon, it is a pleasure to join you all today. Thank you to all our hosts for bringing us together to discuss this important topic, and to all the panellists for sharing their insights on the impact of COVID-19 on violations against children in conflict.
- The UK is committed to protecting and promoting children's rights in conflict situations. And we share the concerns of everyone here today about the impact COVID-19 has had on the most vulnerable in society. It is vital we – the international community – remain alive to emerging threats and adapt our approaches to ensure the rights of children continue to be fully respected and protected.
- That is why the UK welcomes this timely report on the impact of COVID-19 on children in conflict. The report provides useful information, experience and insights from the pandemic so far as well as anticipating the challenges that lie ahead as we collectively look to build back better.
- While the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is yet to be fully determined, it is clear from the findings of this report that the effects on children thus far have been devastating and threaten to undermine the hard-fought progress we have collectively achieved in this space.
- Mass school closures and deteriorating socio-economic conditions have increased the vulnerability of children to recruitment and use. Restricted movement and access for child protection actors has limited the delivery of life-saving provisions and engagement with parties to conflict on the implementation of critical child protection measures. Reduced capacity and suspension of essential services, limited mobility and increased isolation has reduced children's access to vital information and increased their risk of exposure to violence,

abuse, neglect and exploitation. Of particular concern is the noted increase in allegations of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which disproportionately affect girls.

- These are but a few of the known effects. The stark reality remains however that the lives of children have been completely upturned by conflict and COVID-19 but we will not truly know the full extent of the impacts for quite some time.
- That is why the continued and enhanced monitoring, reporting, collection of data and response to grave violations is paramount. Child protection actors and mechanisms like the Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) play a critical role.
- The CTFMR's work is essential for the continued protection of children affected by conflict and in further assessing the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on children. Their work documenting the challenges faced, and solutions implemented, and in supporting the development of new and targeted ways of working to better protect children and hold perpetrators to account will be vital.
- We welcome the report's recommendations and commend the steadfast commitment, resilience and creativity of the Country Task Forces on Monitoring and Reporting as they quickly adapted to the challenges of the pandemic to continue their vital work.
- The UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict also has an important role to play here and the UK will continue to work collaboratively with member states to ensure child protection remains central to UN operations and is integrated across the conflict-cycle.
- It is essential that we also consider both the immediate and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 and commit to working together to use all the tools we have at our disposal to ensure children rights are respected and protected in conflict, especially in times of crisis. We welcome the intent to conduct follow up research to this report

once more conclusive data is available. This research must then inform the Working Group's next steps on country conclusions.

- Children's rights are not negotiable in times of conflict or crisis. The monitoring, reporting, collection of data and response to grave violations is essential, not only to protect children's rights, and bring perpetrators to account, but also to giving children the support they need to return to school, to rebuild their lives, and ultimately, to restore their faith in the future.
- As this report demonstrates, we have the means to adapt and better protect children in conflict and crisis. So let's work together – as a coalition of the concerned from international organisations, governments and civil society – to collectively strengthen and ensure the rights of children continue to be fully respected and protected in conflict during the pandemic and beyond.