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Promotion and protection of the rights of childrenSecurity Council
Sixty-ninth year**Children and armed conflict
Report of the Secretary-General****I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2014, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2068 (2012), by which the Council requested that I continue to submit annual reports on the implementation of its resolutions and presidential statements on children and armed conflict.
2. The report highlights recent global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on grave violations committed against children in 2014. The main activities and initiatives with regard to the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions and the conclusions of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are outlined. In line with the resolutions of the Council pertaining to children and armed conflict, the report includes in its annexes a list of parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel, in contravention of international law.
3. All information presented in the present report and its annexes has been documented, vetted and verified for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information is hampered by such factors as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. The preparation of the report and its annexes involved broad consultations within the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field, and with relevant Member States.
4. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is guided by the criteria found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence for determining the existence of an armed conflict. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children**A. Trends and developments**

5. There were unprecedented challenges in 2014 with regard to the protection of tens of millions of children growing up in situations affected by conflict. In particular, children in several countries affected by major crises, namely, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Israel/State of Palestine, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, were exposed to the most egregious violations. This added to existing violations against children in protracted conflicts, such as in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia. Most recently, the security situation in Yemen deteriorated further with reports, in April 2015, of significant numbers of child casualties.

B. Abductions as an increasing trend

6. Mass abductions of civilians, including children, have become an increasingly prevalent feature of conflict in many situations described in the present report. The abduction of children had primarily been a precursor to other violations, such as killing and maiming, recruitment and use, or sexual violence. In many instances, abducted children were also arbitrarily detained by Governments and armed groups. While these trends continued in 2014, armed groups abducted children in greater numbers and increasingly used abductions as a tactic to terrorize or target particular ethnic groups or religious communities.
7. In Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, over one thousand girls and boys were abducted by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). In one incident in the Syrian Arab Republic, ISIL abducted approximately 150 young boys on their way home from having taken school exams in Aleppo. They were released from captivity after a few months, during which they were physically abused, indoctrinated and made to observe violent practices. Towards the end of the year, ISIL issued a document justifying its sexual slavery of Yezidi girls abducted in Iraq. In Nigeria, Boko Haram abducted hundreds of women and girls in major attacks in Chibok and across the country's north-eastern region. Video statements released by Boko Haram indicated that the abductions were in retaliation against the Government for the detention of relatives and served as punishment for schoolchildren attending Western-style schools.
8. The information contained in the present report demonstrates that the increase in the frequency and scale of abductions has resulted in greater protection needs for children. The children require safe release, family tracing, medical, psychological and legal assistance and facilitation of voluntary repatriation in the context of cross-border abductions.
9. The long-term consequences of abductions are of concern. Dominic Ongwen of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was transferred to the International Criminal Court in January 2015. Abducted by LRA in 1989 on his way to school, Dominic Ongwen rose to the rank of major at 18 years of age. His transfer to The Hague 25 years later is a reminder of the long-term consequences of such violations.
10. Rising concerns about abductions were highlighted by Member States in the March 2015 open debate of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. In the light of those concerns, my Special Representative will explore new ways to respond to the increasing occurrence of abductions. I call upon the Security Council to expand the tools available to child protection actors to gather information and report on the abduction of children, including through adding abductions as a trigger violation for listing within the annexes of this report.

C. Responses to extreme violence

11. Extreme violence rose to unprecedented levels in 2014, leading to a dramatic increase of grave violations against children. Children have been disproportionately affected and were often the direct targets of acts of violence intended to inflict maximum casualties, terrorize entire communities and provoke worldwide outrage.
12. A tactic of extremist groups is the targeting of schools since they fundamentally object to the goal of universal education for children because they are an emblematic target. In other instances, schools located in areas controlled by extremist armed groups have had their curriculum changed to reflect the groups'

ideology.

13. The military responses to the threat caused by extreme violence have also raised serious child protection concerns. In a number of situations where extreme violence is prevalent, military operations led by regional or international coalitions or by neighbouring countries have resulted in the killing and maiming of children. Children have also been subjected to sexual violence and recruited and used by pro-Government militias.

14. An area of particular concern related to the response to extreme violence is the deprivation of liberty of children due to their alleged association with extremist groups. Children have been detained on suspicion of being associated with an extremist group without review of the lawfulness of the deprivation of liberty. These children should be treated primarily as victims and their rights protected at all times. At a minimum, Member States should ensure that procedures or trials are consistent with international juvenile justice standards, with deprivation of liberty as a measure of last resort.

15. The reintegration of children recruited and used in extreme violence raises new challenges. Reintegration has always required significant and long-term resources. However, the impact of exposure to the severity of the violence committed in 2014 across a number of situations will cause particularly serious and long-term distress. Comprehensive programmes are needed to address the reintegration needs of these children. Only through concerted action will it be possible to establish measures to mitigate the harm done to them.

16. Responding appropriately to extreme violence is complex, but it is imperative that all responses be conducted in full compliance with international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law. These international legal obligations are the minimum that must be in place in all national, regional and international responses to security threats. The Security Council, African Union, European Union, League of Arab States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, coalition Member States and individual Member States should ensure that responses include specific mitigating measures for the protection of children. I also encourage all concerned Governments to ensure that the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children, are criminalized, allegations of violations investigated and perpetrators held to account. It is also critical that military operations be complemented by efforts to address the root causes that lead to the emergence of extremist groups. Recognizing and addressing social deprivation and alienation of communities, strengthening efforts to grant access to education and other key social services will contribute to isolating the leaders of extremist groups through delegitimizing their discourse and reducing the numbers who willingly enlist.

D. Engagement with non-State actors

17. Fifty-one armed groups are listed in the annexes to the present report because they have committed grave violations against children. Engaging with that group of actors is inherently challenging, given their variety, number and often changing nature. The emergence of extremist groups has compounded the challenge. Notwithstanding those limitations, the United Nations has sustained dialogue with armed groups in several situations of conflict during the period under review with the aim of ending and preventing violations, negotiating the separation of children and facilitating their reintegration. As a result of that engagement, the leadership of a number of armed groups have issued command orders to prohibit and sanction child recruitment and use and other grave violations against children.

18. Engaging with armed groups requires a case-by-case approach. My Special Representative has utilized engagements with mediators, special envoys and regional organizations to integrate the protection of children into peacemaking initiatives, such as the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities in the Central African Republic, which was signed in Brazzaville in July by parties to the conflict in the country. This approach has contributed to gaining commitments from a number of non-State actors to end the recruitment and use of children and prevent other grave violations throughout the reporting period.

19. However, the nature of many armed groups listed in the annexes to the present report, combined with limitations on the access of the United Nations, presents challenges for monitoring commitments. While it is commendable when an armed group pledges to better protect children, such commitments need to be translated into concrete and verifiable actions that make a difference in children's lives.

20. With child protection partners in the field, my Special Representative will continue to identify opportunities to engage in dialogue with armed groups, obtain concrete commitments and sign action plans. The sustained and complementary use of multiple tools is needed to accelerate progress in compliance by armed groups with international child protection standards. In order for those tools to be effective, Member States should allow independent access to the United Nations in order to facilitate monitoring and reporting.

E. “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign

21. In March, my Special Representative and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers” to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by government security forces by the end of 2016. The campaign generated wide support from Member States, United Nations and civil society partners and provided opportunities for the countries involved to have an exchange on experiences and best practices. In the campaign's first year, progress was steady. Six of the seven countries concerned — Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen — have signed or recommitted to action plans. I encourage the Sudan to sign an action plan with the United Nations.

22. A first country, Chad, fully complied with the measures detailed in its action plan, and its armed forces were delisted from the annexes to the present report in 2014. Other Governments have enacted laws to criminalize underage recruitment, released children from army ranks, conducted national awareness campaigns, and developed and implemented age-assessment mechanisms.

23. Throughout the coming year, my Special Representative will continue to reach out to Member States concerned with the campaign, the international community, regional organizations and all relevant partners to mobilize political, technical and financial support to address challenges faced by countries in the implementation of their action plan. This is necessary in order to put in place mechanisms strong enough to safeguard the progress accomplished to protect children from recruitment if a new crisis strikes. In the campaign's second year, United Nations efforts and advocacy will be directed to encourage all countries concerned with the campaign that have not yet done so to criminalize and prosecute the recruitment and use of children. Accountability remains far too rare, even in countries that have criminalized the recruitment of children.

24. Putting in place strong age-assessment procedures for troop screening and recruitment is another challenge faced by most countries involved in the campaign. It is an essential, yet often difficult, step to execute accurately, especially in countries lacking well-established national birth registration systems.

25. The release of children found in the ranks of national security forces is an essential step, and must be followed by adequate and properly resourced reintegration services that also take into account the particular needs of girls. Resources must be available for community-based programmes that provide psychosocial assistance and help children build their future through educational and vocational opportunities.

III. Information on grave violations committed against children during armed conflict and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent violations against children

A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

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Israel and State of Palestine

79. In 2014, the security situation significantly deteriorated in the State of Palestine with another escalation of hostilities in Gaza and a significant increase of tensions throughout the West Bank, with devastating impacts for children. Palestinian and Israeli children continued to be affected by the prevailing situation of military occupation, conflict and closure.

80. The reporting period saw a dramatic increase in the number of children killed and injured, especially in Gaza. At least 561 children (557 Palestinian; 4 Israeli) were killed and 4,271 injured (4,249 Palestinian; 22 Israeli).

81. In the West Bank, 13 Palestinian boys, aged 11 to 17 years, were killed. Twelve were killed by Israeli security forces live ammunition (11) and “sponge round” bullets (1) during demonstrations and military search and arrest operations, and one boy was killed by settlers. On 15 May, two Palestinian boys, aged 16 and 17 years, respectively, were shot and killed with live ammunition during clashes with Israeli soldiers near Beituniya checkpoint. Reports indicate that the children killed by the Israeli security forces did not appear to have posed a lethal threat. On 19 March, a 14-year-old boy was fatally shot by the Israel security forces when crossing the West Bank Barrier. In another example, a ten-year-old Palestinian boy was fatally shot in the back with live ammunition by the Israeli security forces in Al-Fawwar camp. The Government of Israel reports that investigations were or are being carried out on these cases.

82. On 13 June, three Israeli youths, two of whom were 16-year-old children, were abducted, and on 30 June, their bodies were found near Halhul in northern Hebron. The Government of Israel reported that three Hamas members were identified as suspects, two of whom were killed during a fire fight with the Israeli security forces. It was also reported that hundreds of Palestinians were arrested in the West Bank during large search operations carried out by the Israeli security forces between 13 and 30 June. On 2 July, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy was abducted in Shu'fat and burned alive in apparent retaliation for the kidnapping and killing of the Israeli youths. Three Israeli civilians, two of them under the age of 18 years, were arrested and charged.

83. Of the 1,218 children injured in the West Bank, more than half were under the age of 12 and 91 per cent were injured during confrontations in Hebron and

East Jerusalem, with 231 of them hit by live ammunition and 530 by rubber-coated bullets.

84. Violence committed by Israeli settlers, and related incidents involving the Israeli security forces, remained high, resulting in the injury of 63 Palestinian children. For example, on 18 April, a group of settlers shielded by the Israeli security forces reportedly attacked the Urif Secondary School for Boys near Nablus, which resulted in the injury of 12 students from stones, bullets and a gas canister. The school was attacked in four instances, reportedly by Israelis living in the Yizhar settlement.

85. Sixteen Israeli children, (14 boys and 2 girls) were injured in the West Bank as a result of stones and Molotov cocktail thrown and shots fired at vehicles by Palestinians.

86. In Gaza, civilians, including children, have borne the brunt of the third major military offensive in Gaza in six years, namely, "Operation Protective Edge". In Gaza, in the 50-day period between 8 July and 26 August, at least 540 Palestinian children were killed (340 boys and 200 girls between the ages of 1 week and 17 years, with almost 70 per cent of that number being younger than 12 years). The number of child casualties exceeds the combined number of Palestinian children killed during the two previous escalations. Hundreds of homes, some of which belonged to alleged members of armed groups, were directly hit by Israeli airstrikes. The Israeli bombardments resulted in the destruction of or severe damage to residential properties, schools and hospitals, causing civilian deaths and injuries. This is in addition to reports of Palestinian civilians and civilian objects being directly hit in circumstances where there was allegedly no rocket fire or armed group activity in the vicinity. This raises serious concern over the observance of the rules of international humanitarian law concerning the conduct of hostilities, including the principles of distinction, precaution and proportionality.

87. On average, between 8 July and 26 August, more than 10 children were killed daily in Gaza. More than 80 per cent of them were killed between 17 July and 5 August during the ground incursion by the Israeli security forces. At least 13 children in Gaza were reportedly killed as a result of rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups towards Israel that fell inside Gaza.

88. At least 2,955 Palestinian children were injured in Gaza. Preliminary estimates indicate that up to 1,000 of them will be permanently disabled. Apart from the July-August Israeli military operation, another 76 children were injured.

89. On 16 July, four children, 9 to 11 years of age, were killed on a beach in Gaza City. According to eye witnesses and video footage, one child hid in an empty building and was killed by an air strike. The other three children were hit by a shell fired from the sea, which killed them and injured two others. No military targets could be identified in the apparently calm area and no rockets had been fired towards Israel from that location at that time.

90. On 20 July, an Israeli air strike hit a residential building in Bani Suhaila, killing 25 family members, including 19 children and 3 pregnant women. Surviving family members testified that they had received no prior warning from the Israeli security forces. The Military Advocate General opened a criminal investigation.

91. Palestinian children were also killed in drone strikes. On 10 July, a five-year-old boy was hit by a missile fired by a drone in Deir Al Balah. On 23 July, a drone killed a nine-year-old boy seeking shelter in Beit Lahiya. At the time of the attacks, there were no reports of military activity near the homes.

92. The indiscriminate firing of rockets by Palestinian armed groups from populated areas in Gaza towards Israeli population centres endangered both the civilian population in Israel and the Palestinian civilians in Gaza. This raises concern over the observance of the rules of international humanitarian law on the conduct of hostilities, particularly the principles of distinction and precaution. On 22 August, a four-year-old Israeli boy was killed by mortar shelling in Sha'ar Haneggev region. At least six Israeli children between 3 months and 17 years of age were reportedly gravely injured as a result of rocket fire from Gaza. In addition, 159 children were injured on the way to shelters, 33 were injured by building debris, and 18 were injured in traffic incidents after the activation of warning sirens. In addition, on 22 October, a three-month-old Israeli baby, among others, was killed when a Palestinian man deliberately drove his car into a light rail train station in East Jerusalem.

93. Allegations of nine instances of child recruitment and use by Palestinian armed groups, including by the Al-Qassam Brigades, were reported. The following five cases were verified: on 21 July, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy was injured and captured during an ambush by the Al-Qassam Brigades on Israeli forces near Kibbutz Nir Am/Erez. Two boys aged 17 years were killed in targeted attacks by Israeli drone strikes in Jabaliya and Khan Younis on 12 and 14 July, both reportedly associated with Palestinian armed groups. On 22 July, a 16-year-old Palestinian boy, reportedly recruited by the Al-Qassam Brigades, disappeared and his family was informed of his death on 26 July. A video shows the boy giving his last statement, including his full name. On 2 August, a 17-year-old boy who was reportedly used by the Al-Qassam Brigades, was killed in the shelling of his home by Israeli security forces. A video uploaded by Al-Qassam Brigades shows him undergoing military training and giving his last testament.

94. On 23 July, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was taken from his home near Khan Younis by the Israeli security forces and forced at gunpoint to search for tunnels. The boy reported being interrogated, abused and used to extract information about Hamas members.

95. Palestinian children continued to be arrested and detained by the Israeli security forces and prosecuted in juvenile military courts. According to the Israeli Prison Service, 151 children between 14 and 17 years of age were in Israeli military detention for alleged security violations at the end of December. A monthly average of 188 children were in Israeli military custody.

96. The United Nations obtained the affidavits of 122 Palestinian children from the West Bank, who had been detained by the Israeli security forces, in which they stated that they had been subjected to ill-treatment, such as beatings, being hit with sticks, being blindfolded, being kicked and being subjected to verbal abuse and threats of sexual violence. At least 700 children were arrested in East Jerusalem, 70 of whom were under the age of 13 years. The United Nations received 18 affidavits from Palestinian children reporting ill-treatment by the Israeli police and the border police.

97. Since February, IDF Central Command for the West Bank have implemented a pilot summons procedure to halt the practice of night arrests and tackle some of the protection issues. There are concerns regarding the delivery of summonses at night, arrests following appearance at police stations and reports of violations during the interrogation process.

98. In Gaza, between 8 July and 26 August, at least 262 schools were damaged in Israeli air strikes. Three public schools were completely destroyed and at least 23 were severely damaged. In addition, 274 kindergartens were damaged.

99. Of the 83 school buildings of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that were damaged owing to Israeli airstrikes and shelling nearby, 7 being used as shelters were hit either directly or by air strikes or shelling, resulting in the death of at least 42 persons, including 16 children, and in the injury of about 230 persons. In May, the United Nations shared a list of its facilities with the Government of Israel, which was further discussed with government entities in July. During hostilities in July and August, UNRWA provided the Israeli authorities with real-time information identifying installations that were being used as designated emergency shelters and places of temporary refuge. Despite such information, on 24 July, the UNRWA Beit Hanoun Elementary Coed A and D school, which at the time was sheltering some 450 internally displaced persons, was hit by IDF mortar fire, resulting in the death of at least 12 persons, including 6 children, and in the injury of more than 90 others. The location of the school had been provided to Israeli authorities by United Nations staff on 12 separate occasions over the seven days leading up to the incident, including the day of the incident itself. Intense military activity was reported in the vicinity of the school prior to, but not at the time of, the incident. IDF launched a criminal investigation.

100. On 30 July, artillery projectiles struck the UNRWA Jabalia Elementary Girls A and B School, killing at least 17 persons, including one United Nations staff member, and injuring 99 persons sheltering inside. The school's coordinates had been formally conveyed to the Israeli authorities on at least 28 occasions over a 14-day span, including the night before the incident.

101. On 25 August, two Government schools were attacked and destroyed by air strikes. In addition to the July and August incidents, seven instances of attacks on schools were reported throughout the rest of the year.

102. During its routine inspections, UNRWA discovered that weapons or weapons components had been placed by Palestinian armed elements in three vacant UNRWA schools in Gaza.

103. In the West Bank, in 21 cases, the Israeli security force entered and used schools. On five occasions in the West Bank, UNRWA school premises were entered without the permission of the United Nations.

104. On 10 November, the Secretary-General decided to establish a United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into ten incidents in which death or injury occurred and damage was done to, or weaponry was found at, United Nations facilities during the conflict.

105. Between 8 July and 26 August, 17 of the 32 hospitals in Gaza were damaged by Israeli air strikes or shelling. One hospital and 58 primary health clinics were destroyed. For instance, on 21 July, Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital was directly hit numerous times, killing three persons and injuring 40. Reportedly, no warning of the attack was given. The Israeli security forces claimed that the target was a cache of missiles in the hospital's immediate vicinity. That attack raises concerns about observance of the special protection accorded to hospitals under international law.

106. Three hits on schools were recorded in Israel by rockets fired from Gaza by Palestinian armed groups, resulting in damage to the school facilities, with no fatalities.

107. The blockade of Gaza since June 2007 continued to take a heavy toll on humanitarian assistance for more than 80 per cent of the families in Gaza. It has impacted the provision of health services, which suffered from a lack of adequate equipment, instruments and essential medicine. The Erez checkpoint with Israel and the Rafah crossing with Egypt, serving 1.7 million people, remain the only two humanitarian access points.

108. The Military Advocate General requested the IDF fact-finding and assessment mechanism to examine a number of “exceptional incidents” that occurred during the Gaza crisis. As at April 2015, the Military Advocate General had conducted an initial examination of more than 100 incidents and opened criminal investigations for 13. Since the focus of the Mechanism is on “exceptional incidents”, concerns remain over its not addressing failures to ensure respect for international law at the policy level and the State’s duty to investigate all incidents, policies or tactics that may violate international law.

109. The Israeli and the Palestinian authorities have an obligation to ensure that allegations of violations of international humanitarian and human rights law are promptly, effectively, independently, and impartially investigated, and that those responsible are brought to justice.

110. Israel has repeatedly claimed that its military operation in Gaza was in response to rocket fire into Israel and that it was conducted in full compliance with its international obligations. However, I am deeply alarmed at the extent of grave violations suffered by children as a result of Israeli military operations in 2014. The unprecedented and unacceptable scale of the impact on children in 2014 raises grave concerns about Israel’s compliance with international humanitarian law, notably the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attack, and respect for international human rights law, particularly in relation to excessive use of force. It is of particular concern that “Operation Protective Edge” was the third major Israeli military operation in Gaza within six years. The cumulative impact on children and the civilian population in general of these military operations, and the ongoing military occupation in the State of Palestine, is devastating. As indicated earlier in the present report, the number of Palestinian children killed (557) is the third highest in 2014, after the number of children killed in (a) Afghanistan (710) and (b) Iraq (679), and before the number of children killed in (c) Syrian Arab Republic (368) and (d) Darfur (197). The number of schools damaged or destroyed in the State of Palestine (at least 543) was the highest recorded number of all situations in 2014.

111. I urge Israel to take concrete and immediate steps, including by reviewing existing policies and practices, to protect children, to prevent the killing and maiming of children, and to respect the special protections afforded to schools and hospitals. An essential measure in that regard is ensuring accountability for perpetrators of alleged violations. I further urge Israel to engage in a dialogue with my Special Representative and the United Nations to ensure that there is no recurrence in grave violations against children.

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IV. Recommendations

262. I am deeply concerned at the increase of grave violations outlined in the present report and call upon all parties to immediately end, and take all measures to prevent, grave violations against children.

263. Accountability is crucial to preventing grave violations, and I urge Member States to place it at the core of national and international responses to violations.

264. I call upon Member States to ensure that their response to threats to peace and security are conducted in full compliance with international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights law. Member States should ensure that responses include specific mitigating measures for the protection of children.

265. I strongly urge all parties listed in the annexes to the present report who have not yet done so to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to agree on and implement measures to end grave violations and assist victims.

266. I call upon Member States to allow independent access to the United Nations for the purposes of monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children.

267. I also call upon Member States to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups for dialogue and follow-up on action plans in order to bring an end to violations. Such dialogue does not prejudice the political or legal status of those non-State armed groups.

268. I urge Member States to consider alternatives to the deprivation of liberty or prosecution of children for their alleged or actual association with armed groups or as part of counter-terrorism measures. At a minimum, Member States should ensure that procedures or trials are consistent with international juvenile justice standards and the principle of the best interests of the child.

269. The recruitment and use of children by extremist groups pose new challenges with regard to their protection, rehabilitation and reintegration. I encourage Member States to highlight and address the need for prevention and appropriate measures to rehabilitate those children recruited and used, including education programmes and vocational training, in compliance with the principle of the best interest of the child and respecting the child’s primary status as a victim.

270. I encourage Member States, regional organizations, international mediators and special envoys to continue including child protection provisions in peace negotiations and agreements.

271. I welcome the leadership and contribution of regional and subregional organizations in the protection of children. I call upon regional and subregional organizations to continue integrating child protection considerations in their policies, planning of peace support operations, training of personnel and conduct of operations.

272. I call upon all parties to respect the civilian character of schools and cease attacks against them and attacks and threats of attacks against students and teachers.

273. I call upon the Council to expand the tools available to child protection actors to gather information and report on the abduction of children, including through adding abductions as a trigger violation for listing in the annexes of the present report.

274. I also call upon the Council to continue to support the children and armed conflict agenda by strengthening provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions. I also welcome and encourage the inclusion of grave violations against children as criteria for sanctions in Security Council committees.

275. I welcome the engagement and progress made so far regarding the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign. I call upon all Member States to continue to mobilize political and financial support to ensure that progress achieved is institutionalized and durable.

276. I again urge all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols.

V. Observations

277. The present report clearly lays out the egregious violations to which children were subject during the reporting period in countries affected by conflict. In several situations, in particular the Central African Republic, Iraq, Israel/State of Palestine, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, children were affected to a degree which is an affront to our common humanity. The facts as presented in the body of the present report speak for themselves and should shock our collective conscience.

278. I am more convinced than ever that the United Nations and Member States must continue to give the protection of children affected by armed conflict the highest priority. Their plight should be the primary reason not to start conflicts and the primary reason to end them.

279. Determining responsibility for the killing and maiming and other grave violations against children raises the question of intention, although what is relevant is respect for international legal obligations and the impact on children. The case has been made by some parties to conflict that targeting children was never a policy or practice and that it was merely the unintended consequence of military action. In 2015, however, the case has been made in such a way that the integrity of the listing mechanism established by the Security Council to protect children has been threatened. This is deplorable.

280. I would like to put all parties to conflict on notice that those that engage in military action resulting in numerous grave violations against children will, regardless of intent, find themselves under continued scrutiny by the United Nations, including in future reports relating to children and armed conflict. Member States must re-examine existing policies and practices to stop and prevent grave violations against children. Member States must also be held to account and they, in turn, must hold perpetrators accountable.

281. I call upon all Member States not to lose sight of the vital objective at stake here: protecting children — a moral imperative and a legal obligation. Member States therefore must ensure that all avenues to protect children affected by armed conflict are identified and pursued. I urge all the parties to conflict identified in the report to work with my Special Representative to prevent future grave violations against children.

VI. Lists in the annexes to the present report

282. There are no new parties listed in the report. In the Central African Republic, local defence militias known as the anti-Balaka, already listed for recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children, are now listed for sexual violence against children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the Allied

Democratic Forces (ADF), who were already included in annex I for the recruitment and use of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals, are listed for the killing and maiming of children. In Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)/A1-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I) are now listed for sexual violence against children under the name Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in addition to the three other listed violations. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham (ISIS) are further listed for sexual violence against children and attacks on schools and hospitals, also under the name ISIL. In Nigeria, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), also known as Boko Haram, is now additionally listed for the recruitment and use of children, having been previously listed for killing and maiming and sexual violence against children.

283. Other changes in the list resulted from the fragmentation of previously listed parties or other changes in the landscape of armed conflict in respective situations. In the Central African Republic, the situation remains complex and fluid. Some factions listed in 2014 under the "ex-Seleka coalition and associated armed groups" disappeared, while others emerged. For the current listing, the umbrella "ex-Seleka coalition and associated armed groups" is used. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Jhabat Al-Nusra is now listed as Al-Nusra Front (ANF).

284. In a unilateral declaration made in Nairobi on 12 December 2013, the M23 announced the end of its rebellion and its transformation into a political party, and was removed from annex I. In relation to Yemen, given the constant changing nature of the situation, no changes have been made to the annexes from the previous report, but changes may be made in future years.

Annex I

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council*

Parties in Afghanistan

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police^{a,o}
2. Haqqani Network^{a,b}
3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar^{a,b}
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network^{a,b,d}

Parties in the Central African region (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan)

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)^{a,b,c}

Parties in the Central African Republic

1. Ex-Seleka coalition and associated armed groups^{a,b,c,d}
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-Balaka^{a,b,c}

Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)^{a,b,d}
2. Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)^{a,c,o}
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLV)^{a,c,d}
4. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPD)^{a,c,d}
5. Mayi Mayi Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) "Colonel Janvier"^a
6. Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine" and former elements of the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)^a
7. Mayi Mayi Simba "Morgan"^{a,c}
8. Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga^a

* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

^aParties that recruit and use children.

^bParties that kill and maim children.

^dParties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. ^dParties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

^oThis party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

9. Nduma Defence Coalition (NDC)/Cheka^{a,b}

10. Mayi Mayi Nyatura^a

Parties in Iraq

1. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)^{a,b,c,d}

Parties in Mali

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA)^{a,c}
2. Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)^{a,c}
3. Ansar Dine^{a,c}

Parties in Myanmar

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)^a
2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)^a
3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA)^a
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council^a
5. Karenni Army (KNPP/KA)^a
6. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)^a
7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces^{a,o}
8. United Wa State Army (UWSA)^a

Parties in Somalia

1. Al Shabaab^{a,b}
2. Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ)^a
3. Somali National Army^{a,b,o}

Parties in South Sudan

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)^{a,b,o}
2. SPLA in Opposition^a
3. White Army^{a,b}

Parties in Sudan

1. Government security forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) and the Sudan Police Forces^a
2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)^a
3. Pro-Government militia^a
4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahida
5. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawia
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)^a

Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. Ahrar al-Sham al-Islami^{a,b}
2. Free Syrian Army (FSA) — affiliated groups^a
3. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and the Shabbiha militia^{b,c,d}
4. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (iSiP)^{a,b,c,d}
5. al-Nusra Front (Jhabat Al-Nusra)^{a,b}
6. People Protection Units (YPG)^a

Parties in Yemen

1. Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah^a
2. Al-Qaida in the Arab Peninsula (AQIP)/Ansar al-Sharia^a
3. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the First Armoured Division, the Military Police, the special security forces and Republican Guards^{a,o}
4. Pro-Government militias, including the Salafists and Popular Committees^a

Annex II

List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children, commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, or engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations *

Parties in Colombia

1. Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN)^a
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP)^a

Parties in Nigeria

1. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad also known as Boko Haram^{a,b,d}

Parties in the Philippines

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)^a
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)^a
3. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)^{a,o}
4. New People's Army (NPA)^a

*The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

a Parties that recruit and use children.

b Parties that kill and maim children.

c Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

d Parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

o This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
