



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
6 February 2003

**Fifty-seventh session**  
Agenda item 105

## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/57/552)]

### **57/188. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian children**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling also* the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s adopted by the World Summit for Children, held in New York on 29 and 30 September 1990,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling further* the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session,<sup>3</sup>

*Concerned* that the Palestinian children under Israeli occupation remain deprived of many basic rights under the Convention,

*Concerned also* about the recent grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of the continuing Israeli assaults and sieges on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, resulting in the dire humanitarian crisis,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence resulting in extensive loss of human life and injuries, including among Palestinian children,

*Deeply concerned* about the consequences, including psychological consequences, of the Israeli military actions for the present and future well-being of Palestinian children,

1. *Stresses* the urgent need for Palestinian children to live a normal life, free from foreign occupation, destruction and fear, in their own State;

2. *Demands*, in the meantime, that Israel, the occupying Power, respect relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup> and comply fully

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 44/25, annex.

<sup>2</sup> A/45/625, annex.

<sup>3</sup> See resolution S-27/2, annex.

with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>4</sup> in order to ensure the well-being and protection of Palestinian children and their families;

3. *Calls upon* the international community to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian children and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions.

*77th plenary meeting  
18 December 2002*

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
26 February 2004

**Fifty-eighth session**  
Agenda item 113

## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 22 December 2003

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/58/504)]

### **58/155. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian children**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling also* the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s, adopted by the World Summit for Children, held in New York on 29 and 30 September 1990,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling further* the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session,<sup>3</sup>

*Concerned* that the Palestinian children under Israeli occupation remain deprived of many basic rights under the Convention,

*Concerned also* about the continued grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of the continuing Israeli assaults and sieges on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, resulting in the dire humanitarian crisis,

*Emphasizing* the importance of the safety and well-being of all children in the whole Middle East region,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, resulting in extensive loss of human life and injuries, including among Palestinian children,

*Deeply concerned* about the severe consequences, including psychological consequences, of the Israeli military actions for the present and future well-being of Palestinian children,

1. *Stresses* the urgent need for Palestinian children to live a normal life free from foreign occupation, destruction and fear in their own State;

<sup>1</sup> Resolution 44/25, annex.

<sup>2</sup> A/45/625, annex.

<sup>3</sup> See resolution S-27/2, annex.

2. *Demands*, in the meanwhile, that Israel, the occupying Power, respect relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup> and comply fully with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>4</sup> in order to ensure the well-being and protection of Palestinian children and their families;

3. *Calls upon* the international community to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian children and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions.

*77th plenary meeting  
22 December 2003*

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
24 February 2005

**Fifty-ninth session**  
Agenda item 101

## Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2004

[on the report of the Third Committee (A/59/499)]

### **59/173. The situation of and assistance to Palestinian children**

*The General Assembly,*

*Recalling* the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>1</sup>

*Bearing in mind* the conclusion by the International Court of Justice, in its advisory opinion of 9 July 2004,<sup>2</sup> that the Convention on the Rights of the Child is applicable within the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

*Recalling* the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s adopted by the World Summit for Children, held in New York on 29 and 30 September 1990,<sup>3</sup>

*Recalling also* the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-seventh special session,<sup>4</sup>

*Recalling further* the relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,<sup>5</sup>

*Noting with grave concern* that the Palestinian children under Israeli occupation remain deprived of many basic rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

*Concerned* about the continued grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, the severely detrimental impact of the continuing Israeli assaults and sieges on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, and the continuing dire humanitarian crisis on the safety and well-being of Palestinian children,

*Concerned also* about the severely detrimental impact being caused by the unlawful construction of the wall by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, and its associated

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

<sup>2</sup> See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

<sup>3</sup> A/45/625, annex.

<sup>4</sup> See resolution S-27/2, annex.

<sup>5</sup> See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

regime, on the socio-economic conditions of Palestinian children and their families and on the enjoyment by Palestinian children of their right to education, to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, to health and to be free from hunger, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

*Emphasizing* the importance of the safety and well-being of all children in the whole Middle East region,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, resulting in extensive loss of human life and injuries, including among Palestinian children,

*Deeply concerned* about the negative consequences, including psychological consequences, of the Israeli military actions for the present and future well-being of Palestinian children,

1. *Stresses* the urgent need for Palestinian children to live a normal life free from foreign occupation, destruction and fear in their own State;

2. *Demands*, in the meanwhile, that Israel, the occupying Power, respect relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>1</sup> and comply fully with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>6</sup> in order to ensure the well-being and protection of Palestinian children and their families;

3. *Calls upon* the international community to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian children and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions.

*74th plenary meeting  
20 December 2004*

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

the United Nations Decade for Women have not yet been achieved;

5. *Considers* that the activities of the world community and of the United Nations should continue beyond the end of the United Nations Decade for Women and should be directed towards equal treatment for women and their full integration in development under conditions of peace.

*19th plenary meeting  
24 May 1984*

#### **1984/17. Women under apartheid**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Taking note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and children living under racist minority régimes and in the occupied Arab territories and other occupied territories,<sup>28</sup>

*Bearing in mind* the conclusions of the International Conference on Women and *Apartheid*, held at Brussels from 17 to 19 May 1982, and of the Declaration adopted by the Conference,<sup>29</sup>

*Noting* the wide observance of 9 August annually as the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/172 K of 17 December 1981,

1. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Special Committee against *Apartheid* and its Task Force on Women and Children for giving special attention to the plight of women and children under *apartheid*, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 36/172 K;

2. *Expresses its appreciation* to the International Committee of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women in South Africa and Namibia for undertaking activities in support of women and children living under *apartheid*, and urges the Committee to exert greater efforts in support of women and children living under *apartheid*;

3. *Urges* all Governments, United Nations bodies, international, regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, women's and anti-*apartheid* groups and other concerned groups to give the highest priority to measures of assistance to women in South Africa and Namibia until the end of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace and beyond;

4. *Invites* the Special Committee against *Apartheid* and its Task Force on Women and Children to continue their activities in promoting the widest possible dissemination of information concerning women and children living under *apartheid*;

5. *Appeals* to all Governments, United Nations bodies, international, regional, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, women's and anti-*apartheid* groups and other concerned groups to support the various projects of the national liberation movements and front-line States designed to assist

<sup>28</sup> E/CN.6/1984/10.

<sup>29</sup> See A/37/261-S/15150.

refugee women and children from South Africa and Namibia;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-first session a preliminary report on measures of assistance provided to women inside South Africa and Namibia and to women from South Africa and Namibia who have become refugees as the result of the practice of *apartheid*;

7. *Calls upon* all women's organizations to support the women of Namibia in their efforts to attain independence, in accordance with Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978.

*19th plenary meeting  
24 May 1984*

#### **1984/18. Situation of Palestinian women within and outside the occupied Arab territories**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Deeply concerned* about the prevailing living conditions of Palestinian women within and outside the occupied Arab territories,

*Recognizing* that the mass uprooting of Palestinian women from their homeland seriously affects their participation and integration in the development process,

*Noting* that no comprehensive study relating to the status of Palestinian women within and outside the occupied Arab territories has been conducted in the United Nations system since the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held at Copenhagen from 14 to 30 July 1980.

*Recalling* the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other appropriate United Nations organizations,

*Taking note* of chapter II of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories,<sup>30</sup> submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirtieth session,

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit an updated version of that report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-first session;

2. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories and to submit it to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-second session;

3. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to submit an interim report on the preparation of that study to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-first session;

4. *Invites* all Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies to extend all necessary assistance to the Secretary-General in this regard.

*19th plenary meeting  
24 May 1984*

<sup>30</sup> E/CN.6/1984/10.

4. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to take adequate steps to give wide publicity to the Declaration and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

*19th plenary meeting  
23 May 1986*

#### 1986/21. Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Deeply concerned* about the prevailing living conditions of Palestinian women,

*Recalling* the relevant provisions of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>34</sup>

*Taking note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the preparation of a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories,<sup>37</sup>

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in preparing the comprehensive report, to focus on the identification of the main humanitarian needs of Palestinian women;

2. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women at its 1988 session to propose concrete measures of assistance to Palestinian women on the basis of the conclusions of that report;

3. *Calls upon* United Nations organs and organizations, as well as national, regional and international women's organizations, to extend their assistance to Palestinian women;

4. *Emphasizes* that nothing less than the realization of their inalienable rights will put an end to the sufferings of Palestinian women.

*19th plenary meeting  
23 May 1986*

#### 1986/22. Women and children under apartheid

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Alarmed* by the stepped-up repression and indiscriminate killing, maiming and detention of opponents of the apartheid system,

*Noting* the concern of women throughout the world about the continuing degradation and abuse to which African women and children are daily subjected by the white minority régime of South Africa,

*Recalling* that that concern was expressed in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>34</sup> which also contain proposals for various forms of assistance to be rendered to women and children inside South Africa and to those who have become refugees,

*Recognizing* that the inhuman exploitation and dispossession of the African people by the white minority régime is directly responsible for the appalling conditions under which African women and children live,

*Further recognizing* that the equality and emancipation of African women cannot be achieved without the success of the struggle for national liberation and self-determination of the indigenous people and the total destruction of the racist régime of South Africa,

<sup>37</sup>E/CN.6/1986/6.

1. *Condemns unequivocally* the South African régime for the imposition of the state of emergency, the forcible separation of black families and the detention and imprisonment of women and children;

2. *Demands* the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, who increasingly include women and children;

3. *Commends* the tenacity and bravery of those women inside South Africa and outside who have resisted oppression, who have been detained, tortured and killed, whose husbands, children and relatives have been detained, tortured and killed and who, despite this, have remained steadfast in their opposition to the racist régime;

4. *Acknowledges* the efforts of those Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals that have campaigned for and applied sanctions against the racist régime;

5. *Calls upon* those countries that support or collaborate with the racist régime to desist from such support or collaboration in the political, military, economic and nuclear spheres;

6. *Further calls upon* Governments, in view of the deterioration of the situation in South Africa, as a matter of urgency, to impose comprehensive sanctions in accordance with Security Council resolutions and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

7. *Urges* Member States and United Nations organizations to give effect forthwith, in consultation with the liberation movements, to the Forward-looking Strategies that deal with women and children under apartheid; particular attention should be given to education, health, vocational training and employment opportunities and the strengthening of the women's sections of the liberation movements.

*19th plenary meeting  
23 May 1986*

#### 1986/23. Namibia

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Gravely concerned* by the delay in the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978 concerning the withdrawal of South Africa's illegal administration from Namibia and the holding of elections under the supervision of the United Nations,

*Deeply concerned* by the perpetual suffering of Namibian women under the illegal occupation of the racist South African régime backed by the allies, and further concerned by the utilization of Namibian territory as a springboard for attacking and destabilizing neighbouring States,

1. *Condemns*, in no uncertain terms, the racist régime of South Africa for its installation of a so-called interim Government at Windhoek;

2. *Denounces* the forceful conscription of Namibian men and women between the ages of 17 and 55 years into the racist army in order to consolidate and facilitate widespread repression throughout the country;

3. *Rejects* South Africa's insistence on linking the independence of Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola;

4. *Demands* that South Africa refrain from using Namibia as a base to infiltrate Angola and other independent neighbouring countries;



Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-third session.

15th plenary meeting  
26 May 1988

#### 1988/24. Women and children in Namibia

*The Economic and Social Council,*

Recalling its resolution 1986/23 of 23 May 1986,

Recalling also the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>30</sup> in particular paragraph 259, which calls for the speedy and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978 concerning the independence of Namibia,

Gravely concerned about the delay in the implementation of Security Council resolution 435 (1978) regarding the withdrawal of South Africa's illegal administration from Namibia and the holding of elections under the supervision of the United Nations,

Deeply concerned about the perpetual suffering of Namibian women under the illegal occupation of the racist South African régime, and further concerned about the use of Namibian territory as a springboard for attacking and destabilizing neighbouring States,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on new developments concerning the situation of women under *apartheid* in South Africa and Namibia and measures of assistance to women from South Africa and Namibia who have become refugees as a result of the practice of *apartheid*,<sup>45</sup>

1. *Condemns*, in no uncertain terms, the racist régime of South Africa for its installation of a so-called interim Government at Windhoek;

2. *Denounces* the forcible conscription of Namibian men and women between the ages of 17 and 55 years into the racist army, as well as the detention of children, practices which consolidate and facilitate widespread repression throughout the country;

3. *Rejects* South Africa's insistence on linking the independence of Namibia to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola;

4. *Demands* the release of all political prisoners, among whom are included women and children, and the lifting of the state of emergency imposed by South Africa for more than twelve years;

5. *Demands* that South Africa refrain from using Namibia as a base from which to infiltrate Angola and other independent neighbouring countries;

6. *Calls upon* all women of the world to support and assist all bodies struggling to put an end to colonialism in Namibia;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-third session a comprehensive report on monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women with regard to women and children in Namibia.

15th plenary meeting  
26 May 1988

#### 1988/25. Situation of Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories,<sup>46</sup>

Mindful of the humanitarian principles and provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,<sup>47</sup>

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>30</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,

Noting with deep concern the escalating Israeli oppression and ill-treatment of the Palestinian people, including women and children in the occupied Palestinian territories,

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-third session;

2. *Strongly condemns* the application of an "iron-fist" policy by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinian women and their families in the occupied Palestinian territories;

3. *Reaffirms* that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War is applicable to territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General, as a matter of urgency, to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the situation of Palestinian women and children, in the light of the recent tragic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories;

5. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor the implementation of the provisions of paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women concerning assistance to Palestinian women inside and outside the occupied territories;

6. *Reaffirms* that Palestinian women, as part of a nation whose people are prevented from exercising their basic human and political rights, cannot participate in the attainment of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, namely equality, development and peace, without the realization of their inalienable right to return to their homes, their right to self-determination and their right to establish an independent State in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

15th plenary meeting  
26 May 1988

#### 1988/26. Elimination of discrimination against women in accordance with the aims of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

<sup>46</sup> E/CN.6/1988/8 and Corr.1.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

### 1989/33. Women and children under *apartheid*

*The Economic and Social Council,*

Recalling its resolution 1988/23 of 26 May 1988.

Noting the concern of women throughout the world about the continuing degradation and abuse to which African women and children are subjected daily by the white minority régime of South Africa.

Recalling that this concern was expressed in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>59</sup> which also contain proposals for various forms of assistance to be rendered to women and children inside South Africa and to those who have become refugees,

Recognizing that the inhuman exploitation and dispossession of the African people by the white minority régime is directly responsible for the appalling conditions in which African women and children live,

Also recognizing that the equality of women cannot be achieved without the success of the struggle for national liberation and self-determination of the people of South Africa against the racist régime of Pretoria,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General on new developments concerning the situation of women under *apartheid* in South Africa and Namibia and measures of assistance to women in South Africa and Namibia,<sup>61</sup>

1. Commends the tenacity and bravery of those women both inside and outside South Africa who have resisted oppression, who have been detained, tortured or killed, and of those whose husbands, children and relatives have been detained, tortured or killed and who, despite this, have remained steadfast in their opposition to the racist régime;

2. Acknowledges the efforts of those Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals that have campaigned for and applied sanctions against the racist régime;

3. Condemns unequivocally the South African régime for the imposition of the state of emergency, the forcible separation of black families, the detention and imprisonment of women and children and the restrictions on non-violent anti-*apartheid* democratic organizations and individuals;

4. Urges the South African régime to accord prisoner-of-war status to captured freedom fighters, in accordance with the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949<sup>62</sup> and the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts (Protocol I), adopted in 1977,<sup>63</sup> to accord all political prisoners sentenced to death, among whom are women, a fair trial based on international legal standards, and to stop the execution of political prisoners;

5. Demands the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, among whom are an increasing number of women and children;

6. Again calls upon Governments, in view of the deterioration of the situation in South Africa, to impose, as a matter of urgency, comprehensive sanctions in accordance with the resolutions of the

Security Council and the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

7. Appeals to all countries to support educational, health and social welfare programmes for women and children under *apartheid*;

8. Also appeals to the international community for increased assistance for women and children refugees in southern Africa;

9. Urges the international community to look into the newly developing situation of refugees and displaced persons, with a view to providing material assistance for them;

10. Urges Member States and United Nations bodies, in consultation with liberation movements, to give effect forthwith, to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies that deal with women and children under *apartheid*, giving particular attention to education, health, vocational training and employment opportunities and to the strengthening of the women's sections of the liberation movements;

11. Requests the Commission on the Status of Women to work closely with women in the liberation movements in order to disseminate information and to ensure a proper assessment of the needs and aspirations of the women and children living under *apartheid*;

12. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session a comprehensive report on the implementation and monitoring of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies in regard to women and children under *apartheid*.

15th plenary meeting  
24 May 1989

### 1989/34. Situation of Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>64</sup>

Mindful of the humanitarian principles and provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,<sup>65</sup>

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>59</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,

Recalling also its resolution 1988/25 of 26 May 1988,

Taking into account the *intifadah* of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories against the Israeli occupation and the oppressive practices of Israel against the Palestinian people, including women and children.

1. Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women, making use of all available information, including United Nations reports, information from Governments, non-governmental organizations and missions undertaken by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to the occupied territories, and reports of meetings and seminars, as appropriate, and to submit the report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session:

<sup>59</sup>E/CN.6/1989/3.

<sup>62</sup>United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, vol. 1125, No. 17512.

<sup>64</sup>E/CN.6/1989/4 and Corr.1.

<sup>65</sup>United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

2. *Requests* the specialized agencies, in sending missions to the occupied Palestinian territories, to include an expert on women's issues to assess the situation of the Palestinian women and to elaborate specific projects of assistance;

3. *Strongly condemns* the continuation of the "iron-fist" policy practiced by Israel, the occupying Power, against Palestinian women and their families in the occupied Palestinian territories;

4. *Reaffirms* that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 is applicable to the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem;

5. *Again requests* the Secretary-General to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children, in the light of the drastic deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular the provisions of paragraph 260 thereof concerning assistance to Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories;

7. *Reaffirms* that Palestinian women, as an integral part of a nation whose people are prevented from exercising their basic human and political rights, cannot fully participate in the attainment of the objectives of the Forward-looking Strategies, namely, equality, development and peace, without the realization of their inalienable right to return to their homes, their right to self-determination and their right to establish an independent State in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

*15th plenary meeting  
24 May 1989*

#### **1989/35. Women and peace in Central America**

##### *The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* that, in adopting the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace recognized that women should participate fully in all efforts to strengthen and maintain international peace and security and to promote international co-operation,<sup>66</sup>

*Recalling also* that the World Conference also recognized that the violence and destabilization in Central America hindered the fulfilment of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, essential for the advancement of women,<sup>67</sup>

*Recalling further* the agreement on "Procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America",<sup>68</sup> signed at the Esquipulas II summit meeting at Guatemala City, on 7 August 1987, by the Presidents of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, and noting the

<sup>66</sup>Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A, para. 240.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., para. 247.

<sup>68</sup>Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-second Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1987, document S/19085, annex.

subsequent meetings of the Presidents in 1988 and February 1989,

*Recognizing* the valuable contribution of the Contradora Group and its Support Group to the process of bringing peace to Central America,

*Recognizing also* the valuable efforts put forth by the Secretary-General and the international community to secure peace and development in Central America,

*Convinced* of the exceptional importance to the peoples of Central America, particularly the women, of the achievement of peace, reconciliation, development and social justice in the region, as well as the recognition of their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.

*Considering* that the General Assembly, in its resolution 42/1 of 7 October 1987, requested the Secretary-General to promote a special plan of co-operation for Central America,

*Desiring* to encourage the active participation of women in the promotion of peace and development in Central America,

1. *Expresses its satisfaction* at the will to achieve peace manifested by the Presidents of the Central American countries in their signing of the agreement on "Procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace in Central America" and at their efforts for the implementation thereof;

2. *Again calls upon* the Presidents of the Central American countries to continue their joint efforts to achieve peace in Central America, particularly the efforts to establish the Central American Parliament, in order to ensure conditions favourable for the attainment in the region of the objectives of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>69</sup> and requests the international community to support those efforts;

3. *Urges* all States to support the peace efforts, fully respecting the principles of self-determination of peoples and non-intervention;

4. *Also urges* the international community to ensure that programmes of technical, economic and financial co-operation for the region take account of the particular needs and interests of women in Central America;

5. *Recommends* to the Secretary-General that the special plan of co-operation for Central America include specific activities supporting the advancement of women in the region;

6. *Exhorts* the Governments of the Central American countries and of the countries of the Contradora Group and its Support Group to encourage and ensure the full participation of women at all levels in the search for peace, pluralism, democracy and overall development in the Central American region;

7. *Urges* national and international, governmental and non-governmental women's organizations to participate in and support actively the processes of democratization, peace and development in Central America.

*15th plenary meeting  
24 May 1989*

Stressing the critical role played by women in the development process, and that women constitute 50 per cent of available human resources,

Noting that the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole for the Preparation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, established by the General Assembly by its resolution 43/182 of 20 December 1988, will elaborate the outline, with a view to finalizing the international development strategy in 1990,

1. *Recommends* that the *Ad Hoc* Committee of the Whole for the Preparation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade identify strategies for ensuring that women's needs and their contribution to the development process are reflected in all aspects of the international development strategy, including human resource development and economic growth;

2. *Also recommends* that the *Ad Hoc* Committee, in finalizing the international development strategy, consider measures to ensure the full and effective participation of women in development, taking into consideration Council resolution 1989/105, paragraph 11, of 27 July 1989, as well as relevant resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session;<sup>15</sup>

3. *Urges* Member States to give special attention to the role of women in development when preparing their contributions to the work of the *Ad Hoc* Committee to finalize the international development strategy and, in this regard, to consult with national machinery and the non-governmental organizations concerned with women in development;

4. *Decides* that the Commission on the Status of Women should monitor the implementation of the international development strategy as it pertains to women and development in the context of its review of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women.

13th plenary meeting  
24 May 1990

#### 1990/11. Situation of Palestinian women

##### *The Economic and Social Council,*

Having considered the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of a mission of experts to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children,<sup>16</sup>

Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>2</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,

Recalling also its resolutions 1988/25 of 26 May 1988 and 1989/34 of 24 May 1989,

Expressing concern at the persistent refusal of Israel to respect the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 5 (E/1990/25)*, chap. I.

<sup>16</sup> E/CN.6/1990/10.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

*Deeply alarmed* at the critical situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory, which is profoundly influenced by the consequences of continued Israeli military occupation,

*Dismayed* at the continuation of the oppressive practices of Israel, including collective punishment, curfews, demolition of houses, closure of schools and universities, confiscation of land and measures that are particularly harmful to the Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory,

*Deeply alarmed* by the practice of Israel of settling new waves of Jewish immigrants in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, which is illegal and contravenes the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention,

1. *Reaffirms* that the basic improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinian women, their advancement, full equality and self-reliance can only be achieved through an end to the occupation and the attainment of their right to return to their homes, their right to self-determination and their right to establish an independent State in accordance with United Nations resolutions;

2. *Reaffirms also* that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to the Palestinian people in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem;

3. *Strongly condemns* the oppressive Israeli measures against the *intifadah* and the consequent suffering experienced by Palestinian women and their families in the occupied Palestinian territory;

4. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260, which concerns assistance to Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the experts continue to monitor and investigate further the situation of Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory, and to ensure that their report is submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session;

6. *Requests* governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, including organizations of the United Nations system, to encourage and assist in existing income-generating activities for Palestinian women and in the creation of new jobs;

7. *Requests* that Palestinian women be assisted in the creation of a women's centre that would provide possibilities for child care, educational discussion, cultural activities, women's solidarity and small-scale production;

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the mission of experts to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic<sup>16</sup> in order to alleviate the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory;

9. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session on the implementation of the recommen-

dations and conclusions contained in the report of the mission of experts, taking into consideration all available information, including reports of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and its expert missions, reports of meetings, as appropriate, and information from Governments and non-governmental organizations.

*13th plenary meeting  
24 May 1990*

**1990/12. World conference on women to be held in 1995**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Bearing in mind* General Assembly resolution 35/10 C of 3 November 1980, on special conferences of the United Nations,

*Recalling* its resolution 1987/20 of 26 May 1987, in which it recommended that world conferences to review and appraise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women be held during the decade of the 1990s, on a date to be determined by the General Assembly not later than 1990, and in 2000,

*Recalling* that the General Assembly, in its resolution 44/77 of 8 December 1989, requested the Commission on the Status of Women to consider at its session in 1990 the question of holding in 1995 a world conference on women, at the lowest possible cost, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its forty-fifth session,

*Bearing in mind* that in its resolution 1987/20 the Council decided that the Commission on the Status of Women would be designated the preparatory body for those world conferences,

*Convinced* that without a major international event by which to focus national attention on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the review and appraisal to take place in 1995 will not be given sufficient priority,

*Reaffirming* the continuing validity of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, including the interrelationship between equality, development and peace, and stressing the need to ensure their full implementation by the year 2000,

1. *Recommends* that a world conference on women be held in 1995;

2. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women, as the preparatory body for the world conference, to include preparations for the conference in its regular work programme during the period 1991-1995 under the item concerning the monitoring of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to include the relevant costs of preparing for and convening the world conference in the programme budget for the bienniums 1992-1993 and 1994-1995, within the respective budgetary limits;

4. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to make proposals on the preparation and convening of the world

conference for submission to the Commission at its thirty-fifth session.

*13th plenary meeting  
24 May 1990*

**1990/13. Women and children under apartheid**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1989/33 of 24 May 1989,

*Noting* the concern of women throughout the world about the continuing degradation and abuse to which African women and children are subjected daily by the white minority régime of South Africa,

*Recalling* that this concern was expressed in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>2</sup> which also contain proposals for various forms of assistance to be rendered to women and children inside South Africa and to those who have become refugees,

*Recognizing* that the inhuman exploitation and dispossession of the African people by the white minority régime is directly responsible for the appalling conditions in which African women and children live,

*Also recognizing* that the equality of women cannot be achieved without the success of the struggle towards a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa,

1. *Commends* the tenacity and bravery of those women both inside and outside South Africa who have resisted oppression, who have been detained, tortured or killed, and of those whose husbands, children and other relatives have been detained, tortured or killed and who, despite this, have remained steadfast in their opposition to the racist régime;

2. *Acknowledges* the efforts of those Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and individuals that have campaigned for and applied sanctions against the racist régime;

3. *Welcomes* recent developments in South Africa, in particular the unbanning of political organizations and the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners;

4. *Demands* the immediate and unconditional release of all other political prisoners and detainees, among whom are many women and children;

5. *Condemns unequivocally* the South African régime for the imposition of the state of emergency, the forcible separation of black families and the detention and imprisonment of women and children;

6. *Urges* the international community not to relax sanctions against South Africa until all the provisions of the Declaration on *Apartheid* and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted by the General Assembly by its resolution S-16/1 of 14 December 1989, and contained in the annex thereto, are met;

7. *Appeals* to all countries to support educational, health and social welfare programmes for women and children under *apartheid*;

8. *Appeals* to the international community for increased assistance for women and children refugees in southern Africa;

*Bearing in mind* the relevant recommendations of the Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders<sup>37</sup> and of the Eighth Congress,<sup>31</sup> as well as the relevant observations of the Seventh Congress,<sup>38</sup>

*Bearing in mind also* the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the General Assembly in resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 and contained in the annex thereto, which guarantees the right of women to equal status with men,

*Noting* that, in its general recommendation No. 12, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that States parties should include in their periodic reports to the Committee information on measures undertaken to protect women against the incidence of all kinds of violence in everyday life occurring within the family, at the workplace or in any other area of social life,<sup>39</sup> and that the Committee had decided at its tenth session to undertake at its eleventh session a study of violence against women,<sup>40</sup>

*Noting*, however, that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not explicitly address violence against women,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to recognize that violence against women must be countered by a wide variety of measures;

2. *Reminds* Member States that violence against women is an issue of equal rights that derives from a power imbalance between women and men in society;

3. *Urges* Member States to adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting violence against women;

4. *Also urges* Member States to take all appropriate administrative, social and educational measures to protect women from all forms of physical or mental violence;

5. *Recommends* that a framework for an international instrument be developed in consultation with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women that would address explicitly the issue of violence against women;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General, through the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, to convene in 1991 or 1992 a meeting, to be funded from extrabudgetary resources, of experts representing all regions and including representatives of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, to address the issue of violence against women and to discuss the possibilities of preparing an international instrument and the elements to

<sup>37</sup> See *Sixth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Caracas, 25 August-5 September 1980: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.81.IV.4), chap. I.

<sup>38</sup> See *Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Milan, 26 August-6 September 1985: report prepared by the Secretariat* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.IV.1).

<sup>39</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/44/38)*, chap. V.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, *Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/46/38)*.

be contained therein, and to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session;

7. *Urges* Governments at all levels to develop training programmes for members of the criminal justice and health-care systems, including police officers, doctors, nurses, social workers and members of the legal profession, to ensure sensitization to and fair administration of justice with respect to equality issues;

8. *Requests* Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, other relevant bodies and academics, to undertake research into the causes of violence against women.

*12th plenary meeting  
30 May 1991*

#### **1991/19. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered* the reports of the Secretary-General<sup>41</sup> and the notes by the Secretary-General<sup>42</sup> concerning the situation of Palestinian women living inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory,

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>43</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,

*Recalling also* its resolutions 1988/25 of 26 May 1988, 1989/34 of 24 May 1989 and 1990/11 of 24 May 1990,

*Expressing concern* at the persistent refusal of Israel to respect the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>43</sup>

*Taking into account* the *intifadah* of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory against the Israeli occupation and its harmful effects on Palestinian women and children,

*Dismayed* at the continuation of the oppressive practices of Israel, including collective punishment, curfews, demolition of houses, closure of schools and universities, deportation, confiscation of land and measures that are particularly harmful to the Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory,

*Deeply alarmed* by the continuation of the practice of settling Jewish immigrants in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem, which is illegal and contravenes the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention,

1. *Reaffirms* that the basic improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinian women, their advancement, full equality and self-reliance can only be achieved through an end to the Israeli occupation and the attainment of the right of Palestinians to return to their homes, their right to self-determination and their right to establish an independent Palestinian State in accordance with United Nations resolutions;

2. *Also reaffirms* that the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of

<sup>41</sup> E/CN.6/1988/8 and Corr.1 and E/CN.6/1989/4 and Corr.1.

<sup>42</sup> E/CN.6/1990/10 and E/CN.6/1991/9.

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

War, of 12 August 1949, is applicable to the Palestinian people in the territory occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem;

3. *Demands* that an end be put to the oppressive Israeli measures against the *intifadah* and the consequent suffering experienced by Palestinian women and their families in the occupied Palestinian territory;

4. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 thereof, which concerns assistance to Palestinian women and children both inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory;

5. *Requests* governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, including organizations of the United Nations system, to continue to encourage and assist in existing income-generating activities for Palestinian women and in the creation of new jobs;

6. *Requests* that Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory be assisted in developing small-scale industry and creating vocational training centres;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the mission of experts to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children<sup>44</sup> in order to improve the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory;

8. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue his investigation of the situation of Palestinian women and children and to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session on the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the mission of experts.

*12th plenary meeting  
30 May 1991*

#### **1991/20. Women and children under apartheid**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1990/13 of 24 May 1990,

*Recalling also* the provisions of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution S-16/1 of 14 December 1989 and contained in the annex thereto,

*Noting* the positive changes initiated by the Government of South Africa aimed at dismantling the system of apartheid,

*Deeply concerned* about the continuing degradation and abuse of African women and children by the white minority regime of South Africa, as noted in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>34</sup>

*Recognizing* that the equality of women and men cannot be achieved without the success of the struggle to-

<sup>44</sup> E/CN.6/1990/10, annex I.

wards a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on women and children living under apartheid;<sup>45</sup>

2. *Commends* those women both inside and outside South Africa who have resisted oppression and who have remained steadfast in their opposition to apartheid;

3. *Urges* all parties engaged in negotiations for a post-apartheid society to ensure that the principle of equality between women and men is incorporated in all laws and institutions;

4. *Urges* the Government of South Africa to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>29</sup> at the earliest possible opportunity;

5. *Appeals* to all countries and United Nations bodies, in consultation with liberation movements, as appropriate, to increase their support for educational, health, vocational training and employment opportunities for women and children living under apartheid;

6. *Demands* the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, among whom are women and children, in accordance with the undertaking of the President of South Africa;

7. *Urges* the international community to maintain all existing and any other necessary measures against South Africa until all the provisions of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa have been met;

8. *Decides* that the Commission on the Status of Women should remain seized of the issue of women and children living under apartheid.

*12th plenary meeting  
30 May 1991*

#### **1991/21. Disabled women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>34</sup> in particular paragraphs 277 to 282 and 296, in which disabled women are considered a vulnerable group,

*Recalling also* resolution 34/4 of 8 March 1990 of the Commission on the Status of Women,<sup>46</sup>

*Reaffirming* its support for the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons,<sup>18</sup>

*Taking note with appreciation* of Commission for Social Development resolution 32/2 of 20 February 1991 on the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group to elaborate standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for disabled persons,<sup>47</sup>

*Affirming its belief* that all women, regardless of their situation, are able to contribute to and benefit from development on an equal basis,

1. *Takes note* of the recommendations of the Semi-

<sup>45</sup> E/CN.6/1991/8.

<sup>46</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 5 (E/1990/25)*, chap. I, sect. C.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 1991, *Supplement No. 6 (E/1991/26)*, chap. I, sect. D.

## 1992/15. Women and children under apartheid

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling its resolution 1991/20 of 30 May 1991,*

*Reaffirming the provisions of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution S-16/1 of 14 December 1989,*

*Taking note of General Assembly resolutions 46/79 A to F of 13 December 1991,*

*Alarmed by the grave socio-economic deprivation to which the majority of the people, especially the women and children, are subjected as a direct consequence of apartheid,*

*Deeply concerned about the alleged State complicity in politically motivated violence that has to date claimed thousands of lives and has left hundreds of thousands homeless, the majority of whom are women and children,*

*Noting the positive changes initiated by the South African authorities aimed at dismantling apartheid, which were the result of the relentless struggle waged by the people of South Africa as well as the pressure exerted by the international community,*

*Noting with satisfaction the signing of the National Peace Accord in September 1991<sup>29</sup> and the convening of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa in December 1991, and expressing the hope that this will constitute a major contribution towards a final end to the violence in South Africa,*

*Welcoming the holding of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa as an attempt to resolve the problems of South Africa by peaceful means as envisaged in the Declaration on Apartheid,*

*Recognizing that the equality of women and men cannot be achieved without the success of the struggle towards a united, non-racist, non-sexist and democratic South Africa,*

*Aware of the attention given by the United Nations, and, in particular, the Centre against Apartheid of the Secretariat and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, to the issue of assisting South African women to participate fully in the process of establishing a non-racist democracy in their country,*

1. *Commends* those women both inside and outside South Africa who have resisted oppression and who have remained steadfast in their opposition to apartheid;

2. *Demands* the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, among whom are women and children, in accordance with the undertaking of the South African authorities;

3. *Urges* those involved in the Convention for a Democratic South Africa to place high on their agenda issues concerning women such as freedom, justice and equality, development and the environment;

4. *Also urges* the South African authorities to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>34</sup> at the earliest possible opportunity;

5. *Appeals* to all countries and United Nations bodies, in conformity with General Assembly resolutions 46/79 A to F and in consultation with liberation movements, to increase their support for educational, health, vocational

training and employment opportunities for women and children living under apartheid;

6. *Requests* the Centre against Apartheid of the Secretariat to widen and strengthen its cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, with a view to creating specific programmes of assistance to South African women to enable them to participate fully in the process of transition of their country towards a non-racist democracy;

7. *Appeals* to the international community to give its full and concerted support to the vulnerable and critical process now under way in South Africa through a phased application of appropriate pressures on the South African authorities as warranted by developments, and to provide assistance to the opponents of apartheid and the disadvantaged sectors of society in order to ensure the rapid and peaceful attainment of the objectives of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa;

8. *Decides* to remain seized of the issue of women and children living under apartheid;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the present resolution to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session.

*40th plenary meeting  
30 July 1992*

## 1992/16. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered the reports of the Secretary-General<sup>35</sup> and the notes by the Secretary-General<sup>36</sup> concerning the situation of Palestinian women living inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory,*

*Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>31</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,*

*Recalling also its resolutions 1988/25 of 26 May 1988, 1989/34 of 24 May 1989, 1990/11 of 24 May 1990 and 1991/19 of 30 May 1991,*

*Deeply alarmed by the deteriorating condition of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, as a result of the continued Israeli violation of Palestinian human rights, and oppressive measures, including collective punishments, curfews, demolition of houses, closure of schools and universities, deportation, confiscation of land and settlement activities, which are illegal and contrary to the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relevant to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>37</sup>*

1. *Reaffirms* that the basic improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinian women, their advancement, full equality and self-reliance, can only be achieved by an end to the Israeli occupation and by the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people;

2. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, accept the *de jure* applicability of the Geneva Convention relevant to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the occupied Palestinian territory,



including Jerusalem, and to respect the provisions of the Convention;

3. *Also demands* an end to the Israeli violation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, including an immediate halt to the Israeli settlement activities that have harmful effects on Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, including organizations of the United Nations system, to assist Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory in developing small-scale industry and creating vocational training and legal consultation centres;

5. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to monitor the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning assistance to Palestinian women;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in monitoring the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the mission of experts to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children<sup>38</sup> in order to improve the condition of Palestinian women and children;

7. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to review the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the refugee camps, and to submit a report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session, using all available sources.

*40th plenary meeting  
30 July 1992*

#### **1992/17. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Welcoming* the fact that there are now one hundred and twelve States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>34</sup>

*Noting* the importance of the monitoring function of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as demonstrated most recently in its general recommendation 19 on violence against women, adopted at its eleventh session,<sup>39</sup>

*Recalling* its resolution 1991/25 of 30 May 1991 and other relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council relating to support for the Committee,

*Concerned* that the duration of the annual session of the Committee, which is considerably less than that of other treaty bodies, has prevented the timely consideration by the Committee of many of the reports submitted to it by States parties to the Convention,

*Noting with concern* that the Convention is the human rights instrument with the most reservations, and welcoming the decision by a number of States parties to withdraw their reservations,

1. *Supports* the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meeting time and also supports the proposal that the twelfth session of the Committee should be of three weeks' duration;<sup>40</sup>

2. *Recommends* that three weeks be allocated for each subsequent session until the Committee removes the backlog of reports to be considered;

3. *Strongly supports* general recommendation 19 on violence against women, adopted by the Committee at its eleventh session, and calls on States parties to prepare their reports in accordance with this and other general recommendations of the Committee;

4. *Welcomes* other general recommendations adopted by the Committee at its previous sessions;

5. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to widely publicize the decisions and recommendations of the Committee.

*40th plenary meeting  
30 July 1992*

#### **1992/18. Violence against women in all its forms**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1991/18 of 30 May 1991, in which it requested that an expert group meeting be held to address the issue of violence against women and to discuss the possibilities of preparing an international instrument on this subject and the elements to be contained therein,

*Bearing in mind* that the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women<sup>31</sup> identify violence against women as a major obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace,

*Noting* that, in general recommendation 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session,<sup>39</sup> the Committee recognized that gender-based violence was a form of discrimination that seriously inhibited the ability of women to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men,

*Noting also* the response of the Committee to the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women in all its forms,<sup>41</sup> the annex to which contains the recommendations and a summary of the discussion of the Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women, held at Vienna from 11 to 15 November 1991,

1. *Calls on* Governments to recognize that the elimination of violence against women is essential to the achievement of equality for women and is a requirement for the full respect of human rights;

2. *Urges* Member States to adopt, strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting violence against women and to take all appropriate administrative, social and educational measures to protect women from all forms of physical and mental violence, in accordance with its resolution 1991/18;

3. *Calls on* States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>34</sup> to take the steps necessary to implement general recommendation 19, adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its eleventh session;<sup>39</sup>

4. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on violence against women in all its forms;<sup>41</sup>

5. *Decides* to convene an inter-sessional working group of the Commission on the Status of Women, open

assistance to the opponents of apartheid and the disadvantaged sectors of society in order to ensure the rapid and peaceful attainment of the objectives of the Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa;

7. *Requests* the international community to provide financial, material and human resources to South African women towards the establishment of special programmes and projects geared to women's integration and advancement at the present time and in post-apartheid South Africa;

8. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General to consolidate the United Nations observer mission already deployed in South Africa to monitor and report on the unprecedented proportion of incidents of political and domestic violence directed against women and children from a variety of sources;

9. *Decides* that the Commission on the Status of Women should remain seized of the question of women and children living under apartheid;

10. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.

*43rd plenary meeting  
27 July 1993*

#### **1993/14. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Bearing in mind* that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>18</sup> is the most important international human rights instrument for the promotion of equality between women and men,

*Welcoming* the growing number of States parties to the Convention, which now stands at one hundred and twenty,

*Noting with concern* that the Convention is still the human rights instrument with the most reservations, despite the fact that some States parties have withdrawn their reservations to it,

*Noting* the importance of the monitoring function of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, as demonstrated most recently by the Committee at its twelfth session, at which it adopted suggestion 4 on the World Conference on Human Rights and also adopted, in substance, and decided to place on the provisional agenda of its thirteenth session for final approval without discussion, a draft general recommendation on article 16 and related articles 9 and 15 of the Convention, which would be its contribution to the International Year of the Family,<sup>40</sup>

*Taking note* of General Assembly resolution 47/94 of 16 December 1992,

*Recalling* its resolution 1991/25 of 30 May 1991 and other General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions relating to support for the Committee,

*Noting* that the annual session of the Committee is the shortest of all the annual sessions of the human rights treaty bodies,

*Welcoming* the expressed intention of the Committee to strengthen the analysis of country reports provided to it,

1. *Supports* the request of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for additional meeting time for its future sessions, as granted for its twelfth and thirteenth sessions;

2. *Welcomes* suggestion 4 on the World Conference on Human Rights, adopted by the Committee at its twelfth session, and the draft general recommendation on article 16 and related articles 9 and 15 of the Convention, adopted, in substance, by the Committee at that session, both of which were submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session,<sup>41</sup> and encourages the Committee to continue its work in developing detailed general recommendations;

3. *Requests* States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to review regularly their reservations and make efforts to withdraw them in order to enable the full implementation of the Convention;

4. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to widely publicize the decisions and recommendations of the Committee.

*43rd plenary meeting  
27 July 1993*

#### **1993/15. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report submitted by the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory<sup>42</sup> and previous reports concerning the situation of Palestinian women inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territory,

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>11</sup> in particular paragraph 260 thereof,

*Recalling also* its resolution 1992/16 of 30 July 1992 and its other relevant resolutions,

*Deeply concerned* about the additional suffering of women and children living under occupation,

*Expressing special concern* about the tragic situation of the Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, which has been dangerously deteriorating at all levels,

*Deeply alarmed* by the deteriorating situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, as a result of the continued Israeli violation of Palestinian human rights and oppressive measures, including collective punishments, curfews, demolition of houses, closure of schools and universities, mass deportation, confiscation of land and settlement activities and denial of family unification, which are illegal and contrary to the relevant provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>43</sup>

1. *Reaffirms* that for Palestinian women, equality, self-reliance and integration in the national development plan can be achieved only through the termination of the Israeli occupation and the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people;

2. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, accept the *de jure* applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of

12 August 1949, to the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and to respect the provisions of the Convention;

3. *Appeals* to Governments, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to provide financial assistance to Palestinian women towards the creation of specific projects for them, in support of their attempts to achieve full integration in the development process of their society;

4. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning assistance to Palestinian women;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to assist in the review of the situation of Palestinian women using all available resources, including missions of experts to the occupied Palestinian territory, and to submit to the Commission, at its thirty-eighth session, a report on the implementation of the present resolution, containing recommendations and a programme of action aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation.

*43rd plenary meeting  
27 July 1993*

#### **1993/16. System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1988/59 of 27 July 1988, by which it requested the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to initiate the formulation of a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001,

*Having considered* the note by the Secretariat containing the proposed system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001,<sup>44</sup>

*Convinced* that a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women can enhance coordination among the organizations of the United Nations system by providing a framework for including advancement of women in individual medium-term plans and programme statements,

*Bearing in mind* the fact that the United Nations planning cycle to which the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women was matched has changed, and that there has been a general shift to a more strategic form of planning,

*Recognizing* that the Platform for Action to emerge from the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995, cannot be reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, which must be approved in 1993,

1. *Endorses* the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 as a general framework for the coordination of system-wide efforts, as revised in the light of the comments set out in the

annex to resolution 37/1 of 24 March 1993 of the Commission on the Status of Women;<sup>45</sup>

2. *Requests* the organizations of the United Nations system that are preparing medium-term plans for the period 1996-2001 to incorporate relevant aspects of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women in formulating their individual plans in terms of advancement of women;

3. *Also requests* the organizations of the United Nations system, when implementing the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, to take account of the importance of ensuring that humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and refugee programmes provide for the health needs of women and for their protection from violence and sexual abuse, especially in emergency and conflict situations;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to arrange for a revision of the system-wide medium-term plan after the Platform for Action and the results of the second review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women<sup>11</sup> have been adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace;

5. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that any revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women is more concise, takes account of the changes in the United Nations planning cycle, takes a more strategic approach, highlighting policy implications, and includes more substantial strategies, time-frames, concrete measures, resources and allocation of responsibility for implementation;

6. *Decides* that the Commission on the Status of Women, together with the Committee for Programme and Coordination, should be given the responsibility for monitoring progress on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women and that all United Nations entities should be held accountable for the components of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women that fall within their areas of responsibility.

*43rd plenary meeting  
27 July 1993*

#### **1993/17. International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1992/21 of 30 July 1992, in which it took note of the report of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women on its twelfth session,<sup>46</sup>

*Having considered* the report of the Board of Trustees of the Institute on its thirteenth session,<sup>47</sup>

*Recognizing* the important role that the Institute could play in the substantive preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace, to be held at Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995,

*Also recognizing* the equally important contributions that the Institute could make in its area of expertise to activities related to the International Year of the Family,

ganizations to submit their views on an optional protocol to the Convention, including those related to feasibility, taking into account the elements suggested by the Committee in its suggestion 7;

6. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session a comprehensive report, including a synthesis, on the views expressed in accordance with paragraph 5 above, if possible six weeks prior to the commencement of the session;

7. *Decides* that the Commission should establish an in-session open-ended working group for a two-week period at its fortieth session to consider the report requested in paragraph 6 above with a view to elaborating a draft optional protocol to the Convention;

8. *Once again urges* all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention;

9. *Encourages* States to consider limiting the extent of any reservation they lodge to the Convention, to formulate any reservation as precisely and as narrowly as possible, and to ensure that no reservation is incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention or otherwise contrary to international law;

10. *Requests* States parties to the Convention to review their reservations regularly with a view to withdrawing them expeditiously so that the Convention may be fully implemented;

11. *Also encourages* States parties that are behind schedule in submitting their periodic reports to the Committee to do so promptly, and requests the Committee to follow up this problem;

12. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to publicize widely the decisions and recommendations of the Committee.

*50th plenary meeting  
24 July 1995*

## 1995/30. Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,<sup>82</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>74</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children,

*Recalling also* Commission on the Status of Women resolution 38/4 of 18 March 1994<sup>83</sup> and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Further recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>84</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Welcoming* the signing by the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in Washington, on 13 September 1993,<sup>85</sup> as well as the implementation of the agreements reached between the two sides,

<sup>82</sup> E/CN.6/1995/8.

<sup>83</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1994, Supplement No. 7 (E/1994/27)*, chap. I, sect. C.

<sup>84</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>85</sup> AJ/48/486-S/26560, annex; see *Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-eighth Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1993*, document S/26560.

*Deeply concerned* about the continuing deterioration of all aspects of the situation of the Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem,

*Gravely concerned* about the severe consequences of the continuous Israeli illegal settlements activities, as well as the measures which isolate Jerusalem from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, on the situation of Palestinian women and their families,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation constitutes a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development plan of their society;

2. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>86</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907<sup>87</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,<sup>88</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

3. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children and those who are political deportees to their homes and properties in the occupied Palestinian territory, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

4. *Urges* Member States, international financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women for the creation of projects responding to their needs, especially during the transitional period;

5. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children;

6. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission, at its fortieth session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*51st plenary meeting  
25 July 1995*

## 1995/31. Rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/24 of 3 March 1995,<sup>89</sup>

1. *Decides* to authorize the Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to establish an inter-sessional working group of the Subcommittee, consisting of five of its members, which shall meet each year for five working days, initially for a three-year period, in order to promote the rights of persons be-

<sup>86</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>87</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>88</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>89</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 3* and corrigenda (E/1995/23 and Corr.1 and 2), chap. II, sect. A.

3. *Also endorses* the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, bearing in mind that in its implementation due emphasis will be given to the need for greater selectivity and impact;

4. *Encourages* the Executive Secretary to continue to strengthen the process of renewal and reform of the Commission in consultation with member States;

5. *Requests* the Executive Secretary, in close collaboration with the Bureau of the Commission, to carry out a revision of the work programme for the period 1996-1997, which has become necessary to reflect the new orientation of the Commission's work and to ensure a smooth transition in 1997 to the next medium-term plan, bearing in mind that the revision must be within resources already approved for the Commission by the General Assembly and must pay due regard to the efficiency measures required to implement the relevant decisions of the Assembly regarding the budget for the period 1996-1997;

6. *Appeals* to the Secretary-General to request the General Assembly to consider the revised work programme of the Economic Commission for Africa in conjunction with its review of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

*40th plenary meeting  
18 July 1996*

#### **1996/5. Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,<sup>12</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>13</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>14</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 1995/30 of 25 July 1995 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>15</sup> as it concerns the protection for civilian populations,

*Welcoming* the signing by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements<sup>16</sup> in Washington on 13 September 1993, as well as all subsequent agreements reached between the two parties,

*Concerned* about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous Israeli illegal settlements activities, as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families, resulting from the frequent closure and isolation of the occupied territory,

1. *Recognizes* the gradual, positive changes that are taking place as a result of the implementation of the agreements between the two parties;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation continues to constitute a major obstacle to the advancement and self-reliance of Palestinian women and their integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>17</sup> the Hague Conventions<sup>18</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>19</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties in the occupied Palestinian territory, in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women for the creation of projects responding to their needs, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action on the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all

<sup>12</sup> E/CN.6/1996/8.

<sup>13</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annex II.

<sup>15</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>16</sup> See *Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-ninth Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1993*, document S/26560, annex.

<sup>17</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>18</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

available means and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-first session a report on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*43rd plenary meeting  
22 July 1996*

## 1996/6. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Welcoming* the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Platform for Action of the Conference,<sup>14</sup>

*Bearing in mind* Economic and Social Council resolutions II (II) of 21 June 1946 and 48 (IV) of 29 March 1947, by which the Council established the Commission on the Status of Women and defined its terms of reference, and 1987/22 of 26 May 1987, by which the Council expanded the mandate of the Commission,

*Taking into account* agreed conclusions 1995/1, approved by the Council on 28 July 1995,<sup>20</sup> as well as General Assembly resolution 50/203 of 22 December 1995 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration<sup>21</sup> and the Platform for Action of the Conference, in which the Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission,

*Acknowledging* the decision of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to add to its reporting guidelines an invitation to States parties to include in their report to the Committee information on measures taken to implement the Platform for Action, in order to monitor effectively, within its mandate, the rights guaranteed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>22</sup>

### I

#### FRAMEWORK FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

*Recalling* that the General Assembly, in resolution 50/203, decided that the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with their respective mandates and in accordance with Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993 and other relevant resolutions, should constitute a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism that would play the primary role in the overall policy-making and follow-up and in coordinating

<sup>20</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth session, Supplement No. 3 (A/50/3/Rev.1)*, chap. III, para. 22.

<sup>21</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annex I.

<sup>22</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, reaffirming the need for a coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the results of major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields,

*Convinced* that the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women should be undertaken on the basis of an integrated approach to the advancement of women within the framework of a coordinated follow-up to and implementation of the results of major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields, as well as the overall responsibilities of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council,

1. *Decides* that the Commission on the Status of Women shall have a catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes;

2. *Decides also* that the inter-agency committee on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, shall inform the Commission and the Economic and Social Council of the progress of its work, for the purpose of system-wide coordination, and that a gender perspective shall also be fully integrated in the work of all thematic task forces established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination;

3. *Decides further* that the Platform for Action of the Conference should be implemented through the work of all the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system during the period 1995-2000, and notes that the institutions of the United Nations especially devoted to the advancement of women, including the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women, are in the process of reviewing their programmes of work in the light of the Platform for Action and its implementation;

4. *Decides*, in view of the traditional importance of non-governmental organizations in the advancement of women, that such organizations should be encouraged to participate in the work of the Commission and in the monitoring and implementation process related to the Conference to the maximum extent possible, and requests the Secretary-General to make appropriate arrangements to ensure full utilization of existing channels of communication with non-governmental organizations in order to facilitate broad-based participation and dissemination of information;

5. *Decides also*, in recognition of the valuable contribution of non-governmental organizations to the Fourth World Conference on Women, that the Council and its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations will review the applications of those non-governmental organizations under Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 23 May 1968 as expeditiously as possible, and decides further that, prior to the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Council will take a decision on the participation of the non-

**1997/15. Celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in 1999 and the role of the Commission in the coming century**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1818 (LV) of 9 August 1973, by which it established the Economic Commission for Western Asia for the purpose of consolidating development efforts in the region and promoting economic cooperation among the countries of the region,<sup>54</sup>

*Commending* the Commission for the activities it has undertaken since its establishment in the various fields of economic and social development, thus supporting the development efforts of the States members of the Commission and promoting cooperation among them,

1. *Decides* that the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia shall be celebrated during its twentieth session, to be held in 1999;

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia to take all measures that he deems necessary in this regard, including the preparation of the necessary studies for the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Commission;

3. *Invites* the Governments of the States members of the Commission to take this opportunity to formulate a new vision and define the role and tasks of the Commission in line with regional and world developments in the coming century;

4. *Also invites* the Governments of the member States to participate in this celebration at the highest level;

5. *Invites* the Secretary-General to take part in this event.

*34th plenary meeting  
18 July 1997*

**1997/16. Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,<sup>55</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>56</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>57</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 1996/5 of 22 July 1996 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

<sup>54</sup> By its resolution 1985/69 of 26 July 1985, the Council, on the recommendation of the Commission, decided to change the name of the Commission to "Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia".

<sup>55</sup> E/CN.6/1997/2, sect. II.A.

<sup>56</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>57</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Aware* of the signing by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel, in Washington, D.C., of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements on 13 September 1993<sup>58</sup> and of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on 28 September 1995,<sup>59</sup> within the framework of the Middle East peace process,

*Concerned* about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous Israeli illegal settlement activities, as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families resulting from the frequent closure and isolation of the occupied territory,

1. *Stresses* its support for the Middle East peace process and the need for full implementation of the agreements already reached between the parties;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>60</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907<sup>61</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949,<sup>62</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties in the occupied Palestinian territory, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women for the creation of projects responding to their needs, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the

<sup>57</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>58</sup> A/48/486-S/26560, annex; see *Official Records of the Security Council, Forty-eighth Year, Supplement for October, November and December 1993*, document S/26560.

<sup>59</sup> A/51/889-S/1997/357, annex; see *Official Records of the Security Council, Fifty-second Year, Supplement for April, May and June 1997*, document S/1997/357.

<sup>60</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>61</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>66</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>6</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

36th plenary meeting  
21 July 1997

1997/17. **Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions 50/203 of 22 December 1995 and 51/69 of 12 December 1996 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration<sup>63</sup> and the Platform for Action<sup>6</sup> of the Conference,

*Recalling also* Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6 of 22 July 1996 on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, by which a multi-year programme of work for the Commission on the Status of Women was adopted as a framework for assessing the progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action,

*Noting* that the Commission at its forty-first session reviewed progress achieved in the implementation of the Platform for Action in the critical areas of concern: women and the environment, women in power and decision-making, women and the economy and the education and training of women, and proposed ways and means to accelerate implementation in those four areas,<sup>64</sup>

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on thematic issues before the Commission on the Status of Women<sup>65</sup> and the recommendations contained therein;

2. *Calls upon* Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies and other international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society to cooperate in implementing the strategies adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women and other recent international conferences;

3. *Calls upon* Governments, the United Nations system and other international organizations to mainstream a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, while maintaining institutional arrangements to carry out research and develop methodologies and tools for mainstreaming, and to advocate gender equality and the enjoyment by women of their human rights;

<sup>63</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>64</sup> *See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7 (E/1997/27)*, chap. II.

<sup>65</sup> E/CN.6/1997/3.

4. *Endorses* the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on women and the environment, women in power and decision-making, women and the economy and the education and training of women.<sup>66</sup>

36th plenary meeting  
21 July 1997

1997/18. **International Year of Older Persons: towards a society for all ages**

*The Economic and Social Council*

*Recommends* to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

*"The General Assembly,*

*"Recalling* its resolution 47/5 of 16 October 1992, in which it decided to observe the year 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons,

*"Recalling also* its resolution 40/30 of 29 November 1985, in which it expressed its conviction that older persons must be considered an important and necessary element in the development process at all levels within a given society,

*"Mindful* of the need to promote adherence to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, as adopted in its resolution 46/91 of 16 December 1991,

*"Recalling* Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/22 of 27 July 1993, in which the Council invited Member States to strengthen their national mechanisms on ageing, *inter alia*, to enable them to serve as national focal points for the preparations for and observance of the Year,

*"Recalling also* the relevant provisions of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development<sup>4</sup> and the Programme of Action<sup>3</sup> of the World Summit for Social Development, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development<sup>3</sup> and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna from 14 to 25 June 1993,<sup>67</sup> as well as of the Beijing Declaration<sup>63</sup> and the Platform for Action<sup>6</sup> of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Habitat Agenda, adopted by the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held at Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996,<sup>65</sup>

*"Keeping in mind* that the ageing of societies in the twentieth century, unprecedented in the history of humankind, is a major challenge for all societies and requires a fundamental change in the way in which societies organize themselves and view older persons,

*"1. Encourages* all States, the United Nations system and all other actors, in reaching out for a future society for all ages, to take advantage of the International Year of Older Persons to increase awareness of the

<sup>66</sup> *See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 7 (E/1997/27)*, chap. I, sect. C.1.

<sup>67</sup> A/CONF.157/24 (Part I), chap. III.



7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that reports of future gender missions are made available to the Commission on the Status of Women.

*44th plenary meeting  
28 July 1998*

#### 1998/10. Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General concerning the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system,<sup>28</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>3</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 1997/16 of 21 July 1997 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>29</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Concerned* about the stalemate facing the Middle East peace process, including the lack of implementation of the agreements reached in Washington, D.C., between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel, and the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli positions and measures,

*Concerned also* about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlement activities as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families resulting from the frequent closures and isolation of the occupied territory,

1. *Stresses* its support for the Middle East peace process and the need for speedy and full implementation of the agreements already reached between the parties;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>23</sup> the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907<sup>30</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian

Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>31</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties in the occupied Palestinian territory, in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women for the creation of projects responding to their needs, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>3</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>2</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*44th plenary meeting  
28 July 1998*

#### 1998/11. Mid-term review of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001, including the status of women in the Secretariat

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Reaffirming* the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001,<sup>32</sup> and the comments of the Commission on the Status of Women contained in Commission resolution 40/10 of 22 March 1996 and the annex thereto,<sup>33</sup>

*Noting with concern* that a number of obstacles have been encountered in the implementation of the plan,

1. *Welcomes* the report of the Secretary-General on the mid-term review of the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001,<sup>34</sup> and endorses the recommendations contained therein;

2. *Urges* the Secretary-General to ensure that the obstacles encountered in the implementation of the plan are dealt with effectively, in particular through heightened accountability at all levels, especially that of senior manager, and by including the necessary training, where appropriate;

<sup>28</sup> E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.2.

<sup>29</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>30</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>32</sup> See E/1996/16.

<sup>33</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26)*, chap. I, sect. C.2.

<sup>34</sup> E/CN.6/1998/3.

(c) Respect for the equal right of women to work and their reintegration in employment;

(d) The equal right of women and girls to education without discrimination, the reopening of schools and the admission of women and girls to all levels of education;

(e) Respect for the right of women to security of person and that those responsible for physical attacks on women are brought to justice;

(f) Respect for freedom of movement for women;

(g) Respect for the equal access of women and girls to health care;

5. *Encourages* the continuing efforts of the United Nations, international and non-governmental organizations and donors to ensure that all United Nations-assisted programmes in Afghanistan are formulated and coordinated in such a way as to promote and to ensure the participation of women in those programmes and that women benefit equally with men from such programmes;

6. *Appeals* to all States and to the international community to ensure that all humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan, in conformity with the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, is based on the principle of non-discrimination, integrates a gender perspective, and actively attempts to promote the participation of both women and men and to promote peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

7. *Urges* States to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women in Afghanistan and to mainstream a gender perspective into all aspects of their policies and actions related to Afghanistan;

8. *Welcomes* the establishment of the positions of Gender Adviser and Human Rights Adviser at the United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator for Afghanistan, in order to ensure more effective consideration and implementation of human rights and gender concerns in all United Nations programmes within Afghanistan, taking into account the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan<sup>28</sup> led by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in November 1997;

9. *Urges* the Secretary-General to ensure that all United Nations activities in Afghanistan are carried out according to the principle of non-discrimination against women and girls, and that a gender perspective and special attention to the human rights of women and girls are fully incorporated into the work of the Civil Affairs Unit established within the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, including the training and selection of staff;

10. *Stresses* the importance of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan giving special attention to the human rights of women and girls and fully incorporating a gender perspective in his work;

11. *Appeals* to States and the international community to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Mission to Afghanistan under the

leadership of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;

12. *Urges* all Afghan factions, in particular the Taliban, to ensure the safety and protection of all United Nations and humanitarian workers in Afghanistan and to allow them, regardless of gender, to carry out their work unhindered.

43rd plenary meeting  
28 July 1999

#### 1999/15. Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the section concerning the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system of the report of the Secretary-General<sup>29</sup> on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration<sup>20</sup> and the Platform for Action<sup>21</sup> adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>30</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Beijing Platform for Action,

*Recalling also* its resolution 1998/10 of 28 July 1998 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>31</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Gravely concerned* at the suspension, on 20 December 1998, by the Government of Israel of the implementation of the Wye River Memorandum, signed in Washington, D.C., on 23 October 1998, including the negotiations on the final settlement which were to have been concluded by May 1999,

*Concerned* about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlement activities, as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families resulting from the frequent closures and isolation of the occupied territory,

1. *Stresses* its support for the Middle East peace process and the need for speedy and full implementation of the agreements already reached between the parties;

2. *Affirms* that in spite of the actual deterioration of the Middle East peace process as a result of the lack of compliance by the Government of Israel with the existing agreements, increased efforts must be exerted to bring the peace process back on track towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region and the

<sup>29</sup> E/CN.6/1999/2, sect. IV.A.

<sup>30</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>31</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

achievement of tangible results towards the improvement of the situation of Palestinian women and their families;

3. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development planning of their society;

4. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>17</sup> the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>32</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>27</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women for the creation of projects responding to their needs, especially during the transitional period;

7. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>30</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Beijing Platform for Action;<sup>21</sup>

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fourth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*43rd plenary meeting  
28 July 1999*

#### **1999/16. System-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1996/34 of 25 July 1996 on the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996–2001, in which it called for a new draft plan to cover the period 2002–2005,

*Considering* that the new draft plan should take into consideration the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on progress achieved in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>21</sup>

1. *Invites* the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, to formulate the plan for the period 2002–2005 in two phases, a first phase consisting of an assessment of activities

undertaken by the United Nations system and of the obstacles encountered and lessons learned from the present plan and the system-wide process of implementation, and a second phase consisting of a new plan that reflects the growing emphasis on action and delivery;

2. *Decides* that the assessment should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council through the Commission on the Status of Women in 2000 and that the new plan for the period 2002–2005 should be submitted to the Council through the Commission in 2001.

*43rd plenary meeting  
28 July 1999*

#### **1999/17. Agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women on the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action**

*The Economic and Social Council*

*Endorses* the following agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women with respect to the two critical areas of concern addressed by the Commission at its forty-third session:

#### **I. WOMEN AND HEALTH**

*The Commission on the Status of Women*

1. *Reaffirms* the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>21</sup> adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, notably chapter IV.C on women and health, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development<sup>13</sup> and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;<sup>22</sup>

2. *Recalls* the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which states that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity; that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition; and that the health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest cooperation of individuals and States;

3. *Requests* States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to consider, when preparing their initial and periodic reports under the Convention, including on article 12, general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

4. *Acknowledges* that the realization by women of their right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is an integral part of the full realization by them of all human rights, and that the human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights;

5. *Also acknowledges* the link between the physical and mental health of women throughout the life cycle and the level of national development, including the availability of basic social services such as health services, the status and degree of empowerment of women in society, employment and

<sup>32</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

including the method for selection of its members, shall be carried out by the Council in the light of the experience gained;

8. *Also decides*, once the Permanent Forum has been established and has held its first annual session, to review, without prejudging any outcome, all existing mechanisms, procedures and programmes within the United Nations concerning indigenous issues, including the Working Group on Indigenous Populations of the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, with a view to rationalizing activities, avoiding duplication and overlap and promoting effectiveness.

45th plenary meeting  
28 July 2000

#### 2000/23. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the section concerning the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system of the report of the Secretary-General<sup>87</sup> on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration<sup>36</sup> and Platform for Action<sup>37</sup> adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>88</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Beijing Platform for Action,

*Recalling also* its resolution 1999/15 of 28 July 1999 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>35</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Stressing* the need for full implementation of the Memorandum signed at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 4 September 1999 and full compliance with the existing agreements, as well as the need for the conclusion of the final settlement by the agreed time of September 2000,

*Concerned* about the continuing difficult situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlement activities, as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families resulting from the frequent closures and isolation of the occupied territory,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the entire international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the continuity and success of the peace process and its conclusion by the agreed time of September 2000 and the achievement of tangible progress in the improvement of the situation of Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>31</sup> the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>89</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>39</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>88</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, and the Beijing Platform for Action;<sup>37</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

45th plenary meeting  
28 July 2000

#### 2000/24. Revitalization and strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1979/11 of 9 May 1979, in which it recommended that the International Research and Training

<sup>87</sup> E/CN.6/2000/2, sect. III.A.

<sup>88</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>89</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

# Resolutions

## Substantive session of 2001

### 2001/1. Triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* the United Nations Millennium Declaration,<sup>1</sup> which sets out priorities and goals to be reached by the international community up to the year 2015,

*Recalling also* General Assembly resolutions 47/199 of 22 December 1992, 50/120 of 20 December 1995 and 53/192 of 15 December 1998 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

*Recalling further* its resolutions 1999/5 and 1999/6 of 23 July 1999 and 2000/19 and 2000/20 of 28 July 2000,

*Having considered* the reports of the Secretary-General on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system<sup>2</sup> and on progress in the implementation of the multi-year funding frameworks and evaluation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework,<sup>3</sup>

1. *Requests* the Secretary-General, when finalizing his report on the triennial policy review for submission to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session, to take into account the views and comments expressed by Member States during the operational activities segment of the substantive session of 2001 of the Economic and Social Council and to make appropriate recommendations;

2. *Also requests* the Secretary-General, when finalizing his report on the triennial policy review, to provide an analysis of the current state of the implementation of resolution 53/192 and other related resolutions on operational activities;

3. *Invites* the Secretary-General, in accordance with the coordination, guidance and oversight roles of the Council in the implementation by the United Nations system of the triennial policy review of operational activities, to make recommendations, when finalizing his report on the triennial policy review, on the possible themes that could be discussed at the substantive sessions of 2002 and 2003 of the Council, taking into account the necessary preparatory work for the following triennial policy review.

*21st plenary meeting  
10 July 2001*

### 2001/2. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* section III.A concerning the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system, contained in the report of the Secretary-General<sup>4</sup> on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration<sup>5</sup> and Platform for Action,<sup>6</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>7</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>8</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2000/23 of 28 July 2000 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>9</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Stressing* the need for compliance with the existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements concluded within the context of the Middle East peace process and the need to resume peace negotiations, as soon as possible, in order to reach a final settlement,

*Concerned* about the deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlements activities as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families, resulting from the frequent closures and isolation of the occupied territory,

*Expressing its condemnation* of acts of violence, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinians, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

<sup>4</sup> E/CN.6/2001/2.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, annex II.

<sup>7</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>8</sup> See General Assembly resolutions S-23/2 and S-23/3.

<sup>9</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>1</sup> See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

<sup>2</sup> E/2001/66.

<sup>3</sup> E/2001/58 and Add.1 and 2.

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the entire international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the immediate resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvements in the difficult situation on the ground and in the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>10</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>11</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>12</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>7</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>6</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century";<sup>8</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-sixth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*39th plenary meeting  
24 July 2001*

<sup>10</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>11</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

### 2001/3. Discrimination against women and girls in Afghanistan

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Guided* by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>10</sup> the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>13</sup> the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,<sup>14</sup> the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>15</sup> the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,<sup>9</sup> the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>16</sup> and the optional protocols thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict<sup>17</sup> and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,<sup>18</sup> the Beijing Declaration<sup>5</sup> and Platform for Action,<sup>6</sup> the further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session,<sup>19</sup> accepted humanitarian rules as set out in the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949,<sup>20</sup> and other instruments of human rights and international law,

*Recalling* that Afghanistan is party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,<sup>21</sup> the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>13</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,<sup>13</sup> the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War,<sup>12</sup> and that it has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,

*Reaffirming* that all States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to fulfil the obligations they have freely undertaken under the various international instruments,

*Welcoming* the substantive report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on the Status of Women on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and the conclusions contained therein, including the need to monitor and evaluate the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and girls who reside in all areas of Afghanistan,<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>14</sup> General Assembly resolution 39/46, annex.

<sup>15</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

<sup>16</sup> General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

<sup>17</sup> General Assembly resolution 54/263, annex I.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, annex II.

<sup>19</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, Nos. 970–973.

<sup>21</sup> General Assembly resolution 260 A (III).

<sup>22</sup> E/CN.6/2001/2/Add.1.

**2002/25. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,*<sup>88</sup>

*Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,*<sup>89</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>28</sup> adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>85</sup>

*Recalling also its resolution 2001/2 of 24 July 2001 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,*

*Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*<sup>23</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Stressing the need for compliance with the existing Israeli-Palestinian agreements concluded within the context of the Middle East peace process and the need to resume peace negotiations, as soon as possible, in order to reach a final settlement,*

*Concerned about the continuing dangerous deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlements activities as well as the harsh economic conditions and other consequences for the situation of Palestinian women and their families, resulting from the frequent closures and isolation of the occupied territory,*

*Expressing its condemnation of acts of violence, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,*

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the immediate resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvements in the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their

advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>19</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>90</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>91</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Urges* Member States, financial organizations of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women, especially during the transitional period;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>89</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>28</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>85</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seventh session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*38th plenary meeting  
24 July 2002*

**2002/26. Further promotion of equalization of opportunities by, for and with persons with disabilities and protection of their human rights**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirming the obligations contained in the relevant human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*<sup>22</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>24</sup>

<sup>88</sup> E/CN.6/2002/3.

<sup>89</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>90</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>91</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

groups at risk of abusing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances,

*Concerned also* about the trend towards the development of lenient policies relating to cannabis and other drugs that are not in accordance with international drug control treaties and about the fact that such trends may have a negative impact on efforts being made to eradicate cannabis cultivation and to combat drug trafficking,

1. *Invites* the International Narcotics Control Board to continue to monitor and report on the application of the international drug control treaties by Member States with regard to cannabis and other drugs;

2. *Requests* the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, in collaboration with the World Health Organization, to report on new trends with regard to cannabis.

*44th plenary meeting  
22 July 2003*

**2003/42. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>98</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>99</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>100</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>101</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2002/25 of 24 July 2002 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>102</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Expressing the urgent need* for the resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and towards the speedy achievement of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Concerned* about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlement activities as well as the harsh economic conditions and other severe consequences of the continuing Israeli attacks and sieges on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, which has resulted in the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the immediate resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>103</sup> the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>104</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>105</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for

<sup>98</sup> E/CN.6/2003/3.

<sup>99</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>100</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>101</sup> See General Assembly resolutions S-23/2 and S-23/3.

<sup>102</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>103</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>104</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>105</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.



the Advancement of Women,<sup>99</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>100</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>101</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>98</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

44th plenary meeting  
22 July 2003

### 2003/43. Situation of women and girls in Afghanistan

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Guided* by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>103</sup> the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>106</sup> the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,<sup>107</sup> the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>108</sup> the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,<sup>102</sup> the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>51</sup> and the Optional Protocols thereto on the involvement of children in armed conflict<sup>109</sup> and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography,<sup>52</sup> the Beijing Declaration<sup>110</sup> and Platform for Action,<sup>100</sup> the further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session,<sup>111</sup> accepted humanitarian rules as set out in the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949,<sup>112</sup> and other instruments of human rights and international law,

*Recalling* that Afghanistan is a party to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,<sup>113</sup> the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>106</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,<sup>106</sup> the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention

on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,<sup>15</sup>

*Reaffirming* that all States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms,

*Recalling* the importance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, on women and peace and security, and Council resolution 1460 (2003) of 30 January 2003, on children and armed conflict,

*Recalling also* the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, signed in Bonn, Germany, on 5 December 2001,<sup>114</sup>

*Recalling further* the funding commitments made at the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo on 21 and 22 January 2002,

*Welcoming* the establishment of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission in June 2002,

*Welcoming also* the holding of the Emergency Loya Jirga in June 2002, establishing the Afghan Transitional Authority, and the participation of more than two hundred women in the meeting,

*Welcoming further* the continuing commitment of the Afghan Transitional Administration to the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by women and girls, to the active participation of Afghan women in political, economic and social life, to the education of girls as well as boys and to the opportunity for women to work outside the home,

*Welcoming* the return to school of more than 3 million children, including 1 million girls, since March 2002, and the international support that has made it possible,

*Welcoming also* the inclusion of women in the Transitional Administration, the Judicial Reform Commission, the Independent Human Rights Commission and the Constitutional Drafting Commission, and stressing the importance of the full and effective participation of women in all decision-making processes regarding the future of Afghanistan,

*Welcoming further* the fact that the National Development Framework of the Transitional Administration reflects the needs of, and the importance of the role to be taken by, women and girls in the process of peace-building, reconstruction and development,

<sup>106</sup> General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>107</sup> General Assembly resolution 39/46, annex.

<sup>108</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

<sup>109</sup> General Assembly resolution 54/263, annex I.

<sup>110</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

<sup>111</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>112</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, Nos. 970–973.

<sup>113</sup> General Assembly resolution 260 A (III), annex.

<sup>114</sup> See S/2001/1154.

the sound management of hazardous chemicals and dangerous pharmaceutical products;

8. *Emphasizes* the need to continue to utilize the work being undertaken by relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations in this area, as well as that being carried out under international agreements and conventions in related areas, in updating the Consolidated List;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to report every three years, in accordance with resolution 39/229, on the implementation of the present resolution, taking into account previous Assembly resolutions on the same subject, as appropriate.

50th plenary meeting  
23 July 2004

#### 2004/56. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>172</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>173</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>9</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>10</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2003/42 of 22 July 2003 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>40</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Expressing* the urgent need for the resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and towards the speedy achievement of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Concerned* about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and about the severe consequences of continuous illegal Israeli settlements activities as well as the harsh economic conditions and other severe consequences of the continuing Israeli attacks and sieges on Palestinian cities, towns, villages and refugee camps, which has resulted in the

dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Concerned also* that the route marked out for the wall under construction by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, could prejudge future negotiations and make the two-State solution physically impossible to implement and would cause further humanitarian hardship to the Palestinians, in particular women and children,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the efforts necessary to ensure the immediate resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>30</sup> the Regulations annexed to The Hague Convention IV, of 18 October 1907<sup>174</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>161</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>173</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing

<sup>172</sup> E/CN.6/2004/4.

<sup>173</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>174</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

Platform for Action<sup>9</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>10</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>172</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*51st plenary meeting  
23 July 2004*

**2004/57. Participation of non-governmental organizations in the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Underlining* the significance of the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held in 2005, which will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration<sup>13</sup> and Platform for Action,<sup>9</sup> the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women<sup>173</sup> and the thirtieth anniversary of the World Conference of the International Women’s Year, held in Mexico City from 19 June to 2 July 1975,

*Noting* that the Commission on the Status of Women will undertake, at its forty-ninth session, a review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>10</sup> and will consider current challenges and forward-looking strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women and girls,

1. *Decides*, on an exceptional basis, to invite those non-governmental organizations that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women or to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to attend the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women;

2. *Urges* that, in recognition of the importance of equitable geographical participation of non-governmental organizations in the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, relevant bodies of the United Nations system assist those non-governmental organizations that do not have resources, in particular non-governmental organizations from developing countries, including the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition, to participate in the forty-ninth session of the Commission.

*51st plenary meeting  
23 July 2004*

**2004/58. Preparations for the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Underlining* the significance of the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, which will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development<sup>61</sup> and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development,<sup>62</sup>

*Noting* that the Commission will undertake, at its forty-third session, a review of the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled “World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world”, held in Geneva from 26 June to 1 July 2000,<sup>175</sup> which constitute the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels,

*Building upon* its resolution 1996/7 of 22 July 1996, and also taking into account General Assembly resolutions 50/161 of 22 December 1995, 57/270 B of 23 June 2003 and 58/291 of 6 May 2004,

*Considering* the special nature of the task before the Commission for Social Development at its forty-third session,

1. *Decides* to focus on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development<sup>61</sup> and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development<sup>62</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly<sup>175</sup> through the expanded use of interactive dialogue, and with broad-based participation of governmental delegations at the highest level of responsibility and expertise, and of civil society and organizations within the United Nations system, bearing in mind the need to integrate the social development perspective in the comprehensive review of the progress made in the fulfilment of all the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration;<sup>12</sup>

2. *Also decides* that the Commission for Social Development, at its forty-third session, should emphasize the sharing of experiences and good practices on overcoming challenges to the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly;

3. *Further decides* that the Commission for Social Development should convene, during its forty-third session, high-level plenary meetings, open to all States Members of the United Nations and observers, on the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, and requests the Chairman of the forty-third session

<sup>175</sup> General Assembly resolution S-24/2, annex.

*Recalling also* its resolution 2004/49 of 23 July 2004 on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development,

*Underlining* the importance of the contribution of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society in general to the implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields,

*Recalling* the central role and responsibility of Governments in national and international policymaking,

*Bearing in mind* General Assembly resolution 58/129 of 19 December 2003, entitled “Towards global partnerships”, in which the Assembly, inter alia, identified the principles and objectives of such partnerships and welcomed the establishment of a multitude of partnerships at the field level, entered into by various United Nations organizations, Member States and other stakeholders, such as the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development (the United Nations Alliance),

1. *Encourages* the initiative of the Government of the Dominican Republic to serve as the second pilot country for the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development (the United Nations Alliance);

2. *Invites* all Member States, the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to support the programmes and activities of the United Nations Alliance in its mission to promote sustainable rural development, consistent with General Assembly resolution 58/129 and other relevant resolutions and decisions of the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council;

3. *Stresses* that activities of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system at the country level in support of the United Nations Alliance should take into account the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

4. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2007 on the work of the United Nations Alliance.

*39th plenary meeting  
26 July 2005*

#### **2005/43. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>116</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>117</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>87</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>88</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2004/56 of 23 July 2004 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

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<sup>116</sup> E/CN.6/2005/4.

<sup>117</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>118</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Expressing the urgent need* for the full resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and towards the speedy achievement of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Concerned* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall, as well as the severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations on and sieges of civilian areas, which have detrimentally impacted their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Recalling* the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,<sup>119</sup> and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>77</sup> the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>77</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>47</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the efforts necessary to ensure the full resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>76</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Custom of War on Land of 18 October 1907 (Convention IV),<sup>80</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>120</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>117</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and

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<sup>118</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>119</sup> See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

<sup>120</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>87</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>88</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>116</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*39th plenary meeting  
26 July 2005*

**2005/44. Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* the Brussels Declaration<sup>121</sup> and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010,<sup>122</sup>

*Recalling also* its decision 2001/320 of 24 October 2001, in which it decided to establish, under the regular agenda item entitled “Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits”, a regular sub-item entitled “Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010”,

*Recalling further* its resolution 2003/17 of 22 July 2003 and its decision 2003/287 of 24 July 2003, as well as the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2004 on the theme “Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010”,<sup>123</sup>

*Recalling* paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 59/244 of 22 December 2004, in which the Assembly decided to hold the comprehensive review of the Programme of Action in 2006 during its sixty-first session, in accordance with paragraph 114 of the Programme of Action, and paragraph 6 of the same resolution, in which the Assembly decided to consider at its sixtieth session the modalities for conducting such a comprehensive review,

1. *Takes note* of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General<sup>124</sup> on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001–2010;<sup>122</sup>

2. *Expresses its deep concern* over the insufficient progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and stresses the need to address areas of weakness in its implementation;

3. *Urges* the least developed countries and their bilateral and multilateral development partners to undertake increased efforts and to adopt measures rapidly, with a view to meeting the goals and targets of the Programme of Action in a timely manner;

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<sup>121</sup> A/CONF.191/13, chap. I.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. II.

<sup>123</sup> A/59/3, chap. III, para. 49. For the final text, see *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 3*.

<sup>124</sup> A/60/81-E/2005/68.

**2006/8. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>13</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>14</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>15</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>16</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2005/43 of 26 July 2005 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>17</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the importance of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Expressing* the urgent need for the full resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and towards the speedy achievement of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Concerned* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, as well as the severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations on and sieges of civilian areas, which have impacted detrimentally their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Welcoming* the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>18</sup> on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints owing to denial of access by Israel to hospitals, with a view to ending this Israeli practice,

*Recalling* the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,<sup>19</sup> and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>20</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>20</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>21</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

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<sup>13</sup> E/CN.6/2006/4.

<sup>14</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>15</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>16</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>17</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>18</sup> A/60/324.

<sup>19</sup> See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

<sup>20</sup> General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>21</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the efforts necessary to ensure the full resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for measures for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>22</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Convention IV)<sup>23</sup> of 18 October 1907 and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>24</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>14</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>15</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>16</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>13</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*38th plenary meeting  
25 July 2006*

### **2006/9. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 2005/48 of 27 July 2005, in which the Council welcomed the progress made in the review of the working methods of several functional commissions and invited those functional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies that had not yet done so to continue to examine their methods of work, as mandated by the General Assembly in its

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<sup>22</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>23</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.



most cost-effective manner no later than the end of 2007, and to make it available on CD-ROM and on the website of the secretariat of the Economic Commission for Europe, which provides secretariat services to the Committee;

4. *Invites* Governments that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps, through appropriate national procedures and/or legislation, to implement the Globally Harmonized System as soon as possible, with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008;

5. *Reiterates its invitation* to the regional commissions, United Nations programmes, the specialized agencies and other organizations concerned to promote the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System and, where relevant, to amend their respective international legal instruments addressing transport safety, workplace safety, consumer protection or the protection of the environment so as to give effect to the Globally Harmonized System through such instruments;

6. *Invites* Governments, the regional commissions, United Nations programmes, the specialized agencies and other organizations concerned to provide feedback on implementation to the Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals;<sup>25</sup>

7. *Encourages* Governments, the regional commissions, United Nations programmes, the specialized agencies and other relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations, in particular those representing industry, to strengthen their support of the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System by providing financial contributions and/or technical assistance for capacity-building activities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

### C. Programme of work of the Committee

*Taking note* of the programme of work of the Committee for the biennium 2007–2008 as contained in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>13</sup>

*Noting* the relatively poor level of participation of experts from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the work of the Committee and the need to promote their wider participation in its work,

1. *Decides* to approve the programme of work of the Committee;

2. *Stresses* the importance of the participation of experts from developing countries and from countries with economies in transition in the work of the Committee, calls, in that regard, for voluntary contributions to facilitate their participation, including through support for travel and daily subsistence, and invites Member States and international organizations in a position to do so to contribute;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Economic and Social Council in 2009 on the implementation of the present resolution, the recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

*40th plenary meeting  
23 July 2007*

### 2007/7. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Information on the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals by country and through international legal instruments, recommendations, codes and guidelines is available on the Economic Commission for Europe website at [www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/implementation\\_e.html](http://www.unece.org/trans/danger/publi/ghs/implementation_e.html).

<sup>26</sup> E/CN.6/2007/4.

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>27</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>28</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>29</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2006/8 of 25 July 2006 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>30</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the importance of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Expressing* the urgent need for the full resumption of negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis and towards the speedy achievement of a final settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Concerned* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, as well as the severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations in and sieges of civilian areas, which have had a detrimental impact on their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Expressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the harmful impact of the financial crisis which has exacerbated the already dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Welcoming* the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,<sup>31</sup> issued on 31 August 2005, on the issue of Palestinian women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints owing to denial to them by Israel of access to hospitals, with a view to ending this practice,

*Recalling* the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,<sup>32</sup> and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>33</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>33</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>34</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

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<sup>27</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>28</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>29</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>30</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>31</sup> A/60/324.

<sup>32</sup> See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1.

<sup>33</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the efforts necessary to ensure the full resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for intensified measures to be taken for tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development planning of their society, and encourages all women in the region to take an active role in supporting the peace process;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>35</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907<sup>36</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>37</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugee and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>27</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>28</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>29</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>26</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*42nd plenary meeting  
24 July 2007*

### **2007/8. Flow of information for the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* the outcome documents of the World Summit on the Information Society,<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>36</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>37</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>38</sup> See A/C.2/59/3 and A/60/687.

9. *Requests* the Advisory Group, in accomplishing its mandate, to continue to cooperate with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative in Haiti, the head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti, the United Nations Development Group, relevant United Nations funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations and institutions, including the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Organization of American States, the Caribbean Community and the Inter-American Development Bank, and other major stakeholders;

10. *Also requests* the Advisory Group to submit a report on its work, with recommendations, as appropriate, to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2009.

*40th plenary meeting  
23 July 2008*

### **2008/11. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women,<sup>17</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>18</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>19</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>20</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2007/7 of 24 July 2007 and other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>21</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the importance of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Noting* the resumption of bilateral negotiations within the Middle East peace process on its agreed basis, and expressing the need for the speedy achievement of a final and comprehensive peace settlement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides,

*Reaffirming* the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

*Concerned* about the grave situation of Palestinian women resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including settlement activities and the unlawful construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods and the

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<sup>17</sup> E/CN.6/2008/6.

<sup>18</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>20</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>21</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

many severe consequences arising from Israeli military operations in and sieges of civilian areas, in particular in the Gaza Strip, which have impacted detrimentally their social and economic conditions and deepened the humanitarian crisis faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Taking note* of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of 31 August 2005<sup>22</sup> regarding the issue of Palestinian women giving birth at checkpoints, and expressing grave concern at the increasing difficulties faced by pregnant Palestinian women owing to a lack of appropriate and timely antenatal, delivery and post-natal care due to the obstruction of access to proper medical care,

*Recalling* the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*,<sup>23</sup> and recalling also General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 of 20 July 2004,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>24</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>24</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>25</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing its condemnation* of all acts of violence, including all acts of terror, provocation, incitement and destruction, especially the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, many of them women and children, resulting in injury and loss of human life,

*Expressing grave concern* over the increased difficulties faced by Palestinian women, including the sharp increase in poverty, soaring unemployment, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health and education standards as a result of the deterioration in the economic and social conditions on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region,

1. *Calls upon* the concerned parties, as well as the international community, to exert all the efforts necessary to support the resumption of the peace process on its agreed basis, taking into account the common ground already gained, and calls for intensified measures to be taken for the tangible improvement of the difficult situation on the ground and the living conditions faced by Palestinian women and their families;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and encourages all women in the region to take an active role in supporting the peace process;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>26</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907<sup>27</sup> and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of

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<sup>22</sup> A/60/324.

<sup>23</sup> See A/ES-10/273 and Corr.1; see also *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Advisory Opinion, I.C.J. Reports 2004*, p. 136.

<sup>24</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

<sup>26</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>27</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

## Resolutions

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Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>28</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, to promote their development in various fields and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>18</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>19</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>20</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>17</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its fifty-third session, a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*40th plenary meeting  
23 July 2008*

### **2008/12. Report of the Committee for Development Policy on its tenth session**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 59/209 of 20 December 2004 on a smooth transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries,

*Recalling also* its resolutions 2007/34 and 2007/35 of 27 July 2007,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Committee for Development Policy on its tenth session,<sup>29</sup>

2. *Requests* the Committee, at its eleventh session, to examine and make recommendations on the themes chosen by the Economic and Social Council for the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2009;

3. *Takes note* of the proposals made by the Committee regarding its future work programme, in particular regarding the monitoring of the development progress of Cape Verde,<sup>30</sup>

4. *Requests* the Committee to monitor the development progress of countries graduating from the list of least developed countries and to include its findings in its annual report to the Economic and Social Council;

5. *Invites* the Chairperson and, as necessary, other members of the Committee to continue the practice of reporting orally on the work of the Committee.

*41st plenary meeting  
23 July 2008*

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>29</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2008, Supplement No. 13 (E/2008/33)*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. I, para. 9.

## Resolutions

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*Welcoming* the contributions of the Institute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>55</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>56</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,<sup>51</sup>

*Acknowledging* the contributions of the Institute in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the areas of security, international migration, in particular remittances and development, and governance and political participation,

*Recognizing* the contribution of the Institute to the ongoing efforts in gender mainstreaming through its research and training outputs involving national gender machineries, academic institutes, regional intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women;<sup>57</sup>

2. *Requests* the Institute, within its mandate, to continue to assist countries in promoting and supporting the political participation and economic and social advancement of women through training programmes;

3. *Stresses* the critical importance of voluntary financial contributions by Member States to the United Nations Trust Fund for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women to enable it to carry out its mandate, and invites Member States to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund;

4. *Calls for* the diversification of funding resources, and in this regard invites Member States to continue to provide assistance and support to the Institute through voluntary contributions and substantive involvement in its projects and activities;

5. *Looks forward* to the enhanced implementation of the strategic plan of the Institute under the leadership of its new Director, and in this regard urges the Secretary-General to appoint its new Director as a matter of priority.

*40th plenary meeting  
28 July 2009*

### **2009/14. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>58</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>59</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>50</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>51</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2008/11 of 23 July 2008 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of

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<sup>55</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>56</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>57</sup> E/CN.6/2009/11.

<sup>58</sup> E/CN.6/2009/5.

<sup>59</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Reaffirming* the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security and the need to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution,

*Recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>60</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling also* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>61</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>61</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>62</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing grave concern* over the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the sharp increase in poverty, soaring unemployment, increased food insecurity, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern also about the deepening humanitarian crisis and rising insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

*Deploring* the deteriorating economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access by pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Deploring also* the intensified Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, which have caused heavy casualties among civilians, many of them children and women, and widespread damage to homes, United Nations schools and facilities, hospitals and public infrastructure, gravely impacting the provision of vital health and social services to Palestinian women and their families, and emphasizing that the civilian population must be protected,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region,

*Affirming* the importance of exploring means to address the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women in the resolutions of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly under the relevant agenda items,

1. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures for improving the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

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<sup>60</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>61</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>62</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.



2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women in terms of their advancement, their self-reliance and their integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>63</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 1907,<sup>64</sup> the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>12</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the international human rights covenants, in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, integrating a gender perspective into all international assistance programmes;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>59</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>50</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;<sup>51</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>58</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*40th plenary meeting  
28 July 2009*

### **2009/15. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1998/46 of 31 July 1998, annex II of which contains the recommendation that the functional commissions responsible for follow-up to the major United Nations conferences adopt a multi-year thematic programme in their working methods,

*Recalling also* its request, in its resolution 2008/29 of 24 July 2008, that the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council, in accordance with their mandates, as appropriate, contribute to the annual ministerial review and to the Development Cooperation Forum, in the context of their respective annual workplans, taking into account their specificities,

*Recalling further* that, in its resolutions 1987/24 of 26 May 1987, 1990/15 of 24 May 1990, 1996/6 of 22 July 1996, 2001/4 of 24 July 2001 and 2006/9 of 25 July 2006, the Council adopted

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<sup>63</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>64</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

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22. The Chair at each meeting of the Technical Committee shall be elected by the majority vote of those members of the Technical Committee present and voting.

### Resources of the Centre

23. The Centre shall be financed from the following sources:

- (a) Support from the host country;
- (b) Support from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia;
- (c) Income received by the Centre for services provided to beneficiaries;
- (d) Any other funding sources approved by the Board of Governors.

24. The Centre shall endeavour to mobilize sufficient resources to support its activities, in addition to those received from the host country pursuant to the agreement signed between the host country and the United Nations.

25. The United Nations shall maintain separate trust funds for donations for technical cooperation projects or other special contributions for activities of the Centre.

26. The financial resources of the Centre shall be administered in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.<sup>25</sup>

### Amendments

27. Amendments to the present statute shall be adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia.

28. In the event of any procedural matter arising that is not covered by the present statute or rules of procedure adopted by the Board of Governors, the pertinent part of the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia shall apply.

### Entry into force

29. The present statute shall enter into force on the date of its adoption by the Commission.

### 2010/6. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>26</sup>*

*Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>27</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>18</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>28</sup>*

*Recalling also its resolution 2009/14 of 28 July 2009 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,*

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<sup>25</sup> ST/SGB/2003/7 and Amend.1.

<sup>26</sup> E/CN.6/2010/4.

<sup>27</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>28</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

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*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>29</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>30</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>30</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>31</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, the sharp increase in poverty, soaring unemployment, increased food insecurity, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern also about the deepening humanitarian crisis and rising insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

*Deploring* the deteriorating economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the construction and expansion of settlements and the Wall and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the continuing deterioration of the socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the Israeli military operations and the imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of all persons and goods, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

2. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

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<sup>29</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>30</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

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3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>32</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907,<sup>33</sup> the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949<sup>6</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>30</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

5. *Calls upon* the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, integrating a gender perspective into all international assistance programmes;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>27</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>18</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>28</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>26</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*42nd plenary meeting  
20 July 2010*

### **2010/7. Strengthening the institutional arrangements for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 1998 (LX) of 12 May 1976 establishing the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women,

*Recalling also* General Assembly resolution 64/289 of 2 July 2010, in particular the section entitled “Strengthening the institutional arrangements for support of gender equality and the empowerment of women”, and the establishment, as a composite entity, of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, to be known as UN-Women,

*Noting* the transitional arrangements set out in paragraphs 81 to 88 of resolution 64/289, in particular paragraphs 82, 83, 84, 87 and 88,

*Expressing its deep gratitude* for the support offered by the host country during all the years of operation of the Institute,

*Decides* to dissolve the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women as of the date of the adoption of the present resolution.

*42nd plenary meeting  
20 July 2010*

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<sup>32</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>33</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

and Development, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other relevant international and regional organizations;

(ii) Promote an integrated, international and collaborative approach in these areas, particularly to meet the needs of smallholder farmers;

(iii) Promote the exchange, dissemination and diffusion of best practice examples in the area of agricultural science, technology and innovation and promote cooperation between countries in order to face common challenges in matters of science and technology;

(iv) Facilitate new science, technology and innovation policy reviews, as requested by member countries, to emphasize science and technology and information and communications technologies in building human capacity and infrastructure to foster innovation in national development plans and programmes, in close collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and other relevant international development banks and institutions, and consider new modalities to monitor progress for their implementation;

(v) In particular, the Commission should identify opportunities and best practices and synergies in and between e-science, e-engineering and e-education programmes worldwide in the course of performing science, technology and innovation policy reviews;

(vi) Complete and disseminate the new science, technology and innovation policy methodology guidelines and share outcomes and best practices resulting from their implementation;

(vii) Examine new metrics to assess and document outcomes of investments in science and technology and engineering research and development, education and infrastructure, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Bank and member countries that have established programmes in this field of research;

(viii) Continue to provide a forum, in collaboration with its Gender Advisory Board, to share good practice examples and lessons learned in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation policymaking and implementation;

(ix) Consider, on an annual basis, an award, in collaboration with the World Summit on the Information Society World Summit Awards and the International Center for New Media, in Salzburg, Austria, for the innovative application of information and communications technologies in the fields of science, technology and engineering that support development.

*44th plenary meeting  
26 July 2011*

### **2011/18. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>56</sup>*

*Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>57</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women<sup>58</sup> and the outcome documents of the*

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<sup>56</sup> E/CN.6/2011/6.

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>58</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

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twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>10</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2010/6 of 20 July 2010 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>59</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>60</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>60</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>61</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern also about the dire humanitarian crisis and insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the critical socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the Israeli military operations and the imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socio-economic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

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<sup>59</sup> See General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>60</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>61</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

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1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon*, in this regard, the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, and affirms its support for the plan of August 2009 of the Palestinian Authority for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>62</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 1907,<sup>63</sup> the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>30</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>60</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>57</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>58</sup> and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>10</sup>

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>56</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-sixth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*44th plenary meeting  
26 July 2011*

### **2011/19. Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 2009/6 of 24 July 2009,

*Having considered* the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS,<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>63</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>64</sup> See E/2011/109.

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recruitment processes in the relevant organizations, to continue working collaboratively to enhance gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system, including by:

(a) Continuing to work to better align gender equality programming with national priorities, as requested by the Member State concerned, with the aim of integrating gender mainstreaming into policies, legislation and programmes;

(b) Promoting a facilitative and evolving environment for gender mainstreaming at the headquarters level and ensuring that entities within the United Nations system dedicate adequate financial and human resources to gender equality programming at the country level;

(c) Strengthening the coordination of gender-responsive operational activities among entities of the United Nations system through existing coordination mechanisms at the country level and in partnership, where appropriate, with other relevant entities and national partners;

(d) Ensuring that the various existing accountability mechanisms of the United Nations system provide for more coherent, accurate and effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting on gender equality results and on the tracking of gender-related resource allocation and expenditure, including through the promotion of the use, where appropriate, of gender markers, and encouraging the use by United Nations country teams of gender accountability mechanisms to assist and improve their performance at the country level;

(e) Supporting UN-Women in its promotion of increased accountability for gender mainstreaming, including through the systematic use of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, including for United Nations country teams and for assessing individual staff performance;

(f) Securing technical expertise for gender equality in programme planning and implementation to ensure that gender dimensions are systematically addressed and, in this regard, drawing on the gender expertise available in the United Nations system, including in UN-Women, to assist in the preparation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and other development programming frameworks;

(g) Providing ongoing capacity development in the area of gender mainstreaming for all United Nations staff and personnel at the country level, including resident coordinators and members of the United Nations country teams, particularly gender experts, to ensure that they are better able to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(h) Collecting, analysing, using and disseminating comparable data, disaggregated by sex and age, in a regular and systematic manner to guide country programming investments, to support the preparation of corporate and country-level documents, such as the strategic, programmatic and results-based frameworks, and to continue to refine their tools for measuring progress and impact;

(i) Ensuring progress, including through managerial and departmental accountability, towards achieving the goal of a 50/50 gender balance at all levels in the Secretariat and throughout the United Nations system, with due regard to the representation of women from developing countries and keeping in mind the principle of equitable geographical representation, in conformity with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations;

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Council at its substantive session of 2013 a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including the promotion of accountability and progress made in the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan.

*48th plenary meeting  
27 July 2012*

### **2012/25. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>127</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>128</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth

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<sup>127</sup> E/CN.6/2012/6.

<sup>128</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985 (A/CONF.116/28/Rev.1)*, chap. I, sect. A.



World Conference on Women<sup>129</sup> and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>130</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2011/18 of 26 July 2011 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>131</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>132</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>132</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>133</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty and unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply, incidents of domestic violence, and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern about the dire humanitarian crisis and insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including displacement and the confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the Israeli military operations and the imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

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<sup>129</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>130</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>131</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>132</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>133</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, and commends the implementation of the August 2009 plan of the Palestinian Authority for building the institutions of an independent Palestinian State within a 24-month period and the significant achievements made, as confirmed by international institutions, including the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>134</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 1907,<sup>135</sup> the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>136</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>132</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Stresses* the urgent need for sustained and active international involvement, including by the Quartet, to support both parties in resuming, advancing and accelerating the peace process negotiations for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>137</sup> and the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth session;<sup>138</sup>

7. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>128</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>129</sup> and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>130</sup>

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>127</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*48th plenary meeting  
27 July 2012*

### **2012/26. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* the Istanbul Declaration<sup>139</sup> and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020,<sup>140</sup> adopted by the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in

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<sup>134</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>135</sup> See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Hague Conventions and Declarations of 1899 and 1907* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1915).

<sup>136</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>137</sup> S/2003/529, annex.

<sup>138</sup> A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>139</sup> *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9–13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7), chap. I.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. II.

(k) Collecting, analysing, disseminating and using accurate, reliable, comparable and relevant data, disaggregated by sex and age, in a regular and systematic manner, in order to guide country programming, to support the preparation of organization-wide and country-level documents, such as the strategic, programmatic and results-based frameworks and evaluations, and to continue to promote and refine their tools for measuring progress and impact;

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2014 a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the promotion of accountability at both the national and the global levels and on progress made in the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan.

*45th plenary meeting  
24 July 2013*

### **2013/17. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>53</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>54</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>55</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>56</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2012/25 of 27 July 2012 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>57</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>58</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>58</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>59</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights, arbitrary detention and imprisonment, and settler violence against Palestinian civilians, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern about the dire humanitarian crisis and the insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe

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<sup>53</sup> E/CN.6/2013/6.

<sup>54</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>55</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>56</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>57</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>58</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>59</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including displacement and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from Israeli military operations and the imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families,

*Emphasizing* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, and commends the implementation of the August 2009 plan of the Palestinian Authority for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State and the significant achievements made, as confirmed by international institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>60</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>61</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>58</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Stresses* the urgent need for sustained and active international involvement, including by the Quartet, to support both parties in resuming, advancing and accelerating substantive and credible peace process negotiations for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>62</sup> and the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth session,<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>61</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>62</sup> S/2003/529, annex.

<sup>63</sup> A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

7. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>54</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>55</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>56</sup>

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>53</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-eighth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*46th plenary meeting  
24 July 2013*

### **2013/18. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* that in its resolutions 1987/24 of 26 May 1987, 1990/15 of 24 May 1990, 1996/6 of 22 July 1996, 2001/4 of 24 July 2001, 2006/9 of 25 July 2006 and 2009/15 of 28 July 2009, the Council adopted multi-year programmes of work for a focused and thematic approach for the Commission on the Status of Women,

*Recalling also* that in its resolution 2009/15, the Council confirmed that the Commission should maintain its current working methods, as adopted by the Council in its resolution 2006/9, and should continue to keep its working methods under review,

*Recalling further* that in its resolution 2009/15, the Council decided that the Commission at its fifty-seventh session, in 2013, would discuss the possibility of conducting, in 2015, a review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>64</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>65</sup>

*Recalling* that in its resolution 2009/15, the Council decided that at its fifty-seventh session the Commission would decide on priority themes for future sessions,

*Recalling also* its resolution 2012/30 of 27 July 2012, in which the Council called upon its functional commissions, the regional commissions and other subsidiary bodies, within their respective mandates, to provide coherent support to the Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of all major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social, environmental and related fields, and noting in this regard the ongoing review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 of 20 November 2006 on strengthening of the Council,

*Reaffirming* the central role of the Commission in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly,

*Recognizing* that the organization of work of the Commission should contribute to advancing and accelerating the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly at the local, national, regional and international levels, and in this regard stressing the need to further enhance the impact of the work of the Commission,

*Recognizing also* that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the fulfilment of the obligations of States parties under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women<sup>66</sup> are mutually reinforcing in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women,

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<sup>64</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>65</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>66</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

# Resolutions

## 2014/1. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>1</sup>*

*Recalling the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>2</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>3</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>4</sup>*

*Recalling also its resolution 2013/17 of 24 July 2013 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 on women and peace and security,*

*Recalling further the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>5</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,*

*Recalling the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>6</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>6</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>7</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,*

*Expressing deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,*

*Expressing grave concern about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights, arbitrary detention and imprisonment and escalating settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their property, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply and unsafe drinking water, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, and expressing grave concern about the dire humanitarian crisis and the insecurity and instability on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip,*

*Deploring the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the forced displacement of civilians and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including the permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,*

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<sup>1</sup> E/CN.6/2014/6.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>4</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>6</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

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*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from Israeli military operations, including those in November 2012, and the continuing imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families, and recognizing the essential efforts and support being provided by the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian aid organizations on the ground,

*Reiterating* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration into the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, commends the implementation of the August 2009 plan of the Palestinian Authority for constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State and the significant achievements made, as confirmed by international institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, and calls for continued support of these efforts;

3. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>8</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>9</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>6</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

5. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

6. *Stresses* the urgent need for sustained and active international involvement, including by the Quartet, to assist the parties in advancing and accelerating peace process negotiations for the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the independence of a democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its neighbours, on the basis of United Nations resolutions, the Quartet road map to a permanent two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict<sup>10</sup> and the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth session,<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>10</sup> S/2003/529, annex.

<sup>11</sup> A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

7. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>2</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action,<sup>3</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;<sup>4</sup>

8. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>1</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

22nd plenary meeting  
12 June 2014

## **2014/2. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Reaffirming* its agreed conclusions 1997/2 of 18 July 1997 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system,<sup>12</sup> and recalling its resolutions on the subject matter, including resolutions 2011/6 of 14 July 2011, 2012/24 of 27 July 2012 and 2013/16 of 24 July 2013,

*Reaffirming also* the commitments to gender equality and the advancement of women made at the Millennium Summit,<sup>13</sup> the 2005 World Summit,<sup>14</sup> the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals,<sup>15</sup> the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development<sup>16</sup> and other major United Nations summits, conferences and special sessions, and reaffirming further that their full, effective and accelerated implementation is integral to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals,

*Reaffirming further* the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres and to further undertake to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender,

*Reaffirming* that gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and constitutes a critical strategy in the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>17</sup> and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>18</sup> as well as in the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,<sup>19</sup>

*Underlining* the catalytic role played by the Commission on the Status of Women and the important roles played by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and taking note of the agreed conclusions and decisions of the Commission related to the promotion and monitoring of gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system,

<sup>12</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1)*, chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.

<sup>13</sup> See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

<sup>14</sup> See General Assembly resolution 60/1.

<sup>15</sup> See General Assembly resolution 65/1.

<sup>16</sup> See General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

<sup>17</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>18</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>19</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5–13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.



to promote more coherent, accurate and effective monitoring and reporting on progress on gender equality, the impact of the promotion of gender equality and the use of common indicators on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, taking into account the situation of women and girls who face discrimination and marginalization and those in vulnerable situations;

(o) Continuing to promote the institutionalization of transparency and robust accountability systems, with a focus on assessing gender mainstreaming, including at the level of United Nations country teams, through capitalizing on the lessons learned from the design and implementation of the System-wide Action Plan, while both expanding and drawing on assets and resources instituted to support the implementation of such transparency and accountability systems;

(p) Facilitating complementarity among accountability instruments at the global and country levels;

(q) Striving for both dedicated results at the outcome level and the mainstreaming of gender equality considerations through other priority areas;

(r) Ensuring adequate resources for meeting gender-related goals and targets across the post-2015 development framework;

15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 2016, a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including on the promotion of accountability at both the national and the global levels and on progress made in the implementation of the System-wide Action Plan.

*36th plenary meeting  
10 June 2015*

### **2015/13. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>66</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>67</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>68</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>69</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2014/1 of 12 June 2014 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution [57/337](#) of 3 July 2003, on the prevention of armed conflict, and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and 2122 (2013) of 18 October 2013 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>70</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>71</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>71</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>72</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

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<sup>66</sup> E/CN.6/2015/5.

<sup>67</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A

<sup>68</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>69</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>70</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>71</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

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*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council,

*Taking note* of the recent accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law treaties,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including as a result of the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights, arbitrary detention and imprisonment and escalating settler violence against Palestinian civilians and their properties, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply and unsafe drinking water, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where a grave humanitarian crisis continues to severely affect the situation of women and girls,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the forced displacement of civilians, especially among the Bedouin community, and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including the permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health-care services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Condemning* the military conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 and the civilian casualties caused, including the killing and injury of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children, women and elderly persons, as well as the widespread destruction of homes and critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water, sanitation and electricity networks, economic, industrial and agricultural properties, public institutions, religious sites and United Nations schools and facilities, as well as the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and any violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, about the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, including that resulting from the Israeli military operations in July and August 2014, as well as the long-term negative impact of Israeli military operations from December 2008 to January 2009 and in November 2012, and the continuing imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the need for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Stressing also* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families, and recognizing the essential efforts and support being provided by the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian aid organizations on the ground, particularly in response to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip,

*Welcoming* the convening of the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, on 12 October 2014, and urging the timely and full disbursement of pledges for expediting the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families,

*Reiterating* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of

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all women in the region, and stressing the importance of women's equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and immense reconstruction and recovery needs in the Gaza Strip, and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, commends the achievements of the Palestinian Government in constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State, as confirmed by international institutions, including by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, and calls for continued support of these efforts;

3. *Calls upon* international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges made at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>73</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949<sup>74</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>71</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

5. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

6. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

7. *Urges* the international community to make renewed efforts aimed at advancing and accelerating the conclusion of a peace treaty based on clear parameters and with a defined time frame to attain without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 by resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the internationally recognized basis of the two-State solution, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East;

8. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>67</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>68</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>69</sup>

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in his report,<sup>66</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*36th plenary meeting  
10 June 2015*

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<sup>73</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>74</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

(b) Sixty-second session (2018):

(i) Priority theme: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;

(ii) Review theme: Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women (agreed conclusions of the forty-seventh session);

(c) Sixty-third session (2019):

(i) Priority theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

(ii) Review theme: Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the sixtieth session);

2. *Requests* the Commission, in order to achieve concrete results in each review cycle, to consider and make a recommendation at its sixty-second session on how best to utilize the year 2020, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

3. *Affirms* that the Commission will contribute to the thematic reviews of progress on the Sustainable Development Goals taking place at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

*27th plenary meeting  
2 June 2016*

#### **2016/4. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>21</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>22</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>23</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>24</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2015/13 of 10 June 2015 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and 2122 (2013) of 18 October 2013 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>25</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>26</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>26</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>27</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

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<sup>21</sup> E/CN.6/2016/6.

<sup>22</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>23</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>24</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

<sup>25</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>26</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

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*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council,

*Taking note* of the accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law treaties,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including as a result of the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights, and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply and unsafe drinking water, shortage of electricity and fuel, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian disaster continues to severely affect the situation of women and girls,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the forced displacement and transfer of civilians, especially among the Bedouin community, and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including the permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health-care services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Expressing grave concern* about all acts of violence, intimidation and provocation by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including women and children, and properties, including homes, mosques, churches and agricultural lands, condemning acts of terror by several extremist Israeli settlers, and calling for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard,

*Gravely concerned* by the tensions and violence in the recent period throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and deploring the loss of innocent civilian life, including among girls and women, as a result of excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupying forces,

*Condemning* the military conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 and the civilian casualties caused, including the killing and injury of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children, women and elderly persons, as well as the widespread destruction of homes and critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water, sanitation and electricity networks, economic, industrial and agricultural properties, public institutions, religious sites and United Nations schools and facilities, as well as the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and any violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law,

*Taking note* of the report and findings of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1,<sup>28</sup> and stressing the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, by the persisting disastrous humanitarian situation and socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip, including those resulting from the Israeli military operations in July and August 2014, as well as the long-term negative impact of Israeli military operations from December 2008 to January 2009 and in November 2012, and the continuing imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction

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<sup>28</sup> [A/HRC/29/52](#).

process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the need for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, consistent with the provisions and obligations under international humanitarian law,

*Stressing also* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families, and recognizing the essential efforts and support being provided by the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian aid organizations on the ground, particularly in response to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip,

*Recalling* the convening of the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, on 12 October 2014, and urging the timely and full disbursement of pledges for expediting the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families,

*Expressing grave concern* that Palestinian women and girls continue to be held in Israeli prisons or detention centres under harsh conditions, including, inter alia, unhygienic conditions, solitary confinement, extensive use of administrative detention of excessive duration without charge and denial of due process, and noting that women and girls also face gender-specific challenges, including inadequate access to medical care, risks associated with pregnancy and giving birth in prison and sexual harassment,

*Reiterating* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of women's equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>29</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and immense reconstruction and recovery needs in the Gaza Strip, and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, commends the achievements of the Palestinian Government in constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State, as confirmed by international institutions, including by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, and calls for continued support of these efforts;

3. *Calls upon* international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges made on 12 October 2014 at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>30</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949<sup>31</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>26</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

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<sup>29</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1.

<sup>30</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>31</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

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5. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

6. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

7. *Urges* the international community to make renewed efforts aimed at advancing and accelerating the conclusion of a peace treaty based on clear parameters and with a defined time frame to attain without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 by resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the internationally recognized basis of the two-State solution, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East;

8. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>22</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>23</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”;<sup>24</sup>

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in his report,<sup>21</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*27th plenary meeting  
2 June 2016*

### **2016/5. United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolutions [2013/12](#) of 22 July 2013, [2014/10](#) of 13 June 2014 and [2015/8](#) of 9 June 2015 on the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases,

*Acknowledging* that the global burden and threat of non-communicable diseases, principally cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, which are linked to four main risk factors, namely, tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, as well as the global burden of mental health and neurological issues, constitute major challenges for economic and social development in the twenty-first century and may lead to increasing inequalities within and between countries and populations,

*Reaffirming* General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which the Assembly adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets and affirmed its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030, its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, its commitment to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner, and to building upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seeking to address their unfinished business,

*Reaffirming also* General Assembly resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, supports and complements it, helps to contextualize its means of implementation targets with concrete policies and actions, and reaffirms the strong political commitment to address the challenge of financing and creating an enabling environment at all levels for sustainable development in the spirit of global partnership and solidarity,

*Welcoming* the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, while highlighting the integrality of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, goals and targets related to health and non-communicable diseases,

**2017/10. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>65</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>66</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>67</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>68</sup>

*Recalling also* its resolution 2016/4 of 2 June 2016 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and 2122 (2013) of 18 October 2013 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>69</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>70</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>70</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>71</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council,

*Taking note* of the accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law treaties,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including as a result of the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply and unsafe drinking water, shortages of electricity and fuel, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian disaster continues to severely affect the situation of women and girls,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the forced displacement and transfer of civilians, especially among the Bedouin community, and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including the permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health-care services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

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<sup>65</sup> [E/CN.6/2017/6](#).

<sup>66</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>67</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>68</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>69</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>70</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.



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*Expressing grave concern* about all acts of violence, intimidation and provocation by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including women and children, and properties, including homes, mosques, churches and agricultural lands, condemning acts of terror by several extremist Israeli settlers, and calling for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard,

*Gravely concerned* by the tensions and violence over the recent period throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and deploring the loss of innocent civilian life, including among girls and women, as a result of excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupying forces,

*Condemning* the military conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 and the civilian casualties caused, including the killing and injury of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children, women and elderly persons, as well as the widespread destruction of homes and critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water, sanitation and electricity networks, economic, industrial and agricultural properties, public institutions, religious sites and United Nations schools and facilities, as well as the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and any violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law,

*Taking note* of the report and findings of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1,<sup>72</sup> and stressing the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, by the persisting disastrous humanitarian situation and socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip, including those resulting from the Israeli military operations in July and August 2014, as well as the long-term negative impact of Israeli military operations from December 2008 to January 2009 and in November 2012, and the continuing imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the need for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, consistent with the provisions and obligations under international humanitarian law,

*Stressing also* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families, and recognizing the essential efforts and support being provided by the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian aid organizations on the ground, particularly in response to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip,

*Recalling* the convening of the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, on 12 October 2014, and urging the timely and full disbursement of pledges for expediting the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families,

*Expressing grave concern* that Palestinian women and girls continue to be held in Israeli prisons or detention centres under harsh conditions, including, inter alia, unhygienic conditions, solitary confinement, extensive use of administrative detention of excessive duration without charge and denial of due process, and noting that women and girls also face gender-specific challenges, including inadequate access to medical care, risks associated with pregnancy and giving birth in prison and sexual harassment,

*Reiterating* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of women's equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

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<sup>72</sup> [A/HRC/29/52](#).

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1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;
2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>73</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and immense reconstruction and recovery needs in the Gaza Strip, and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, commends the achievements of the Palestinian Government in constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State, as confirmed by international institutions, including by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, and calls for continued support of these efforts;
3. *Calls upon* international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges made on 12 October 2014 at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families;
4. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>74</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>75</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>70</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;
5. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;
6. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;
7. *Urges* the international community to make renewed efforts aimed at advancing and accelerating the conclusion of a peace treaty based on clear parameters and with a defined time frame to attain without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 by resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the internationally recognized basis of the two-State solution, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East;
8. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>66</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>67</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>68</sup>
9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>65</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-second session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*32nd plenary meeting  
7 June 2017*

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<sup>73</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1.

<sup>74</sup> General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

<sup>75</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

3. *Strongly encourages* Governments to continue to support the role and contribution of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and women's organizations, as well as national human rights institutions where they exist, in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and in this regard calls upon Governments to collaborate with relevant stakeholders at all levels on preparations for the 2020 review so as to benefit from their experience and expertise;

**B. Themes for the Commission on the Status of Women in 2021 and beyond**

4. *Requests* the Commission at its sixty-fourth session to decide on its future multi-year programme of work;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its sixty-fourth session a report containing proposals on the Commission's priority and review themes for 2021 and beyond.

*34th plenary meeting  
12 June 2018*

**2018/9. Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recognizing* the significance of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995,

*Recalling* that the Council, in its resolution [2016/3](#) of 2 June 2016, requested the Commission on the Status of Women, in order to achieve concrete results in each review cycle, to consider and make a recommendation at its sixty-second session on how best to utilize the year 2020, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls,

1. *Decides* to recommend to the General Assembly that, in order to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, a one-day high-level meeting of the Assembly be convened in the margins of the general debate of the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, and that the outcome of the high-level meeting take the form of a Chair's summary;

2. *Recommends* that the President of the General Assembly conduct consultations to finalize the organizational arrangements for the high-level meeting of the Assembly.

*34th plenary meeting  
12 June 2018*

**2018/10. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered with appreciation* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>62</sup>

*Recalling* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>63</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women,<sup>64</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> [E/CN.6/2018/6](#).

<sup>63</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>64</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>65</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

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*Recalling also* its resolution 2017/10 of 7 June 2017 and other relevant United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 57/337 of 3 July 2003 on the prevention of armed conflict and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000 and 2122 (2013) of 18 October 2013 on women and peace and security,

*Recalling further* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>66</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>67</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>67</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>68</sup> and reaffirming that these human rights instruments must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem,

*Recalling also* the relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council,

*Taking note* of the accession by the State of Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law treaties,

*Deeply regretting* that 51 years have passed since the onset of the Israeli occupation, stressing the urgent need for efforts to reverse the negative trends on the ground and to restore a political horizon for advancing and accelerating meaningful negotiations aimed at the achievement of a peace agreement that will bring a complete end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 and the resolution of all core final status issues, without exception, leading to a peaceful, just, lasting and comprehensive solution of the question of Palestine, and stressing the importance of the inclusion of women in the peace negotiations and peacebuilding processes,

*Expressing deep concern* about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations,

*Expressing grave concern* about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation, including as a result of the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians, the revocation of residency rights and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply and unsafe drinking water, a sanitation crisis, shortages of electricity and fuel, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards, including the rising incidence of trauma and the decline in their psychological well-being, particularly in the Gaza Strip, where a humanitarian disaster continues to severely affect the situation of women and girls,

*Deploring* the dire economic and social conditions of Palestinian women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the systematic violation of their human rights resulting from the severe impact of ongoing illegal Israeli practices, including the forced displacement and transfer of civilians, especially among the Bedouin community, and confiscation of land, particularly in connection with the construction and expansion of settlements and the wall, which continue to constitute a major obstacle to peace on the basis of the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders, and the continued imposition of closures and restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, including the permit regime throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which have detrimentally affected their right to health care, including access of pregnant women to health-care services for antenatal care and safe delivery, education, employment, development and freedom of movement,

*Expressing grave concern* about all acts of violence, intimidation and provocation by Israeli settlers against Palestinian civilians, including women and children, and properties, including homes, mosques, churches and agricultural lands, condemning acts of terror by several extremist Israeli settlers, and calling for accountability for the illegal actions perpetrated in this regard,

*Gravely concerned* by the tensions and violence over the recent period throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and deploring the loss of innocent civilian life, including among girls and women, as a result of excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israeli occupying forces,

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<sup>66</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>67</sup> See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

<sup>68</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

*Condemning* the military conflict in and around the Gaza Strip in July and August 2014 and the civilian casualties caused, including the killing and injury of thousands of Palestinian civilians, including hundreds of children, women and elderly persons, as well as the widespread destruction of homes and critical civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals, water, sanitation and electricity networks, economic, industrial and agricultural properties, public institutions, religious sites and United Nations schools and facilities, as well as the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, and any violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law,

*Taking note* of the report and findings of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [S-21/1](#),<sup>69</sup> and stressing the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Gravely concerned*, in particular, by the persisting disastrous humanitarian situation and socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip, including those resulting from the Israeli military operations in July and August 2014, as well as the long-term negative impact of Israeli military operations from December 2008 to January 2009 and in November 2012, and the continuing imposition of a blockade consisting of the prolonged closure of border crossings and severe restrictions on the movement of persons and goods, as well as the continued impeding of the reconstruction process by Israel, the occupying Power, which has detrimentally affected every aspect of the lives of the civilian population, especially women and children, in the Gaza Strip,

*Stressing* the need for measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, consistent with the provisions and obligations under international humanitarian law,

*Stressing also* the importance of providing assistance, especially emergency assistance, to alleviate the dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation being faced by Palestinian women and their families, and recognizing the essential efforts and support being provided by the United Nations agencies and other humanitarian aid organizations on the ground, particularly in response to the grave humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip,

*Recalling* the convening of the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, on 12 October 2014, and urging the timely and full disbursement of pledges for expediting the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families,

*Expressing grave concern* that Palestinian women and girls continue to be held in Israeli prisons or detention centres under harsh conditions, including, inter alia, unhygienic conditions, solitary confinement, extensive use of administrative detention of excessive duration without charge and denial of due process, and noting that women and girls also face gender-specific challenges, including inadequate access to medical care, risks associated with pregnancy and giving birth in prison and sexual harassment,

*Reiterating* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of women's equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains the major obstacle for Palestinian women with regard to their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society, and stresses the importance of efforts to increase their role in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and to ensure their equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security;

2. *Calls upon* the international community, in this regard, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>70</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and immense reconstruction and

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<sup>69</sup> [A/HRC/29/52](#).

<sup>70</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

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recovery needs in the Gaza Strip, and to help in the reconstruction of relevant Palestinian institutions, with the integration of a gender perspective into all of its international assistance programmes, commends the achievements of the Palestinian Government in constructing the institutions of an independent Palestinian State, as confirmed by international institutions, including by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations, and calls for continued support of these efforts;

3. *Calls upon* international donors to fulfil without delay all pledges made on 12 October 2014 at the Cairo International Conference on Palestine: Reconstructing Gaza, in order to expedite the provision of humanitarian assistance and the reconstruction process, which is essential for alleviating the distress of Palestinian women and their families;

4. *Demands* that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>71</sup> the Regulations annexed to the Hague Convention IV of 18 October 1907, the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>72</sup> and all other relevant rules, principles and instruments of international law, including the International Covenants on Human Rights,<sup>67</sup> in order to protect the rights of Palestinian women and their families;

5. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families living under Israeli occupation;

6. *Calls upon* Israel to facilitate the return of all refugees and displaced Palestinian women and children to their homes and properties, in compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions;

7. *Urges* the international community to make renewed efforts aimed at advancing and accelerating the conclusion of a peace treaty based on clear parameters and with a defined time frame to attain without delay an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 by resolving all outstanding issues, including all core issues, without exception, for a just, lasting and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with the internationally recognized basis of the two-State solution, and of the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, for the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East;

8. *Requests* the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>63</sup> in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children, the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>64</sup> and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>65</sup>

9. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report,<sup>62</sup> and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-third session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

*34th plenary meeting  
12 June 2018*

### **2018/11. Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Reaffirming* General Assembly resolution [46/182](#) of 19 December 1991 and the guiding principles contained in the annex thereto, and recalling other relevant resolutions of the Assembly and relevant resolutions and agreed conclusions of the Economic and Social Council,

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<sup>71</sup> General Assembly resolution [217 A \(III\)](#).

<sup>72</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

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15. *Encourages* the Non-Self-Governing Territories to take steps to establish or strengthen disaster preparedness and management institutions and policies;

16. *Requests* the administering Powers concerned to continue their cooperation with the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, in the framework of the responsibilities established in Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular subparagraph *d*, and to facilitate, when appropriate, the participation of appointed and elected representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories in the relevant meetings and conferences of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system, in accordance with relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, including the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on specific Territories, so that they may benefit from the related activities of those agencies and organizations;

17. *Recommends* that all Governments intensify their efforts within the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system of which they are members to accord priority to the question of providing assistance to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories on a case-by-case basis;

18. *Draws the attention* of the Special Committee to the present resolution and to the discussion held on the subject at the 2019 session of the Economic and Social Council;

19. *Recalls* the adoption by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on 16 May 1998 of its resolution 574 (XXVII),<sup>195</sup> in which the Commission called for the mechanisms necessary for its associate members, including the Non-Self-Governing Territories, to participate, subject to the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, in the special sessions of the Assembly convened to review and assess the implementation of the plans of action of those United Nations world conferences in which the Territories had originally participated in their capacity as observers, and in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies;

20. *Requests* the President of the Council to continue to maintain close contact on those matters with the Chair of the Special Committee and to report thereon to the Council;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to follow up on the implementation of the present resolution, paying particular attention to cooperation and integration arrangements for maximizing the efficiency of the assistance activities undertaken by various organizations of the United Nations system, and to report thereon to the Council at its 2020 session;

22. *Decides* to keep the above questions under continuous review.

*37th plenary meeting  
23 July 2019*

### **2019/28. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>196</sup>

*Recalling* its relevant resolutions and all other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling also* Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) of 31 October 2000, including its call upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, and its emphasis on the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity,

*Recalling further* the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1998, Supplement No. 21 (E/1998/41)*, chap. III, sect. G.

<sup>196</sup> [E/CN.6/2019/6](#).

<sup>197</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

*Recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>198</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Reaffirming* the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and the need to end all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of human rights,

*Reaffirming also* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>199</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>200</sup> the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>201</sup> and the political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session,<sup>202</sup> and reaffirming its commitment to their full, effective and accelerated implementation,

*Reaffirming further* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, and stressing the importance of women’s equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security,

*Expressing grave concern* about the continuing systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its impact on women and girls,

*Expressing grave concern also* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women and peaceful demonstrators, and emphasizing that civilian populations must be protected by all parties in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Stressing* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Deeply concerned* about violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, which is underrecognized and underreported, particularly at the community level, and its pervasiveness, which reflects discriminatory norms that reinforce stereotypes and gender inequality and the corresponding impunity and lack of accountability, reiterating the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres in all regions of the world, and re-emphasizing that violence against women and girls violates, and impairs their full enjoyment of, all human rights,

*Noting* the accession by Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, as well as other international treaties, and stressing the need to implement fully obligations under those instruments that protect the rights of women and girls, including during and post-conflict,

*Underlining* the limitations on Palestinian jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which undermine the ability of the Palestinian Government to protect Palestinian women and girls in certain areas,

*Noting* the importance of the agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in facilitating the advancement and empowerment of women in development in line with General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women and girls with regard to the fulfilment of their rights, and their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society;

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<sup>198</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>199</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>200</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>201</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>202</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2015, Supplement No. 7 (E/2015/27)*, chap. I, sect. C, resolution 59/1, annex.



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2. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all measures contrary to international law, as well as discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, and stresses that Palestinian civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict;
3. *Calls for* urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994;
4. *Calls upon* the parties to comply fully with their obligations, including as States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>197</sup> taking fully into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;
5. *Acknowledges* the contribution of national coalitions and committees in advancing women's rights, including those pertaining to resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention and combating violence against women;
6. *Welcomes* the adoption by the Palestinian Government of a national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#);
7. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families, including those living under Israeli occupation, and recognizes the importance of integrating gender considerations across humanitarian programming by seeking to ensure the provision of access to protection and the full range of medical, legal and livelihood and psychosocial services, including services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, without discrimination, and through ensuring that women and women's groups can participate equally and meaningfully and are supported in being leaders in humanitarian action;
8. *Calls upon* the international community, including the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>203</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip;
9. *Recalls* the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, and stresses that the situation of the Palestine refugees, including women and girls, continues to be a matter of grave concern and that they continue to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs, pending a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948;
10. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and urges in this regard the intensification and acceleration of renewed international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative,<sup>204</sup> the Quartet road map<sup>205</sup> and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;
11. *Stresses* the importance of efforts to increase the role of Palestinian women in decision-making and of their equal and meaningful participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and encourages Member States and observer States as well as the United Nations system to ensure systematic attention to, recognition of and support for the crucial role of Palestinian women at all

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<sup>203</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

<sup>204</sup> [A/56/1026-S/2002/932](#), annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>205</sup> [S/2003/529](#), annex.

levels by, inter alia, promoting women's capacity, leadership, participation and engagement in political, economic and humanitarian decision-making;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report, and to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution in his report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Economic and Social Council at its 2020 session.

*37th plenary meeting  
23 July 2019*

**2019/29. Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolutions [73/98](#) of 7 December 2018 and [73/255](#) of 20 December 2018,

*Recalling also* its resolution [2018/20](#) of 24 July 2018,

*Guided* by the principles of the Charter of the United Nations affirming the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and recalling relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [242 \(1967\)](#) of 22 November 1967, [252 \(1968\)](#) of 21 May 1968, [338 \(1973\)](#) of 22 October 1973, [465 \(1980\)](#) of 1 March 1980, [497 \(1981\)](#) of 17 December 1981 and [2334 \(2016\)](#) of 23 December 2016,

*Recalling* the resolutions of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, including resolutions [ES-10/13](#) of 21 October 2003, [ES-10/14](#) of 8 December 2003, [ES-10/15](#) of 20 July 2004 and [ES-10/17](#) of 15 December 2006,

*Taking note* of the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, as transmitted by the Secretary-General,<sup>206</sup>

*Reaffirming* the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,<sup>207</sup> to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967,

*Recalling* the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>208</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>208</sup> and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>209</sup> and affirming that these human rights instruments are applicable and must be respected in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan,

*Noting with concern* that more than 70 years have passed since the adoption of General Assembly resolution [181 \(II\)](#) of 29 November 1947 and 52 years since the occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in 1967,

*Taking note*, in this regard, of Palestine's accession to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions as well as other international treaties,

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<sup>206</sup> [A/74/88-E/2019/72](#).

<sup>207</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

<sup>208</sup> See General Assembly resolution [2200 A \(XXI\)](#), annex.

<sup>209</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.

22. *Decides* to include the item entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” in the agenda of its 2022 session.

*1st plenary meeting  
14 September 2020*

**2021/5. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>25</sup>

*Recalling* its relevant resolutions and all other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling also* Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) of 31 October 2000, including its call upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, and its emphasis on the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity,

*Recalling further* the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>26</sup>

*Recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>27</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Reaffirming* the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and the need to end all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of human rights,

*Reaffirming also* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>28</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>29</sup> the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>30</sup> and the political declaration on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session,<sup>31</sup> and reaffirming its commitment to their full, effective and accelerated implementation,

*Reaffirming further* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, stressing the importance of women’s equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and

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<sup>25</sup> [E/CN.6/2019/6](#).

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>27</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>28</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>29</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>30</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>31</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2015, Supplement No. 7 (E/2015/27)*, chap. I, sect. C, resolution 59/1, annex.

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promotion of peace and security, and welcoming in this regard the global call by international women leaders made on 1 July 2020,

*Expressing grave concern* about the continuing systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its impact on women and girls,

*Expressing grave concern also* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women and peaceful demonstrators, and emphasizing that civilian populations must be protected by all parties in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Stressing* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Deeply concerned* about violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, which is underrecognized and underreported, particularly at the community level, and its pervasiveness, which reflects discriminatory norms that reinforce stereotypes and gender inequality and the corresponding impunity and lack of accountability, reiterating the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres in all regions of the world, and re-emphasizing that violence against women and girls violates, and impairs their full enjoyment of, all human rights,

*Noting* the accession by Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, as well as other international treaties, and stressing the need to implement fully obligations under those instruments that protect the rights of women and girls, including during and post-conflict,

*Noting also* the importance of giving high priority to the swift adoption of the Family Protection Law to ensure that women and girls are protected from gender-based violence, including domestic violence,

*Underlining* the limitations on Palestinian jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which undermine the ability of the Palestinian Government to protect Palestinian women and girls in certain areas,

*Noting* the importance of the agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in facilitating the advancement and empowerment of women in development in line with General Assembly resolution [71/243](#) of 21 December 2016,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women and girls with regard to the fulfilment of their rights, and their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society;

2. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all measures contrary to international law, as well as discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, and stresses that Palestinian civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict;

3. *Calls for* urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994;

4. *Calls upon* the parties to comply fully with their obligations, including as States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking fully into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

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5. *Acknowledges* the contribution of national coalitions and committees in advancing women's rights, including those pertaining to resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention and combating violence against women;

6. *Welcomes* the adoption by the Palestinian Government of a national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) as well as of initiatives at the legislative, administrative and security levels to advance women's rights, notably in relation to family law and combating violence against women;

7. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families, including those living under Israeli occupation, and recognizes the importance of integrating gender considerations across humanitarian programming by seeking to ensure the provision of access to protection and the full range of medical, legal and livelihood and psychosocial services, including services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, without discrimination, and through ensuring that women and women's groups can participate equally and meaningfully and are supported in being leaders in humanitarian action;

8. *Calls upon* the international community, including the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>32</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in the Gaza Strip;

9. *Recalls* the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, and stresses that the situation of the Palestine refugees, including women and girls, continues to be a matter of grave concern and that they continue to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs, pending a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948;

10. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and urges in this regard the intensification and acceleration of renewed international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative,<sup>33</sup> the Quartet road map<sup>34</sup> and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;

11. *Stresses* the importance of efforts to increase the role of Palestinian women in decision-making and of their equal and meaningful participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and encourages Member States and observer States as well as the United Nations system to ensure systematic attention to, recognition of and support for the crucial role of Palestinian women at all levels by, inter alia, promoting women's capacity, leadership, participation and engagement in political, economic and humanitarian decision-making and by improving the gender balance in senior civilian government positions and in security functions;

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<sup>32</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

<sup>33</sup> [A/56/1026-S/2002/932](#), annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>34</sup> [S/2003/529](#), annex.

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report, and to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution in his report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Economic and Social Council at its 2021 session.

*1st plenary meeting  
14 September 2020*

**2021/6. Programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2022–2024**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recalling* its resolution 2020/14 of 17 July 2020, entitled “Outcome of the fifteenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests”,

*Adopts* the programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for the period 2022–2024, as contained in the annex to the present resolution.

*8th plenary meeting  
8 June 2021*

**Annex**

**Programme of work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for its seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth sessions**

Table 1

**Seventeenth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests, 2022 (policy session)**

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*Priorities in support of implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017–2030*

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1. Thematic priorities for the biennium 2021–2022: selected global forest goals and associated targets in accordance with the sixteenth session of the Forum and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair’s summary from the sixteenth session
2. Other policy session items and consideration of relevant proposals contained in the Chair’s summary from the sixteenth session
  - (a) New announcements of voluntary national contributions
  - (b) Updates by stakeholders and partners on activities in support of the thematic priorities
    - (i) Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its workplan
    - (ii) Regional and subregional organizations and processes
    - (iii) Major groups and other relevant stakeholders, including the private sector and philanthropic community
  - (c) Interlinkages between the global forest goals and targets and the Sustainable Development Goals under review by the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2022 and international forest-related developments

between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people, in order to pave the way for the realization of the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within recognized borders, based on the pre-1967 borders, and the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the present resolution and to continue to include in the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator an update on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, in collaboration with relevant United Nations agencies;

22. *Decides* to include the item entitled “Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan” in the agenda of its 2023 session.

*34th plenary meeting  
22 July 2022*

### **2022/23. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>161</sup>

*Recalling* its relevant resolutions and all other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling also* Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) of 31 October 2000, including its call upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, and its emphasis on the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity,

*Recalling further* the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>162</sup>

*Recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>163</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Reaffirming* the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and the need to end all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of human rights,

*Reaffirming also* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>164</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>165</sup> the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>166</sup> and the political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session,<sup>167</sup> and reaffirming its commitment to their full, effective and accelerated implementation,

*Reaffirming further* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, stressing the importance of women’s equal participation and involvement in all

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<sup>161</sup> See [A/77/90-E/2022/66](#).

<sup>162</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>163</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).

<sup>164</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>165</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>166</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>167</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 7 (E/2020/27)*, chap. I, sect. A.

## Resolutions

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efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and welcoming in this regard the global call by international women leaders made on 1 July 2020,

*Expressing grave concern* about the continuing systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its impact on women and girls,

*Expressing grave concern also* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women, peaceful demonstrators and journalists, and emphasizing that civilian populations must be protected by all parties in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Strongly condemning*, in this regard, the killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and stressing the need to promptly ensure accountability,

*Stressing* the need for the protection of civil society actors to allow them to conduct their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment from any party, and rejecting any attacks against civil society,

*Stressing also* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Deeply concerned* about violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, which is underrecognized and underreported, particularly at the community level, and its pervasiveness, which reflects discriminatory norms that reinforce stereotypes and gender inequality and the corresponding impunity and lack of accountability, reiterating the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres in all regions of the world, and re-emphasizing that violence against women and girls violates, and impairs their full enjoyment of, all human rights,

*Noting* the accession by Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, as well as other international treaties, and stressing the need to implement fully obligations under those instruments that protect the rights of women and girls, including during and post-conflict,

*Noting also* the importance of giving high priority to the swift adoption of the Family Protection Law to ensure that women and girls are protected from gender-based violence, including domestic violence,

*Underlining* the limitations on Palestinian jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which undermine the ability of the Palestinian Government to protect Palestinian women and girls in certain areas,

*Noting* the importance of the agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in facilitating the advancement and empowerment of women in development in line with General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) of 21 December 2020,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women and girls with regard to the fulfilment of their rights, and their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society;

2. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all measures contrary to international law, as well as discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, and stresses that Palestinian civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict;

3. *Calls for* urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994;

4. *Calls upon* the parties to comply fully with their obligations, including as States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking fully into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

5. *Acknowledges* the contribution of national coalitions and committees in advancing women's rights, including those pertaining to resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention and combating violence against women;



## Resolutions

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6. *Welcomes* the adoption by the Palestinian Government of a national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) as well as of initiatives at the legislative, administrative and security levels to advance women's rights, notably in relation to family law and combating violence against women;

7. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families, including those living under Israeli occupation, and recognizes the importance of integrating gender considerations across humanitarian programming by seeking to ensure the provision of access to protection and the full range of medical, legal and livelihood and psychosocial services, including services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, without discrimination, and through ensuring that women and women's groups can participate equally and meaningfully and are supported in being leaders in humanitarian action;

8. *Calls upon* the international community, including the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>168</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and deteriorating socioeconomic and psychosocial conditions in the Gaza Strip;

9. *Recalls* the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, and stresses that the situation of the Palestine refugees, including women and girls, continues to be a matter of grave concern and that they continue to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs, pending a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution [194 \(III\)](#) of 11 December 1948;

10. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and urges in this regard the intensification and acceleration of renewed international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative,<sup>169</sup> the Quartet road map<sup>170</sup> and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;

11. *Stresses* the importance of efforts to increase the role of Palestinian women in decision-making and of their full, equal and meaningful participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and encourages Member States and observer States as well as the United Nations system to ensure systematic attention to, recognition of and support for the crucial role of Palestinian women at all levels by, inter alia, promoting women's capacity, leadership, participation and engagement in political, economic and humanitarian decision-making and by improving the gender balance in senior civilian government positions and in security functions, while recognizing the need to protect women participating in public spaces from threats and reprisals;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report, and to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution in his report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Economic and Social Council at its 2023 session.

*34th plenary meeting  
22 July 2022*

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<sup>168</sup> General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

<sup>169</sup> [A/56/1026-S/2002/932](#), annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>170</sup> [S/2003/529](#), annex.



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
25 August 2023

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## 2023 session

Agenda item 16

**Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan**

## **Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 26 July 2023**

[on a proposal considered in plenary meeting ([E/2023/L.35](#))]

### **2023/35. Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women**

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Having considered* the report of the Secretary-General,<sup>1</sup>

*Recalling* its relevant resolutions and all other relevant United Nations resolutions,

*Recalling also* Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) of 31 October 2000, including its call upon all parties to armed conflict to respect fully international law applicable to the rights and protection of women and girls, especially as civilians, and its emphasis on the responsibility of all States to put an end to impunity,

*Recalling further* the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>2</sup>

*Recalling* the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women<sup>3</sup> as it concerns the protection of civilian populations,

*Reaffirming* the obligations of States and all parties to armed conflict to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as applicable, and the need to end all violations of international humanitarian law and all violations and abuses of human rights,

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<sup>1</sup> [A/78/86-E/2023/83](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.

<sup>3</sup> General Assembly resolution [48/104](#).



*Reaffirming also* the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>4</sup> the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,<sup>5</sup> the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”,<sup>6</sup> and the political declaration on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-fourth session,<sup>7</sup> and reaffirming its commitment to their full, effective and accelerated implementation,

*Reaffirming further* the importance of increasing the role of women in peacebuilding and decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and the peaceful resolution of conflicts as part of efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of all women in the region, stressing the importance of women’s equal participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and welcoming in this regard the global call by international women leaders made on 1 July 2020,

*Expressing grave concern* about the continuing systematic violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel, the occupying Power, and its impact on women and girls,

*Expressing grave concern also* at the deaths of and injuries caused to civilians, including children, women, peaceful demonstrators and journalists, and emphasizing that civilian populations must be protected by all parties in accordance with international humanitarian law,

*Strongly condemning*, in this regard, the killing of the journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, and stressing the need to promptly ensure accountability,

*Stressing* the need for the protection of civil society actors to allow them to conduct their work freely and without fear of attacks and harassment from any party, and rejecting any attacks against civil society,

*Stressing also* the need to ensure accountability for all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in order to end impunity, ensure justice, deter further violations, protect civilians and promote peace,

*Deeply concerned* about violence against women and girls in all its different forms and manifestations worldwide, which is underrecognized and underreported, particularly at the community level, and its pervasiveness, which reflects discriminatory norms that reinforce stereotypes and gender inequality and the corresponding impunity and lack of accountability, reiterating the need to intensify efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres in all regions of the world, and re-emphasizing that violence against women and girls violates, and impairs their full enjoyment of, all human rights,

*Noting* the accession by Palestine to several human rights treaties and the core humanitarian law conventions, as well as other international treaties, and stressing

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<sup>4</sup> *Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15–26 July 1985* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>5</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolution [S-23/2](#), annex, and resolution [S-23/3](#), annex.

<sup>7</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 7 (E/2020/27)*, chap. I, sect. A.

the need to implement fully obligations under those instruments that protect the rights of women and girls, including during and post-conflict,

*Noting also* the importance of giving high priority to the swift adoption of the Family Protection Law to ensure that women and girls are protected from gender-based violence, including domestic violence,

*Underlining* the limitations on Palestinian jurisdiction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which undermine the ability of the Palestinian Government to protect Palestinian women and girls in certain areas,

*Noting* the importance of the agencies, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in facilitating the advancement and empowerment of women in development in line with General Assembly resolution [75/233](#) of 21 December 2020,

1. *Reaffirms* that the Israeli occupation remains a major obstacle for Palestinian women and girls with regard to the fulfilment of their rights, and their advancement, self-reliance and integration in the development of their society;

2. *Calls upon* Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately cease all measures contrary to international law, as well as discriminatory legislation, policies and actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, that violate the human rights of the Palestinian people, and stresses that Palestinian civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by the conflict;

3. *Calls for* urgent measures to ensure the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law and as called for by the Security Council in its resolution [904 \(1994\)](#) of 18 March 1994;

4. *Calls upon* the parties to comply fully with their obligations, including as States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, taking fully into consideration the concluding observations as well as the general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

5. *Acknowledges* the contribution of national coalitions and committees in advancing women's rights, including those pertaining to resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention and combating violence against women;

6. *Welcomes* the adoption by the Palestinian Government of a national action plan for the implementation of resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) as well as of initiatives at the legislative, administrative and security levels to advance women's rights, notably in relation to family law and combating violence against women;

7. *Urges* the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls and to intensify its measures to improve the difficult conditions being faced by Palestinian women and their families, including those living under Israeli occupation, and recognizes the importance of integrating gender considerations across humanitarian programming by seeking to ensure the provision of access to protection and the full range of medical, legal and livelihood and psychosocial services, including services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, without discrimination, and through ensuring that women and women's groups can participate equally and meaningfully and are supported in being leaders in humanitarian action;

8. *Calls upon* the international community, including the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East, to continue to provide urgently needed assistance, especially emergency assistance, and services, bearing in mind, inter alia, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>8</sup> and national priorities, in an effort to alleviate the dire humanitarian crisis being faced by Palestinian women and their families, in particular for addressing the humanitarian crisis and deteriorating socioeconomic and psychosocial conditions in the Gaza Strip;

9. *Recalls* the need for all parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and to take into account the particular needs of women and girls, and stresses that the situation of the Palestine refugees, including women and girls, continues to be a matter of grave concern and that they continue to require assistance to meet basic health, education and living needs, pending a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948;

10. *Reaffirms* the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects, and urges in this regard the intensification and acceleration of renewed international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference, including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative,<sup>9</sup> the Quartet road map<sup>10</sup> and an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967;

11. *Stresses* the importance of efforts to increase the role of Palestinian women in decision-making and of their full, equal and meaningful participation and involvement in all efforts for the achievement, maintenance and promotion of peace and security, and encourages Member States and observer States as well as the United Nations system to ensure systematic attention to, recognition of and support for the crucial role of Palestinian women at all levels by, inter alia, promoting women's capacity, leadership, participation and engagement in political, economic and humanitarian decision-making and by improving the gender balance in senior civilian government positions and in security functions, while recognizing the need to protect women participating in public spaces from threats and reprisals;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out in his report, and to include information on the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution in his report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan to the Economic and Social Council at its 2024 session.

*45th plenary meeting  
26 July 2023*

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<sup>8</sup> General Assembly resolution 70/1.

<sup>9</sup> A/56/1026-S/2002/932, annex II, resolution 14/221.

<sup>10</sup> S/2003/529, annex.

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-first session  
Vienna, 24 February-5 March 1986  
Item 5 of the provisional agenda\*

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL  
PEACE AND CO-OPERATIONInterim report of the Secretary-General on the preparation of  
a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women  
living within and outside the occupied Arab territories

1. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 1984/18 of 24 May 1984, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories and to submit it to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-second session.
2. In paragraph 3 of the resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit an interim report on the preparation of that comprehensive report to the Commission at its thirty-first session. The present report is submitted in response to that request.
3. It should be noted that, in paragraph 1 of the resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-first session an updated version of the report on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories submitted to the Commission at its thirtieth session. The updated report has been circulated as document E/CN.6/1986/7.

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\* E/CN.6/1986/1.

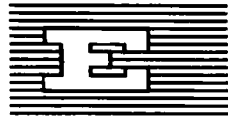
4. With respect to the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories, it is proposed that the first part of the report should deal with Palestinian women living within the occupied Arab territories. Since this subject is covered in the updated report mentioned in paragraph 3 above, that report, duly adapted and further updated, will constitute the first part of the comprehensive report.

5. The second part of the comprehensive report will contain information on the situation of Palestinian women living outside the occupied Arab territories. It is proposed that, in keeping with established procedure, this part of the report should focus on the situation of Palestinian women in the host countries as defined in United Nations practice, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

6. In order to prepare the second part of the report, the Secretariat will seek from the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as from the Palestine Liberation Organization, relevant information on the situation of Palestinian women living in those host countries. Consultations with the appropriate bodies of the United Nations will also be undertaken for this purpose.

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UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-second session  
Vienna, 14-23 March 1988  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the  
occupied Arab territories

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1984/18 and 1986/21 and Council decision 1987/121. The report describes the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories in the period from 15 October 1985 to 30 September 1987.

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\*E/CN.6/1988/1.



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## INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolutions 1984/18 of 24 May 1984 and 1986/21 of 23 May 1986.
2. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 1984/18, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories and to submit it to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-second session. In paragraph 3 of the same resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission at its thirty-first session, an interim report (E/CN.6/1986/6) on the preparation of the comprehensive report. In paragraph 1 of the same resolution, the Council also requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission, at its thirty-first session, an updated version (E/CN.6/1986/7) of the report on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories that had been submitted to the Commission at its thirtieth session. 1/
3. On the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-first session, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1986/21, requested the Secretary-General, in preparing the comprehensive report, to focus on the identification of the main humanitarian needs of Palestinian women.
4. The present comprehensive report has been prepared in accordance with the interim report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1986/6). It is composed of two chapters and conclusions derived therefrom. In pursuance of paragraph 4 of the interim report, chapter one is a further update of the updated report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/1986/7) and deals with the situation of Palestinian women living within the occupied Arab territories.
5. In pursuance of paragraph 5 of the interim report, chapter two contains information on the situation of Palestinian women living outside the occupied Arab territories. In keeping with established procedure, this chapter focuses on the situation of Palestinian women living in the host countries as defined by United Nations practice, namely, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.
6. The Secretary-General, in his Note Verbale of 26 February 1987, invited the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as the host countries, and the Government of Israel, as the occupying power, to provide the Secretary-General with appropriate information on the situation of Palestinian women living in the host countries and the occupied territories. The invitation to provide the information on the situation of Palestinian women by 1 August 1987, for the completion of the report, was reiterated by the Secretary-General in his second Note Verbale of 12 June 1987 to the same Governments. At the time of preparing the present report, replies had been received from the Governments of Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic. These replies are attached to the present report.
7. In a letter of 19 February 1987, the Secretariat invited the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to provide information required for the report. The invitation was reiterated by the Secretariat in its letter of 9 June 1987. The reply, which is annexed to the present report, and four publications reached the Secretariat on 15 October 1987. Owing to time constraints and the limitation of the length of the present report to 24 pages, the contents of these publications could not be incorporated in the present report.

8. The present report has, accordingly, been based exclusively on United Nations documents concerned with the situation of Palestinian people. Analyses of these documents, issued by numerous United Nations bodies and agencies during the period under review, namely from 15 October 1985 to 30 September 1987, provided little specific information concerning Palestinian women. For example, it was not possible to determine the total number of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories.

9. Only reports of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) contained data on assistance provided by UNRWA to Palestinian women. That data, however, did not cover those Palestinian women who were not registered with UNRWA and did not provide any information on assistance provided to Palestinian women by institutions other than UNRWA (i.e. Governments, charity organizations etc.). The present report, therefore, reflects mainly information from UNRWA on the situation of Palestinian women registered with it.

10. The difficult living conditions of the Palestinian people are, however, generally known. Some broad conclusions can be drawn from the overall picture of the situation of Palestinian women that emerges from literature on the subject.

11. Palestinian women, like the rest of the Palestinian people, have for four decades been subjected to a life of deprivation and hardship. They have been expelled from their homes and faced the separation of their families. Most Palestinian women today live either under occupation or in exile. Some have been living in daily terror or harassment, arrest and imprisonment. Those who have been separated from their male family members have often had to assume the function of head of household, which has compelled them to take decisions and sometimes to seek employment for which they have not been adequately prepared. For some, this has meant putting their children in nurseries or kindergartens, thereby foregoing some of their traditional duties. The disruption of family life has led in some cases to emotional disturbance and conflict within the family, which has added to the difficulties of adapting to life in the camps, under occupation or in the countries of exile.

12. Various charity organizations and women's associations have tried to help Palestinian women to improve their living conditions and to undertake their new responsibilities. Some of them have tried to promote, through their activities, the new roles of Palestinian women and to make them properly understood and socially accepted.

13. Palestinian women living in refugee camps have been confronted with special hardship and instability. The daily life in camps has meant for women a struggle against dust and mud, fetching water from distant stand-pipes, patching up walls and leaking roofs, washing the clothes of a family of eight or more, baking bread, coping with all the diseases that arise from leaking drains, filthy streets, poor quality of food and squalid housing conditions. Women in camps, therefore, have experienced not only difficult living conditions, but also insecurity of life inside the camp, deprivation of freedom (often because of being without passports) and lack of prospects. Under conditions of war or in attacks against Palestinian camps, women have been deprived of adequate protection and often have been among the killed or wounded. They have often had to flee from one camp to another and have suffered from lack of food, water and medical aid.

I. SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN LIVING WITHIN THE  
OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

A. Background information

14. In 1985, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had a total estimated population of 1,380,000. 2/ In 1987, according to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, there were 373,586 refugees registered with UNRWA in the West Bank, and in the Gaza Strip, 445,397 (A/42/13). 3/

B. Political and social matters

1. Political matters

15. Examples of oppressive practices by the military authorities in the occupied territories continued to be reported by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/41/680) 14/ and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/41/35). 5/ During the period under review, the Special Committee expressed its concern with regard to the "iron fist" policy, which had been revived in 1985 by the Israeli authorities, and the reinstatement of the emergency regulations of 1945. The iron fist policy caused an escalation of violence and resulted in an increasing number of administrative punishments, such as arrest and detention, including short-term detention without trial, as well as large-scale expulsion, deportation and collective punishment, including demolition and sealing of houses (A/41/680, paras. 41-47; annex III, paras. 11-25, 30-53 and 83; A/41/35, paras. 21-23). Prevailing tension in the occupied territories continued to affect the daily life of Palestinian people, men, women and children alike, leading to demonstrations, disturbances at schools and universities, and numerous incidents with Israeli settlers. In preparing the present report, only those examples that directly related to women were extracted.

16. In the period under review, the Special Committee heard extensive testimony on harsh treatment of suspects and detainees. The attention of the Committee was drawn to the severe conditions prevailing in Israeli investigation centres, detention camps and prisons, including one prison for women in Neve Tirtza. Most of the prisons were reported to be overcrowded; medical care inadequate, security prisoners were often put together with criminal prisoners and punitive action, such as prolonged solitary confinement, denial of visits, withholding of educational, cultural or information materials and deprivation of hot water, had been applied. There were alleged instances of torture and physical violence (A/41/35, para. 22; A/41/680, annex III, para. 356). These conditions had caused protest actions, including demonstrations and hunger strikes of Palestinian female prisoners at the Neve Tirtza prison (A/41/680, annex III, paras. 348 and 373).

17. On some occasions, protest actions by prisoners were supported by demonstrations and protests by their family members. For example, on 17 October 1985, dozens of women, mothers, sisters and wives of administrative detainees reportedly held a sit-in strike at the Red Cross offices at East Jerusalem, in protest against the alleged ill-treatment and harsh prison conditions of the detainees (A/41/680, annex III, para. 350).

18. The Special Committee drew attention to reports of torture and inhuman treatment of young detainees (A/41/680, annex III, paras. 352 and 357).

## 2. Social matters

### (a) Employment and working conditions

19. When preparing the present report, no data or information were available on the demographic trends in the territories and on the employment of women. During the period under review, the overall situation was characterized by economic stagnation (a decline in private investment and a slow-down in public investment, an increase in taxes), expropriation and confiscation of Palestinian land, exploitation of land resources, insecurity and restrictions on freedom of movement (A/41/35, paras. 21-26). In 1984/86, fragmented internally and dependent externally, the economy of the territories began to be affected more than it had ever been since 1967 by the downturn of the economy in Israel and in other countries of the region. 6/ Agriculture continued to decline and the Palestinian industrial sector was unable to withstand Israeli competition. A low overall employment rate prevailed (affecting approximately one third of the working-age population) and to some extent this resulted from the very low employment rate of women, which was partly caused by local traditions and customs. 7/ Unemployment remained highest among graduates from higher educational institutions. 8/

20. During the period under review, there was no major change in the level of irregular employment in Israel of workers from the occupied territories, despite efforts by the Israeli authorities to combat this type of employment, which related to the generally difficult living conditions in the occupied territories and to family needs. 9/ Those employed unofficially included women and children working in seasonal agriculture and in small enterprises.

### (b) Education

21. Information presented in this section relates exclusively to the education and training services UNRWA provided for women. 10/

22. In 1986/87, as far as UNRWA schools were concerned, enrolment in elementary and preparatory classes in the West Bank totalled 40,088 pupils (40,221 in 1985/86) and 86,906 in the Gaza Strip (86,928 in 1985/86). There were 98 schools in the West Bank served by 1,304 teachers (98 and 1,290 respectively in 1985/86) and 145 schools in the Gaza Strip served by 2,405 teachers (145 and 2,360 respectively in 1985/86) (A/41/13, table 5; A/42/13, table 5). Many schools of UNRWA and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip operated on a double shift. The double-shift system was generally recognized as detrimental to the children's development. Also, the much shorter school day made life more difficult for mothers, particularly in the many cases where children from the same family attended different shifts, but it was not possible to discontinue this system because of shortage of funds.

23. Detailed information on the distribution of refugee pupils receiving education in 1985/86 and 1986/87 is given in table 1 below.

24. The major problems faced during the period under review were posed by overcrowded classrooms and unsuitable school premises. Owing to a number of donations enabling the necessary repairs and new constructions to be carried out, however, some progress was noted in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (A/41/13, paras. 57, 59, 60; A/42/13, paras. 36-37). Some of these investments covered the construction of new schools for girls, such as Biddo Preparatory Girl's School and the girl's school at Rummaneh in the West Bank.

Table 1. West Bank and Gaza Strip: distribution of refugee pupils

Type of school	Number of pupils		Number of pupils	
	1986		1987	
	West Bank	Gaza Strip	West Bank	Gaza Strip
<b>Number of pupils in elementary classes at UNRWA schools</b>				
Girls	15 354	29 870	15 310	29 844
Boys	13 243	32 979	13 154	32 688
Total	28 597	62 849	28 464	62 532
<b>Number of pupils in preparatory classes at UNRWA schools</b>				
Girls	6 092	11 351	6 138	11 557
Boys	5 532	12 728	5 486	12 817
Total	11 624	24 079	11 624	24 374

Sources: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1985-30 June 1986 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/41/13)), table 5; and ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13), table 5).

25. During the period under review, the situation of pre-school, elementary, preparatory and secondary education remained basically unchanged from previous years (A/41/680, para. 65). Despite the teaching process being affected by numerous incidents and disturbances, specifically in the early months of 1987, and an increasing number of resignations or dismissals of teachers (A/41/680, paras. 60-64, 313-316), the UNRWA education programme continued to run at all levels without major interruption (A/41/13, para. 56; A/42/13, para. 36).

26. The vocational training centres attended by women functioned without major interruption. In the Ramallah Women's Training Centre in the West Bank, which was the only women's training centre run by UNRWA in the occupied territories in 1985/86, 288 female graduates completed post-preparatory and post-secondary levels of training in technical, commercial and para-medical fields. They qualified as laboratory technicians and in the fields of dressmaking, clothing production, home and institutional management and hairdressing. In 1986/87 the number of graduates was 328. Three hundred and fifty female graduates completed pre-service teacher training in 1985/86 and 300 in 1986/87 (A/41/13, table 6; A/42/13, table 6). In order to reduce the discrepancy in training opportunities given to men and women, UNRWA plans to extend the level of training for women and to introduce new courses.

27. During the period under review, the restrictions on academic freedom, textbooks, programmes and staff led to continuous dissatisfaction among professors and students. Numerous incidents occurred, including the arrest and transfer of male and female students and professors, and their expulsion from universities (A/41/680, annex III, paras. 297-312).

28. In the academic year 1986/87, out of 63 university scholarship holders in the West Bank there were 13 females: 3 in engineering, 1 in medical and paramedical and 9 in the arts and sciences (A/42/13, table 7).

(c) Health

29. This section concentrates on the health services UNRWA provided to women. UNRWA medical-care services were provided through a network of health centres/points, maternal and child health clinics, specialist and special care clinics, dental clinics, central and clinical laboratories, rehabilitation centres, maternity centres and beds reserved in private or voluntary hospitals under contractual agreements.

30. According to the annual reports for 1985 and 1986 of the Director of Health of UNRWA, 11/ the health conditions of the Palestinian population (men, women and children in the occupied territories) were closely linked to socio-economic conditions and remained unfavourable and basically unchanged. Inadequate sanitation, nutrition and water supply, insufficient access to medical facilities and the high cost of medical care in Israel continued to constitute the main health problems of Palestinian people (A/41/35, para. 27). Although they affect the population as a whole, health conditions have a greater significance for women, who bear and rear the children and look after the health and nutrition of the family. In 1985 and 1986, there was a higher percentage of adult women than of men in the occupied territories.

31. A certain amount of progress was noted during the period under review with regard to medical personnel, basic biochemical tests and dental care services, including the provision of dental services to schoolchildren, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and the construction of UNRWA health premises. Communicable diseases showed a decrease, except those linked to environmental sanitation (A/41/13, para. 71; A/42/13, para. 52). Medical supplies were, in general, satisfactory (A40/INF.DOC./5, annex, para. 74; A/42/13, para. 47). Although acute malnutrition among refugee children, nursing and pregnant women had declined since 1978, except in the Gaza Strip, chronic malnutrition and anaemia prevailed during the period under review (A/41/13, para. 88; A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 95). Deterioration of the mental well-being of the population continued, including mental disorders and problems of psychosocial development among children, who could not be properly treated by the existing services (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 39; A40/INF.DOC./5, paras. 102-103; A/41/13, para. 79). The improvements made in the health services were far from adequate to meet the needs of the growing Palestinian population and the demand for UNRWA medical care services (A/42/13, para. 48).

32. UNRWA continued to provide maternal and health services, pre-natal, natal, infant and child care at its health units, supported by specialist and hospital referral services. Maternal care provided by UNRWA clinics consisted of regular health supervision, nutritional support and treatment of anaemia throughout pregnancy and the nursing periods. In 1985/87 there were six maternity wards attached to the UNRWA health centres in the Gaza Strip and two in the West Bank (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 36; A40/INF.DOC./5, annex,

para. 56; A/42/13, para. 50). To increase the coverage of the service through the expansion of community outreach programmes, a second mobile health team was established to service the six maternal and child health care sub-centres in Gaza (A/42/13, para. 53).

33. Details of the maternal, child health and preventive services provided by UNRWA are set out in tables 2, 3 and 4 below.

Table 2. UNRWA health facilities

Service	1985		1986	
	West Bank	Gaza	West Bank	Gaza
<u>Out-patient care</u>				
Number of health centres/points	32	9	32	9
Number of pre-natal clinics	23	9	25	16
Number of child health clinics	21	9 <u>a/</u>	24	16
<u>In-patient care</u>				
<u>A. Subsidized hospitals</u>				
Number of hospitals	5	0	5	1
Number of beds available:	225	0	227	20
General	88	0	88	20
Paediatric	39	0	41	0
Maternity	13	0	13	0
<u>B. UNRWA hospitals</u>				
Number of hospitals	3	7	3	6
Number of beds available:	42	129	42	129
General	28	0	28	0
Paediatric	4	0	4	0
Maternity	6	59	10	59

Sources: Excerpted from World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2), appendix 3, part B, p. 24, and ibid. (A40/INF.DOC./15), appendix 3, part B, p. 27.

a/ Excluding six maternal child health sub-centres operating in Gaza.



Table 3. Maternal and child health-care services provided by UNRWA

Service	West Bank		Gaza	
	1985	1986	1985	1986
Pregnant women registered	5 658	5 898	18 135	18 823
Deliveries attended	6 080	6 341	14 831	11 651
Children registered:				
0-1 year	5 333	5 527	14 762	15 250
1-2 years	5 777	5 846	13 166	13 441
2-3 years	5 075	5 451	11 138	12 038

Sources: Excerpted from World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2), appendix 3, part C, p. 25, and *ibid.* (A40/INF.DOC./5), appendix 3, part C, p. 28.

Table 4. Preventive services  
(As of 30 June 1987)

Service	West Bank	Gaza Strip
<u>Maternal and child health care</u>		
Pregnant women (average monthly attendance)	2 009	5 420
Children below three years (average attendance) <u>a/</u>	18 594	35 039

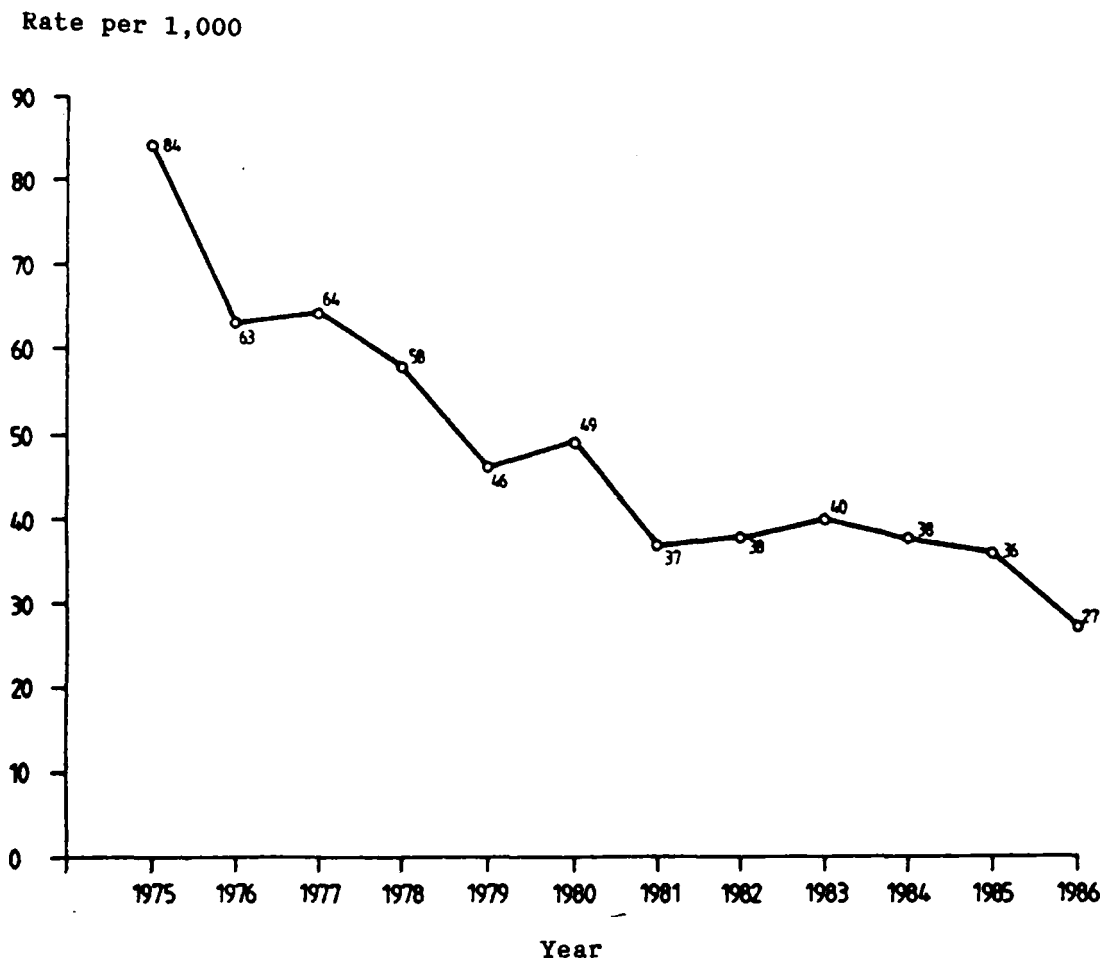
Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-First Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), table 9.

a/ Health was monitored monthly for the age group 0-1 year; bimonthly for the age group 1-2 years; and trimonthly for the age group 2-3 years.

34. Successful monitoring of the health of children, pregnant women and nursing mothers was continued during the period under review. In the West Bank camps, where infant mortality statistics have been closely monitored for over two decades, the infant mortality rate in 1986 declined to 27 per thousand compared with 84 per thousand ten years ago. To increase further the effectiveness of the health monitoring programme, a new maternal and child health-care intervention strategy was implemented in the West Bank (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 57; A40/INF.DOC./5, para. 91; A/42/13, para. 53).

35. The decrease in infant mortality rates in the West Bank is reflected in the figure below.

Infant mortality rates, West Bank camp population, 1975-1986



Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-First Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), chart 3.

36. Family planning services continued to be provided, on request, in some health centres in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (A/41/13, para. 77). In Gaza, the programme also included family-life education in the preparatory schools for girls of 12-15 years of age. Nurses took part in this programme by giving lessons and demonstrations in mother- and child-health care in the schools (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 54; A40/INF.DOC./5, para. 86; A/42/13, para. 54).

37. UNRWA provided preventive and curative oral health services, as well as nutrition and supplementary feeding services (A40/INF.DOC./5, paras. 66, 149 and 158; A39/INF.DOC./2, paras. 94 and 100). Two major improvements were introduced in the UNRWA programme of immunization: tetanus immunization of pregnant women and rubella immunization of 11- and 12- year old schoolgirls and of non-pregnant women of child-bearing age (A39/INF.DOC/2, annex; para. 55; A40/INF.DOC./5, annex, para. 89). To improve the general health status, health

education of mothers and families was carried out by maternal and child health-care clinics (A40/INF.DOC./5, para. 87).

38. Nursing activities were central to the on-going health-care services of UNRWA. Nurses were directly involved in therapeutic, preventive, curative, and promotive care services; delivery, maternal and child health-care services, and nutrition and supplementary feeding services. They also provided supportive and supervisory services in other areas, namely, environmental health services, health education, epidemiology and control of communicable diseases, special care and rehabilitative services (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 70; A40/INF.DOC./5, paras. 116, 122 and 127; A/41/13, para. 81). UNRWA nurses also organized meetings with selected women from the camps, for the purpose of gaining their co-operation and assistance in providing education on health and family life to families in camps, as well as in promoting relevant health-care activities. The initial results of these meetings were encouraging (A/42/13, para. 56). In some of the UNRWA health centres, dayahs (traditional birth attendants) received training and were used for natal and post-natal care because of the inadequate number of fully qualified nursing staff. In many camps, dayahs performed home deliveries and were supervised by health-centre nursing staff, constituting an important link between the health services and the community services (A/41/13, para. 82; A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 71).

39. Qualified nurses were provided with post-basic education in midwifery or community health on a continuing basis. The upgrading of nursing staff continued to be a major goal of the nursing programme (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 72). In the period under review, one senior staff nurse from Gaza completed in December 1985 a 10-month training course in community health nursing at Cumberland College, Sydney, Australia (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 23) and another completed a similar 12-month diploma course in December 1986 (A40/INF.DOC./5, para. 40; A/41/13, para. 90). A senior staff nurse of the Rafah Health Centre, Gaza, who had been awarded a one-year scholarship to pursue a post-basic training course in public health nursing at the University of Cairo, completed it in November 1986 (A40/INF.DOC./5, para. 40).

40. With regard to environmental health, some developments were noted. The water augmentation schemes aimed at providing indoor water taps to refugee shelters and sewage schemes were carried out in some camps in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Refuse collection and removal facilities were also gradually improved. Chemical control of rats, mice and domestic flies was carried out selectively. The focus was on general cleanliness (A40/INF.DOC./5, paras. 143 and 145-147; A/42/13, paras. 57 and 59). Hygiene education programmes, covering the situation in homes, schools, shops, slaughterhouses and food storage, was expanded (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 80). Despite improvements in this programme during the period under review, a number of problems remained. These included the provision of an adequate indoor water supply, construction of sewage systems, mechanization of refuse disposal, renovation and replacement of dilapidated school latrines and augmenting the work-force of sanitation staff (A39/INF.DOC./2, para. 90).

### C. Assistance to Palestinian women within the occupied Arab territories

41. During the period under review, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies continued to provide assistance to Palestinian people, including special programmes of assistance for Palestinian women and children in the occupied Arab territories (A/41/319-E/1986/72). 12/

42. UNRWA continued to provide both regular and emergency programmes of assistance to eligible refugees. Education services were provided in co-operation with UNESCO, and health services in co-operation with the World Health Organization (WHO). Health monitoring of children, pregnant women and nursing mothers was the major component of the UNRWA health programme. The relief programme concentrated mainly on providing assistance to the most needy groups, including widows and orphans. UNRWA also initiated special projects to improve environmental health conditions and school premises (A/41/319-E/1986/72, paras. 15, 18, 19 and 25-27).

43. Considerable progress was noted with respect to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) programme of co-operation in the West Bank and Gaza. The programme consisted of three elements: primary health care, pre-school stimulation and the promotion of child development centres. It aimed at promoting a cost-effective approach to the survival and development of Palestinian children and mothers through the prevention, early detection and treatment of childhood disabilities and through the development of innovative approaches to early child care. Within the programme, 28 village health workers in the Hebron District were trained in simple preventive, promotive and curative tasks relating to maternal and child health. Twenty-five kindergartens were renovated and 30 sets of basic kindergarten furniture provided. Every kindergarten in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was provided with an Arabic language teacher's manual. Three new child development centres were opened in Hebron, Jenin, and in Gaza (A/41/319-E/1986/72, paras. 36-38).

44. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) provided the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with an expert in the vocational training of women to implement a UNDP project of assistance to Palestinian women's institutions, aimed at expanding vocational training opportunities offered by these institutions and by Palestinian community development centres. ILO also announced its intention to formulate, with UNDP, projects to provide assistance to Palestinian women in its area of competence, such as long-term facilities for vocational training at a higher level, promotion of vocational training courses in income-generating activities for women's organizations, and support to craft-production activities (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para 65).

45. The assistance of UNESCO to the Palestinian people concentrated mainly on the award of university fellowships and the provision of educational supplies and equipment.

46. WHO provided assistance to Palestinian people, and in particular women and children, in the areas of primary health care, environmental health, and the training and education of health personnel. Two centres were designated as WHO Collaborating Centres in Primary Health Care Research: the Ramallah Health Services Research Centre on the West Bank and the Gaza Health Services Research Centre. The Ramallah Centre placed special emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of an expanded primary health care programme, the evaluation and supervision of the work of dayahs, and a review of infant and child mortality (A/41/319-E/1986/72, paras. 72-76).

47. Some development projects for improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories were elaborated at the Seminar on the Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which was held at Vienna from 2 to 6 March 1987. 13/

## II. SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN LIVING OUTSIDE THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES

### A. Background information

48. On 30 June 1987, in Lebanon there were 278,609 refugees registered with UNRWA, in the Syrian Arab Republic 257,989, and in Jordan 845,542 (A/42/13, table 1).

49. At the time of preparing the present report, no information was available on the legal and political status of Palestinian women outside the occupied Arab territories and their situation regarding employment. The information on education and health below is based exclusively on UNRWA reports.

### B. Political and social matters

#### 1. Political matters

50. Special attention should be given to the situation in Lebanon and the critical situation of Palestinian refugees, including women, under the emergency conditions prevailing during the period under review (A/41/35, para. 18; A/42/13, paras. 19-34). Ongoing fighting and renewed attacks against Palestinians in the refugee camps of Rashidieh, Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh caused a number of casualties among the civilian population, who had inadequate protection. Some Palestinian camps were particularly affected by prohibition of entry or exit, frequent blockades of food and humanitarian aid, and the severing of water and electricity supplies. In some besieged camps (such as Rishidieh camp) only women and children were allowed out to bring some supplies to ensure the minimum of services. The lives of the women in the refugee camps, like those of the men, changed dramatically, because of hunger, lack of water, destruction of houses, lack of oil and gas, bombardments and extreme deterioration of the sanitary situation. In addition, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expressed its grave concern at air raids carried out by the Israeli Air Force against Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon (A/42/35). 14/

51. In 1987, because of the difficulty of maintaining a distinction between Palestinian refugees affected directly by the fighting and other refugees whose living conditions were rapidly deteriorating, UNRWA emergency assistance was extended to all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, including those not registered with UNRWA.

#### 2. Social matters

##### (a) Education

52. In 1986/87, as far as UNRWA schools were concerned, enrolment in elementary and preparatory classes in Lebanon totalled 34,002 pupils (33,959 in 1985/86), 51,653 in the Syrian Arab Republic (51,914 in 1985/86) and 135,990 in Jordan (136,202 in 1985/86). There were 82 schools in Lebanon served by 1,199 teachers, 114 in the Syrian Arab Republic and 196 in Jordan with 1,539 and 3,702 teachers respectively.

53. Detailed information on the situation of refugee pupils receiving education in 1986/87 is given in table 5 below.

Table 5. Distribution of refugee pupils receiving education in UNRWA schools a/ (As of October 1986)

Field	Number of UNRWA schools	Number of teachers	Number of pupils in elementary classes <u>b/</u>			Number of pupils in preparatory classes <u>b/</u>			Total no. of refugee pupils
			Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	
Lebanon	82	1 199	11 449	12 032	23 481	5 125	5 396	10 521	34 002 <u>c/</u>
Syrian Arab Republic	114	1 539	16 992	17 901	34 893	7 942	8 818	16 760	51 653
Jordan	196	3 702	44 772	46 617	91 389	21 607	22 994	44 601	135 990

Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), table 5.

a/ Excluding 102,637 refugee pupils attending elementary, preparatory and secondary government and private schools.

b/ Including non-eligible children attending UNRWA schools, who, in October 1986, numbered 42,619. Of these, 16,818 were in the Gaza Strip, where all refugee children have always been regarded in practice as eligible for education services.

c/ In October 1986, no enrolment figures were received for the Tyre area. This figure comprises the actual figures for the whole of Lebanon excluding Tyre and an estimate for the Tyre area.

54. Although in the period under review, progress was made in school construction in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, overcrowded classrooms and some unsuitable school premises continued to be a problem in UNRWA schools (A/42/13, paras. 36-37). Schools in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic operated normally throughout 1986/87. In Lebanon, the teaching process was seriously affected by the prevailing emergency situation, which led in some instances to an interruption of school services, restriction on movement making schools inaccessible, and occupation of schools by displaced refugees.

55. Although UNRWA continuously tried to provide the same education and training to Palestinian men and women, the discrepancy in vocational training opportunities for men and women prevailed. Detailed information on training places in UNRWA centres is provided in table 6 below.

Table 6. Training places for males and females in UNRWA training centres (Academic year 1986/87)

Type of training	Jordan				Lebanon		Syrian Arab Republic	
	Amman Training Centre		Wadi Seer Training Centre		Siblin Training Centre a/		Damascus Vocational Training Centre	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<b>A. Vocational and technical education</b>								
1. Post-preparatory level <u>b/</u>	32	-	542	2	-	60	544	-
2. Post-secondary level <u>c/</u>	224	-	125	75	110	210	206	22
Total	256	-	667	77	110	270	750	22
<b>B. Pre-service teacher training</b>	-	-	-	-	110	190	-	-
Grand total	256	-	667	77	220	460	750	22

Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), table 6.

a/ Centre was inoperative throughout 1986/87. Trainees shown above attended courses off the premises.

b/ Courses were offered to post-preparatory-level students in the mechanical, metal, electrical and building trades.

c/ Courses were offered to post-secondary-level students in the technical, commercial, electronics and paramedical fields.

56. Training at UNRWA centres in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic proceeded normally throughout 1986/87; in Lebanon, however, the training process was disrupted by the hostilities.

57. Some students received university scholarships to study abroad. More information on the distribution of these scholarships in 1986/87 is given in table 7 below.

Table 7. Female and male university scholarship holders, by faculty and country of study (Academic year 1986/87)

Faculty	Egypt		Jordan		Lebanon		Syrian Arab Republic		Other countries a/	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Engineering	-	2	7	89	1	12	4	8	-	4
Medical and paramedical	-	-	15	31	1	4	46	61	2	5
Arts and sciences	-	1	9	3	6	9	-	-	1	1
Total	-	3	31	123	8	25	50	69	3	10

Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), table 7.

a/ Other countries were: Algeria (one male student), Democratic Yemen (one male student), Iraq (three male and two female students), Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (one male and one female student) and Turkey (four male students).

(b) Health

58. During the period under review, UNRWA continued to provide health services to the eligible refugee population outside the occupied Arab territories. Table 8 below provides exact information on the Palestinian population eligible for health services.

Table 8. Population eligible for health services

Country	As of 30 June 1985	As of 30 June 1986
Jordan	728 807	750 560
Lebanon	229 096	235 625
Syrian Arab Republic	219 636	225 261

Sources: Excerpted from World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2), appendix 1, part A, p. 20; and ibid. (A40/INF.DOC./5), appendix 1, part A, p. 23.



59. In the period under review, the major tendencies characterizing health services and the health status of the Palestinian refugee population corresponded with those in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. A certain degree of progress was noted with regard to health infrastructure and equipment in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

60. Maternal and child health-care services continued to be the important area of the health activities of UNRWA. Tables 9, 10 and 11 below provide detailed information.

Table 9. UNRWA health facilities a/

Service	1985			1986		
	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic
<u>Out-patient care</u>						
Number of health centres/points	16	20	21	16	20	21
Number of pre-natal clinics		14	19	21	15	20
21						
Number of child health clinics	14	19	21	15	17	21
<u>In-patient care a/</u>						
<u>Subsidized hospitals</u>						
Number of hospitals	2	16	5	2	20	5
Number of beds available:	38	322	48	38	362	48
General	25	186	48	25	208	48
Paediatric	13	0	0	13	0	0
Maternity	0	0	0	0	0	0

Sources: Excerpted from World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2), appendix 3, part B, p. 24; and ibid. (A40/INF.DOC./5), appendix 3, part B, p. 27.

a/ UNRWA does not operate hospitals in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Table 10. Maternal and child health-care services provided by UNRWA

Service	1985			1986		
	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic
Pregnant women registered	10 039	3 437	4 015	10 024	3 550	4 215
Deliveries attended	9 888	3 321	3 598	11 229	3 035	3 809
Children registered:						
0-1 year	12 834	5 333	4 864	13 331	4 222	5 008
1-2 years	12 529	3 037	5 401	12 530	4 067	5 704
2-3 years	12 262	2 977	4 528	13 028	3 137	5 132

Sources: Excerpted from World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2), appendix 3, part C, p. 25, and ibid. (A40/INF.DOC./5), appendix 3, part C, p. 28.

Table 11. Preventive services  
(As of 30 June 1986)

	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Jordan
<u>Maternal and child health care</u>			
Pregnant women (average monthly attendance)	847	1 275	3 250
Children aged below three years (average attendance) <u>a/</u>	8 590	13 840	31 546

Sources: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1985-30 June 1986 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/41/13)), annex I, table 9.

a/ Health was monitored monthly for the age group 0-1 year, bimonthly for the age group 1-2 years and trimonthly for the age group 2-3 years.

61. In collaboration with family planning associations, family planning services continued to be provided, upon request, in some health centres in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the family planning services were provided in maternal and child health-care clinics in

the Damascus area. In Jordan, the family planning services consisted of advisory services provided by health centre staff with designated family planning clinics (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 54). Training of staff was completed to expand these services to the additional health centres in the Syrian Arab Republic (A/41/13, para. 77).

62. Nursing activities were central to the ongoing health-care services of UNRWA. During the period under review, therefore, various forms of training were offered to qualified nurses. Scholarships for nursing education were donated by voluntary and non-governmental agencies. In 1985/86, in Jordan, a 27-month basic midwifery course was offered at the College of Nursing. Eighteen practical nurses from Jordan received on-the-job training in community nursing at Amman New Camp, Zarqa and Irbid camps in December 1986 (A39/INF.DOC./2, paras. 11 and 19). A community nursing programme was implemented in all camps in Jordan to enhance community awareness and involvement. Nurses assisted by carrying out tasks, which went beyond the traditional ones, such as collection of family and community data, identification of health or health-related problems, and assistance in solving or reducing these problems with the family or other staff (A40/INF.DOC./5, paras. 131-134). A senior staff nurse from the Syrian Arab Republic was offered a scholarship to pursue a one-year diploma course in community health nursing at Cumberland College, Sydney, Australia and completed it in December 1986. All qualified nurses at Damascus attended a six-week training course in community nursing at the rate of one full-day session per week, which started in October 1986. One UNRWA-employed dayah at North Shouneh Health Point attended a two-week refresher course at the Government Maternal and Child Health Clinic, Irbid, in October 1985. In Lebanon, a senior practical nurse was awarded a scholarship to pursue a one-year course in public health nursing at the University of Cairo, which she completed in 1986 (A/41/13, paras. 90-91 and A40/INF.DOC./5, annex, chap. II, para. 40).

63. In other areas of UNRWA activities, developments can be noted. In the period under review, immunization of pregnant women with tetanus toxoid, which was carried out in Lebanon, was extended to other fields of operation (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 53); the nutrition survey for Jordan was concluded with results similar to those for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 95); in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic more teachers were enrolled in an in-service training programme on health education and oral health (A/41/13, para. 78).

64. In view of the generally deteriorating mental and sociological conditions of the Palestinian population, and children in particular, a pilot project to assess the mental health of refugee children was initiated in refugee camps in Jordan (A/41/13, para. 79; A/42/13, para. 55). Also in Jordan, two community projects to assist mentally retarded and physically disabled children were started (A/40/13, para. 105). As in previous years, a summer camp was organized jointly by UNRWA and the Young Men's Christian Association for refugee orphans at the UNRWA training centre at Amman (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 40).

65. During the period under review, the situation in Lebanon adversely affected the delivery of UNRWA health services, particularly in the refugee camps. Compared to previous years, the utilization of UNRWA medical services decreased, owing to the security situation and limited accessibility of refugees to UNRWA services (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 29; A/42/13, para. 48). Also, the implementation of nutritional support programmes and supplementary feeding was frequently interrupted in Lebanon because of continuous fighting (A40/INF.DOC./5, annex, para. 155). Feeding centres became inaccessible for certain periods of time (A39/INF.DOC./2, annex, para. 97) and hospitals and clinics in the besieged camps were shelled and seriously damaged.

66. With regard to environmental health, in a number of camps in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, owing to government, municipal and UNRWA efforts, refugee shelters were provided with indoor water taps, and water and sewage schemes were completed. Because of the ongoing hostilities, there was little progress in improving sanitary conditions in Lebanon (A/42/13, para. 60).

C. Assistance to Palestinian women outside the occupied Arab territories

67. During the period under review, United Nations organizations continued to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, including special assistance to women and children in the countries outside the occupied Arab territories.

68. UNRWA continued to provide regular assistance to eligible refugees, in all areas of its activities. It also extended emergency relief services to all refugees in Lebanon (A/41/319-E/1986/72, paras. 16 and 20).

69. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) implemented its programmes aimed at rehabilitation and provision of assistance to Palestinian mothers and children, despite deteriorating conditions in Lebanon. The programmes were supported by non-governmental organizations and Palestinian philanthropic societies. With regard to women's income-generating activities, UNICEF reorganized an embroidery workshop for women. Some progress was also made in pre-primary education, to upgrade the quality of kindergarten teachers (A/41/319-E/1986/72, paras. 28 and 31). In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF continued to strengthen the expanded UNRWA programme of immunization activities and maternal and child health-care services, and assisted in financing the training of nurses and dayahs (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 33). In Jordan, UNICEF significantly supported the training of dayahs and midwives and the home-visiting programme by nurses and paramedical personnel (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 34).

70. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) undertook surveys on the economic and social conditions of Palestinian people in refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic in January 1986.

71. ILO participated in the formulation of two projects in the fields of labour and training to be implemented by UNDP. One of the projects, concerning the promotion of vocational and technical education, should expand the existing vocational training facilities offered by UNRWA centres, government services or private institutions (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 64). An ILO expert in the vocational training of women was made available to UNDP to implement a project of assistance to Palestinian women's institutions (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 65).

72. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) continued its assistance in the field of training. Palestinian families of the Gilline and Ramadan refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic were instructed in how to improve the cultivation and yield of crops and livestock through the provision of facilities, knowledge, skills, material inputs and technical leadership for demonstration and training work (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 70).

73. UNESCO continued its assistance in education, including the provision of fellowships and educational supplies and equipment (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 71).

74. In Jordan, WHO sponsored a Workshop on Community Needs for Health Care Delivery. Fifteen nurses from UNRWA and six from the Ministry of Health participated (A/41/319-E/1986/72, para. 74).

### III. CONCLUSIONS

75. The difficult living conditions of Palestinian women described in the present report indicate the need for special attention and assistance, particularly for those women living under occupation and in the camps. At present, the assistance provided to the Palestinian people by the United Nations system does not focus adequately on the needs of women. In order to provide Palestinian women with more appropriate help in specific areas, their needs should be ascertained, if possible through special missions. Programmes of assistance should be designed to go beyond the mere delivery of services and take into consideration also ways and means and the cultural context of the delivery. It is necessary to analyse thoroughly the obstacles and barriers that might prevent Palestinian women from having full access to existing services.

76. With regard to the specific needs of Palestinian women linked to their gender, the hypothesis can be made that they are related to the new roles that Palestinian women now have to perform. These roles include the maintenance of national and cultural traditions in order to perpetuate the values of the Palestinian people. Also the roles imply that women should go out of their homes to study, to work, to seek medical or legal help, and to take part in social, economic and political activities.

77. These circumstances create many new needs and demands, which should also be addressed, namely, respect for women's dignity, self-determination and choices; support for the development of women's talents; enhancement of their aspirations; encouragement for their participation in social, political and economic life; and provision of help to women heads of households.

78. The situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories calls for assistance aimed at meeting their specific needs in all forms and at all levels by the relevant parts of the United Nations system, whenever possible through existing projects, namely as listed in document A/42/183-E/1987/53, annex, chapter III. As noted above, the present report has been based on United Nations sources, which, unfortunately, do not provide much specific information on women. For the elaboration of programmes of assistance that would focus on the specific needs of women, more data would be necessary.

#### Notes

1/ "The situation of women and children living in the occupied Arab territories and other occupied territories: Report of the Secretary-General" (A/CONF.116/6, 30 October 1984).

2/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General: Appendices, International Labour Conference, 73rd session, 1987 (Geneva), appendix III, "Report of the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", para. 13.

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13), table 1.

4/ "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, Note by the Secretary-General" (A/41/680, 20 October 1986), annex III, paras. 54-59.

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35).

6/ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, "Recent economic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories: A review of the work completed by the Special Economic Unit (Palestinian People)" (TD/B/1102, 30 June 1986); "Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories: Note by the Secretary-General" (A/42/341-E/1987/78, 16 June 1987), paras. 2-6.

7/ Report of the Director-General ..., paras. 13-15.

8/ Ibid., para. 19.

9/ Ibid., paras. 22-24; "Recent economic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories ...".

10/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session Supplement No. 13 (A/41/13); and *ibid.*, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13).

11/ World Health Organization, "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine" (A39/INF.DOC./2, 7 May 1986); and *ibid.* (A40/INF.DOC./5, 8 May 1987).

12/ See "Assistance to the Palestinian people: Report of the Secretary-General" (A/41/319-E/1986/72).

13/ "Living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories: Report of the Secretary-General" (A/42/183-E/1987/53), annex, chap. III.

14/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/42/35), paras. 35 and 38.

Annex I

REPLY FROM THE ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

Embassy of the  
Arab Republic of Egypt

Vienna  
29/UN

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office at Vienna presents its compliments to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and with reference to the Secretary-General's note of 26 February 1987 regarding the information available on the status of the Palestinian women living in Egypt, has the honour to enclose herewith the required information.

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office at Vienna avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs the assurances of its highest consideration.

Enclosure

Vienna, 6 May 1987

To the  
Centre for Social Development  
and Humanitarian Affairs  
United Nations Office at Vienna  
Vienna

Seal of the Embassy

Memorandum

- Between 15,000 and 20,000 Palestinian women reside in the Arab Republic of Egypt. About 115 of them are employed by the public sector and the Government. A small percentage, about a thousand, are engaged in commercial activities (part ownership and management of supermarkets, management and operation of weaving factories). The majority, that is to say about 7,000 Palestinian women, are housewives or unemployed.
- Palestinian women are strongly inclined towards marriage to members of the Palestinian community resident in the country, although a weakening of this tradition has been noticed recently, as the women seek family stability through marriage to Egyptians, in order to obtain residence permits and to acquire Egyptian nationality. About 1,357 Palestinian women are married to Egyptians.
- Palestinian women resident in the country may be divided into three categories of standard of living:
  - First category: Below average; about 65 per cent of the total number, residing in the provinces;
  - Second category: Average; about 25 per cent of the total. This group is composed of the wives and daughters of PLO personnel in the country and abroad;
  - Third category: Above average and superior. This group consists of the wives and daughters of Palestinian capitalists in the country.
- There are about 8,000 female Palestinians enrolled at the various levels of education (schools, universities, institutions of higher learning).
- Problems faced by Palestinian women resident in the country are mainly the lack of job opportunities and the high cost of higher education at university level. The latter is particularly relevant where their parents are employed by the public sector or the Government.



Annex II

REPLY FROM THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic  
to the United Nations  
820 Second Ave., 10th Floor, New York, N.Y. 10017  
Tel: (212) 661-1313

SO/SW - 137

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations and with reference to His Excellency's note no. SD 3012/22 dated 12 June 1987 has the honour to transmit herewith information on the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied Arab territories in preparation of a comprehensive report by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-second session in 1988.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the United Nations the assurances of its highest consideration.

New York, 9 October 1987

Signed

Secretariat of the United Nations  
United Nations  
New York

Annex III

REPLY FROM THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

Palästinensische  
Befreiungsorganisation  
Vertretung Wien  
Wambachergasse 10  
A-1130 Wien

Nr. AK/UN/10  
Datum: 15 September 1987

Mrs. Chafika Sellami-Meslem  
Director  
Branch for the Advancement of Women  
Centre for Social Development  
and Humanitarian Affairs  
Vienna International Centre  
P.O. Box 500  
A-1400 Vienna

Madam,

I have the honour to refer to your letter of the 9th of June 1987 concerning information about the situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the occupied territories.

I have to apologize for the late answer due to communication difficulties with the concerned department within the Palestine Liberation Organization. In the meantime I refer to the following studies and research material which I hope will be of use for your report:

"Women in the Middle East"

Published by Khamsin - Z - Books 1987

This book contains two informative studies with the following subtitles:

- "Palestinian Women and the National Liberation Movement" by Hamida Kazi
- "A Palestinian Woman in Prison" by Laila Al-Hamdani

"Women in Emergency Situations: Palestinian Women under Occupation" by the Association of Women Committees for Social Work; Jerusalem, Occupied Territories, 1985

"The Women's Role in the Palestine National Struggle"

Published by the P.L.O., Department of Information and National Guidance

"Fighting on Two Fronts: Conversations with Palestinian Women"

Soraya Antonius

"..... ein befreites Leben"

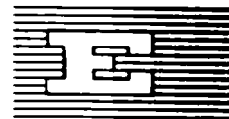
A manuscript prepared by Barbara Debus and Maria Spieker

Please accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Daoud Barakat

Sd/-

Permanent Observer of the PLO  
to the United Nations (Vienna)



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



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25 January 1988

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-second session  
Vienna, 14-23 March 1988  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women living within and outside the  
occupied Arab territories

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 16

Replace table 6 by the table appearing overleaf.

Table 6. Training places for males and females in UNRWA training centres  
(Academic year 1986/87)

Type of training	Jordan				Lebanon		Syrian Arab Republic	
	Amman Training Centre		Wadi Seer Training Centre		Siblin Training Centre a/		Damascus Vocational Training Centre	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A. Vocational and technical education								
1. Post-preparatory level b/	-	60	544	-	32	-	542	2
2. Post-secondary level c/	110	210	206	22	224	-	125	75
Total	110	270	750	22	256	-	667	77
B. Pre-service teacher training	110	190	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grand total	220	460	750	22	256	-	667	77

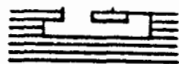
Source: Excerpted from Report of the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1 July 1986-30 June 1987 (Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/42/13)), table 6.

a/ Centre was inoperative throughout 1986/87. Trainees shown above attended courses off the premises.

b/ Courses were offered to post-preparatory-level students in the mechanical, metal, electrical and building trades.

c/ Courses were offered to post-secondary-level students in the technical, commercial, electronics and paramedical fields.

UNITED NATIONS



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17 February 1989

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-third session  
Vienna, 29 March-7 April 1989  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

DEC 03 1992  
GENERAL COLLECTION

The situation of Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/25 and Council decision 1988/23. The report describes the situation of Palestinian women and children living inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories in the period from 15 October 1987 to 1 November 1988.

\*E/CN.6/1989/1.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/25 in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-third session. When the resolution was adopted, the Secretary-General presented a statement of programme budget implications (E/1988/15/Add.1, annex IV), in which it was indicated that the new report would cover only developments that had taken place since 15 October 1987. The report is an update of the previous one (E/CN.6/1988/8 and Corr.1) and deals with the situation of Palestinian women and children living inside the occupied Palestinian territories, and outside, in the host countries as defined by United Nations practice, namely Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. In resolution 1988/25, the Council also requested the Secretary-General, as a matter of urgency, to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the situation of Palestinian women and children in the light of the recent tragic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. Speaking in the Economic and Social Council on 26 May 1988, in explanation of the position of his Government before the vote on draft resolution IX, concerning the situation of Palestinian women, contained in the report of the Second Committee on agenda item 11 on the advancement of women, the representative of Israel stated that it was Israel's belief that United Nations funds should be spent more appropriately and more judiciously than on an investigatory commission, with which Israel would in any case not co-operate. In the course of further inquiries by the Office of the Secretary-General, Israel reiterated its position and prevented the Secretary-General from sending the requested investigatory mission. Subsequently, when the programme budget implications of resolution 1988/25 were considered by the Fifth Committee, the representative of Israel stated that ... Israel supported assistance by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the Palestinians, but would not co-operate with missions and studies by other bodies such as the Economic and Social Council. Therefore, it would not admit ... the five experts and staff members indicated in resolution 1988/25. (A/C.5/43/SR.27, para. 20.)

3. In the circumstances, the report has been prepared in accordance with paragraph 6 of the statement on programme budget implications, in which it is stated that:

"Should the investigating mission be dispatched, the report of that mission would form the body of the Secretary-General's report on conditions of Palestinian women and children in the occupied territories in question. As was the case in document E/CN.6/1988/8, information on the situation of Palestinian women living outside the occupied territories would be sought from the Governments concerned as well as from existing United Nations sources. In the event that no investigating mission is dispatched, the analysis of the situation of Palestinian women and children living in the occupied territories would be prepared on the basis of information obtained from other United Nations reports, with the collaboration of other relevant United Nations offices." (E/1988/15/Add.1, annex IV, para. 6.)

An analysis of these reports provided little relevant information. Although there are a number of comprehensive reports, only those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), World

Health Organization (WHO), and the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories contained some information on women. Because of this, the report has been based largely on those official sources and any effort to identify additional sources would have gone beyond the time and resources available for this report.

4. The Secretary-General, in a note verbale dated 29 June 1988, invited the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as the host countries, and the Government of Israel, as the occupying power, to provide the Secretary-General with information by 1 October 1988 on the situation of Palestinian women and children living in the host countries and the occupied territories. No reply had been received at the time the present report was being prepared.

5. In a letter dated 20 June 1988, the Secretariat invited the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to provide information required for the report. Their reply is reflected here. In addition the report makes use of data on the occupied territories published by the Government of Israel in the Statistical Abstract of Israel 1987.

## I. SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN LIVING INSIDE THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

### A. Background information

6. As of 30 June 1988, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip had a total registered Palestinian population of 844,708 (see table 1). About 40 per cent of the registered population lives in camps. The average family is estimated to consist of six persons, with a male to female ratio of 51:49, and the annual growth rate of this UNRWA registered population increase was estimated at 2.5 per cent. 1/

Table 1. Distribution of registered Palestinian population as of 30 June 1988

Field	Population	Number of camps	Total camp population <u>a/</u>	Percentage of population in camps	Registered persons not in camps	Percentage of population not in camps
West Bank	385 634	20	100 499	26.1	285 135	73.9
Gaza Strip	459 074	8	253 008	55.1	206 066	44.9
Total	844 708	28	353 507	41.85	491 201	58.15

Source: Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), table 2.

a/ It is estimated that a further 52,000 persons, who are not registered refugees, live in camps. About 37,000 of these are persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 hostilities.



Table 2. Distribution of female Palestinian population inside and outside the occupied territories, by age group

Age	West Bank		Gaza Strip		Jordan		Lebanon		Syrian Arab Republic		Percent-age	Total
	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age	Total	Percent-age	Total		
0-5	47.7	36 213	47.8	54 536	48.5	75 138	48.7	34 611	48.9	36 652	48.3	237 150
6-15	48.0	82 201	48.2	119 467	48.4	197 384	48.5	63 553	48.9	61 078	48.4	523 683
16-60	48.0	237 747	55.8	259 461	47.5	535 335	48.4	168 041	49.0	152 150	48.1	1 352 734
Over 60	55.4	37 084	48.8	31 269	54.4	78 265	54.6	26 224	55.0	19 587	54.9	192 429
<b>Total</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>393 245</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>464 733</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>886 122</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>292 429</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>269 467</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>2 305 966</b>

Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 30 January 1989.

7. In the West Bank, 37 per cent of the Palestinian refugee families accounted by UNRWA, are headed by females, while in the Gaza Strip the percentage is 18 per cent. This compares with an average of 20 per cent in Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan. In the age distribution of the population, there are slightly more men than women in all age groups up to age 60. After this age, there are more women than men. The distribution of registered female Palestinian population by age group both inside and outside the occupied territories is shown in table 2. The distribution of male and female heads of families is shown in table 3 and the age distribution of male and female refugees in table 4.

Table 3. Sex distribution of heads of Palestinian families inside and outside the occupied territories

Sex	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Total
Males	56 250	78 968	98 178	51 927	43 395	328 718
Females	32 467	17 220	22 409	14 606	12 771	99 473
Total	88 717	96 188	120 587	66 533	56 166	428 191
Percentage of female heads of family	36.6	17.9	18.6	21.95	22.74	23.2

Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

Table 4. Average age of Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories, by sex

Sex	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	Total
Males	28.9	25.5	28.4	27.3	25.9	27.5
Females	30.4	26.9	29.3	28.4	26.9	28.6
Total	29.6	26.2	28.8	27.9	26.4	28.0

Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

#### B. Political situation

8. The situation of Palestinian women during the past year has been profoundly affected by the events surrounding the Intifada, or uprising, that began in December 1987.

9. According to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694), the violence and repression in the occupied territories has reached an unprecedented level since the beginning of Intifada. The uprising has been marked by many casualties from shootings, beatings or gas inhalation. The exact number of casualties can only be estimated because of different reporting periods for the various sources providing estimates. According to estimates by Palestinian and Israeli lawyers and doctors, as reported in United Nations document, during the first two months of the uprising, 20 per cent of the injured were women, ranging in number in the West Bank between 126 and 153 and in the Gaza Strip between 90 and 264. According to the same source, some 5 to 10 per cent of the injured were children 10 years of age or younger. Altogether there were between 630 and 766 injuries in the West Bank between 31 and 76 and in the Gaza Strip between 450 and 1,320 (A/43/694, para. 357). According to an estimate made by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the total number of injured women ranged between 600 and 671.\*

10. It was reported by the Special Committee that, in the first four months of the uprising, there was a 10 per cent increase in the number of miscarriages among women in the Gaza Strip, compared with the same period in the previous years. Nearly 70 per cent of these were said to have resulted from inhalation of tear gas (A/43/694, para. 365). The total number of miscarriages reported from different United Nations sources was between 124 <sup>2/</sup> and 166 (A/43/694, para. 365). A PLO estimate, based on a listing of individual cases, gave a total of 131. Of these, 65 per cent occurred after the third month of pregnancy and 22 per cent during the eighth and ninth months.

11. Palestinian civilians, including women and children, were subject to mass arrests and administrative detention. In the period under review, the Special Committee reported mistreatment of women and minor detainees, overcrowded prisons and harsh conditions of detention (A/43/694, sect. IV). It was stated that young children, under 15 years of age were beaten, interrogated and tortured. <sup>3/</sup> Incidents were reported of sexual harassment (A/43/694, sect. IV). Dozens of children aged 8-12 years were arrested during the first week of May 1988, after throwing stones at soldiers (A/43/694, para. 294) and according to an information reported in the United Nations document A/41/INF.DOC/7, annex, para. 11(4), the number of children detained up to 28 March 1988 had risen to 1,650. According to PLO estimates for 9 December 1987-13 June 1988, 1,087 children were detained and 101 had been killed.

12. Raiding, demolishing or sealing of houses were common punishments. In the period under review, well over 100 houses were destroyed, according to estimates compiled from United Nations sources. <sup>4/</sup> Curfews, often lasting for some days, the various economic sanctions and general strikes further contributed to the deterioration of daily life. Other punitive measures included cutting off the water, electricity and telephone lines of refugee camps or whole towns. <sup>5/</sup> Palestinian residents were also subjected to new restrictive practices such as confiscation of identity cards (without which they cannot move freely) and preparation of special "lists" of Palestinians, which the authorities can consult before issuing permits and travel documents to members of the family (A/43/694, para. 248). On 28 April 1988, a new order made parents whose children up to 12 years of age were caught rioting (defined

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\*Reply from the PLO Bureau of Social Affairs, dated 2 December 1988, to the letter sent by the Secretariat on 20 June 1988.

as throwing stones, burning cars and tires or blocking roads) responsible for their children's acts and obliged to pay fines. In serious cases they could be subject to criminal charges (A/43/694, para. 368).

13. Raids carried out on hospitals and health centres\* led, on some occasions, to their closure and interruption of their medical functions, and to harassment of patients, medical staff and visitors. For example, a maternity wing in the Women's Union Hospital was stormed on one occasion. Vehicles and ambulances were at times prevented from carrying patients to the hospitals. Refugee camps and other localities had no medical care for up to several successive days, owing to curfews and sieges. An order by the Israeli occupation authorities on 20 December 1987 warned all health centres and hospitals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip not to receive people injured during the uprising. 6/

14. A number of measures were taken by Palestinians to disengage the economy of the occupied territories from Israel, including:

(a) A boycott and a "shifting away" from consumption of Israeli goods with a consequent reduction in the living standard of the population (TD/B/1183, paras. 11 and 16);

(b) Initiatives designed to ensure self-sufficiency and strengthen the Palestinian "household economy" by producing meat, fruit and vegetables and increasing local employment in rural areas, refugee camps and some urban communities (TD/B/1183, para. 11);

(c) Creation of local self-help committees to extend health, education, welfare and economic services to the population; 7/ creation of alternative employment opportunities for Palestinians who ceased to work in Israel or resigned from their posts in Israeli Civil administration (TD/B/1183, para. 11);

(d) A "return to agriculture campaign", the agricultural output having shown a steady decline during the previous years (TD/B/1142, chap. D, para. 11), which stressed the need to cultivate staples, vegetables and fruits that could substitute for the imports of those items from Israel (TD/B/1183, para. 83).

15. One measure taken by the Palestinians against the Israeli authorities consisted of a "tax revolt", solidarity by the commercial sector with the uprising and absenteeism from work in Israel by migrant labourers at a rate of 20-100 per cent during the different phases of Intifada.

16. Schools, universities and training centres were closed for most of the reporting period. Teaching in elementary, preparatory and secondary schools has been seriously affected by frequent closures due to curfews, prevailing tension, and invasions by demonstrators and security forces. On the West Bank, the Israeli occupation authorities ordered the closure of all educational institutions from 4 February to 23 May 1988. Both UNRWA private schools and the government schools had to close on 21 July 1988; the vocational training centres were also affected, 8/ and numerous incidents also occurred at academic institutions, including closure of universities, searches and seizure of books and documents and interference in the appointment of male and female teaching staff (A/43/694, sect. IV, paras. 470, 471 and 478).

17. The Israeli authorities imposed systematic and prolonged curfews, as on 28 March 1988, when the territories were closed for 72 hours. Food convoys

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\*The El-Shifa, Women's Union, Nasser, Ramallah, El-Ahli and Hebron hospitals and the Columbia Camp clinic.

were prevented from entering areas under curfew and the territories often faced a total ban on fuel and petrol deliveries lasting up to two weeks. Some towns and villages had to cope with the interruption of electricity, water supplies and telephone lines: from 7 March 1988 the village of Kabatiya was completely closed for 33 days, with no access to medical facilities (A/43/694, paras. 390 and 614). Goods movement in and between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was restricted.

18. Financial and administrative restrictions were also introduced such as: the reduction by one fifth of the amount of money that Palestinians could bring to the West Bank from Jordan; restrictions on cheques drawn on bank accounts of Palestinian welfare organizations; the obligation to prove that all taxes had been paid before licences or other documents could be issued. 9/

19. Owing to the drop in tax revenues, the civil administration stated that it had to freeze many development projects, such as provision of funds for local authorities, welfare assistance, electricity grids, water works and communication systems, and medical care payments (A/43/694, sect. IV, para. 429).

20. Other measures included confiscation of land, regulation of cropping patterns (a shift away from field crops to vegetables and melons, resulting in low income growth, limitation on water and irrigation supplies, strict control of Palestinian exports, entry of subsidized Israeli goods into the occupied Palestinian territories. 10/

21. The uprising led to the creation of alternative Palestinian social, economic and political structures and popular committees were set up to cope with all the needs of the Palestinian population. According to the occupation authorities they also included "shock committees", which dealt with people who violate directives to strike, close their shops or refrain from going to work in Israel. 11/ Palestinian women were actively participating in the popular committees and various social associations as a means of meeting the basic educational, economic and relief needs of the Palestinian population. There were instances of harassment of the organizations by the Security authorities. A welfare society, "In'ash al-Usra", in El-bireh, serving 15,000 Palestinian women and children, was closed by the authorities, 11/ and the offices of the Palestinian Women's Union were invaded, and their files confiscated. Many welfare centres, including those that used to organize educational courses for women and young people, had to close because welfare assistance had been frozen by the Israel authorities owing to the drop in tax collection. In many places women organized silent marches and demonstrations to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 1988 (A/43/694, para. 205).

### C. Economic situation

22. There are differences in the economic structures of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which affect the role of the women. As can be seen from table 5, on the West Bank approximately 14 per cent of the labour force consists of women, while the percentage in the Gaza Strip is only 4 per cent. On the West Bank, women work mostly in agriculture, while in the Gaza Strip their main employment is in professional, technical and related work (53 per cent of the female employment). This reflects the limited opportunities for women outside public service employment in the Gaza Strip. On the West Bank, slightly over a quarter of the economically active women were employed in the public sector and half were employed on the farms. In the Gaza Strip, almost two thirds were employed in the public sector. For both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, unemployment is higher for women than for men (women's employment on the West Bank in 1986 was 6.4 per cent against 3.8 per cent for men and in the Gaza Strip 9.1 per cent against 3.5 per cent for men).

23. In the Gaza Strip there is also evidence that males are to some extent employed outside the occupied territories but that women do not have the same opportunity.

24. There are no data on income differentials by sex in the occupied territories nor on the specific effects of the Intifadah on the economy and particularly on the employment and income of women and children.

Table 5. Employed persons by occupation and sex, 1986  
(Percentage)

	<u>West Bank</u>		<u>Gaza Strip</u>	
	All employed persons	Females	All employed persons	Females
Scientific and academic workers	2.7	5.2	1.3	3.55
Other professional, technical and related workers	5.9	18.85	5.9	53.3
Administrators and managers	1.1	-	1.4	3.7
Clerical and related workers	2.7	4.55	2.4	4.7
Sales personnel	10.0	2.6	10.7	1.7
Service personnel	6.9	4.43	8.2	3.7
Agricultural workers	23.2	54.04	18.9	7.6
Skilled workers in industry, mining, building, transport and other skilled workers	25.4	8.75	30.7	17.2
Other workers in industry, building, transport and unskilled workers	22.0	1.03	20.4	2.4
Total	100	100	100	100
	<u>Thousands</u>			
Total numbers employed	167.0	23.3	94.2	4.0
	<u>Percentage</u>			
Percentage of females employed	13.95	-	4.25	-

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1987, No. 38 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1987), table XXVII/25.

#### D. Living conditions

25. The Palestinian population in the period under review continued to face an acute housing shortage. The most recent statistics show that the average housing density was three persons per room; nearly half the population lived in overcrowded conditions, with seven or more persons to a dwelling. Obstacles to the granting of building permits, combined with the systematic demolition or sealing of the houses of suspected persons, increased the difficulties. 12/

26. Data on basic household amenities show differences between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As can be seen from table 6, the availability of certain amenities, some publicly provided, depends on the type of locality.

27. One characteristic of the life of Palestinian women was the frequent splitting up of families, and the absence of male family members due to detention, expulsion, imprisonment or death. In 1988, according to information provided by UNRWA, some 130,000 refugees were receiving assistance for Special Hardship Cases (SHCs), 13/ and over 60 per cent of the families were headed by women or elderly persons. Cash grants were given to 1,020 selected SHC families as emergency assistance. Some welfare services were focusing on vocational education for young people and women in sewing and embroidery, and on programmes for women preparing them to participate in educational, sporting, cultural and other recreational activities (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 88).

Table 6. Household facilities in dwellings, by selected localities (1985)  
(Percentage)

	<u>West Bank</u>		<u>Gaza Strip</u>	
	<u>Villages</u>	<u>Towns</u>	<u>Refugee camps</u>	<u>Towns</u>
Heating facilities	98.2	97.2	42.9	57.6
Running water in dwelling	49.5	91.0	68.5	83.2
Taps in courtyard	15.3	7.3	29.4	15.0
Toilets	44.4	77.7	97.4	98.7
Bathroom	85.5	99.8	65.8	78.6
Electricity around the clock	46.4	98.2	94.4	93.7

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1987, No. 38 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1987), table XXVII/17.

#### E. Social matters

##### 1. Education

28. Access to educational services varies by area and by age. According to statistics on enrolment included in UNRWA Statistical Yearbook 1986-1987, table 9, on the West Bank, up to age 12 approximately two thirds of the girls

who can attend school do so. The percentage declines as age increases. In contrast, in the Gaza Strip the percentage of girls attending schools of potential population by age is about 80 per cent. This may reflect the fact that over half of the children in the Gaza Strip attend UNRWA schools, whereas on the West Bank the largest percentage are of government schools. For both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip the percentage of enrolment of boys is slightly higher than for girls. <sup>17/</sup> Detailed information on the distribution of refugee pupils receiving education in UNRWA schools in 1987/88 is given in table 7. There were 98 schools in the West Bank with 1,328 teachers and 146 schools in the Gaza Strip with 2,545 teachers. Due to increase in teaching staff, the class sections with more than 50 pupils were reduced in Gaza from 59 to 10 and in the West Bank from 28 to 11.

Table 7. West Bank and Gaza Strip: distribution of male and female refugee pupils in UNRWA schools, 1987

Type of school	West Bank					Gaza Strip					1
	Girls		Boys		Total	Girls		Boys			
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
Elementary	15 395	54.2	13 032	45.8	28 427	30 539	47.9	33 224	52.1	63	
Preparatory	6 135	53.5	5 333	47.3	11 468	11 847	47.3	13 206	52.7	25	

Source: Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), table 5.

29. The discrepancy between male and female attendance at vocational training courses continued. The Ramallah Women's Training Centre was still the only women's training centre run by UNRWA. Except for teacher training courses, where the attendance was more than 50 per cent of female, the male to female ratio was 5 to 1. In order to reduce this discrepancy, UNRWA took steps to encourage women to join existing training programmes and introduced some new courses. An intake of 20 trainees was admitted for a new physiotherapy course and additional courses in nursing are being planned. In the biennium 1989-1990, semi-professional courses will for the first time be introduced for female trainees at the Gaza Training Centre (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 36).

30. During the period under review, on the West Bank, pupils in the elementary and preparatory schools lost nearly 40 per cent of their class time; in the Gaza Strip the figure was 35 per cent. Vocational training centres were even worse affected: on the West Bank, three training centres were open for only 44 days; in the Gaza Strip, one training centre was open for only 50 days. <sup>14/</sup> As a result of frequent closures of universities and the administrative restrictions on academic institutions, 16,000 students lost the entire academic year (A/43/693, para. 496).

## 2. Health

31. According to the annual report of the Director of Health of UNRWA for the year 1987, <sup>15/</sup> the health conditions of the Palestinian population (men, women and children alike) are closely linked to political and socio-economic conditions. Equivalent detailed information related to the non-refugee



population is not available. Medical services, which were poor to begin with, have been seriously affected by the many casualties incurred during the Palestinian uprising and by the emergency measures taken by the Israeli authorities (see paras. 11-12 above).

32. To cope with this emergency situation, UNRWA increased its medical staff (10 additional doctors were employed at health centres in the West Bank camps) and extended the working hours at the centres (some remained operational for 24 hours a day). 16/ To increase the coverage of maternal and child care services on the West Bank, two new centres were established and the premises of one camp health centre, were enlarged. In the Gaza Strip, a second mobile health team was established and one maternal and child health (MCH) subcentre was open twice weekly instead of one day a week. 17/ Greater emphasis was placed on the prevention and treatment of disability among children. Many children received both out-patient and in-patient treatment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

33. UNRWA continued to provide maternal and health services and pre-natal, natal, infant and child care at its health units, supported by specialists and hospital referral services. These consisted of 41 health centres, six maternal and child health subcentres, eight maternity wards (six in the Gaza Strip and two in the West Bank) and 46 supplementary feeding centres. 19/ Maternal care provided by UNRWA clinics consisted of regular health supervision, nutritional support, treatment of anaemia throughout pregnancy and nursing, and the immunization of pregnant women with tetanus toxoid. More than 25,000 pregnant women were registered for antenatal care at UNRWA maternal and child care clinics, representing about 75 per cent of the expected number of pregnant women. In the West Bank, 10 per cent of the women registered at UNRWA maternal and child care clinics were at high risk and 12 per cent at moderate risk, with a corresponding risk pattern among neonates. Out of all deliveries reported in 1987, 59 per cent were at subsidized and government hospitals, 28 per cent took place at home, attended by UNRWA-trained midwives or by dayahs (traditional birth attendants) and 13 per cent were at UNRWA maternal and child care centres (with only 65 beds in eight camps). The child care services provided by the agency consisted of the supervision of infants and pre-school children and the immunization of those registered at its maternal and child care clinics. More than 59,000 children (up to the age of three) were registered at UNRWA maternal and child care clinics for health supervision and immunization. This represents 75 per cent of the expected number of children in this age group. 20/

34. UNRWA continued to provide nutrition and supplementary feeding services to children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and infants. 21/ Since Intifada, the programme has been expanded. The mid-day meal programme was extended to include any child up to 10 years of age and, if medically necessary, children over 10 years old. The powdered milk distribution programme was extended to all children (including non-refugees) below the age of three. The dry-ration and dry-milk distribution programme was extended to include the refugee population not normally eligible for such services, including pregnant women, nursing mothers and children aged 6-36 months.

35. Family planning services continued, focused on health education for women registered at the agency's maternal and child care clinics. The health and family education programme of the three preparatory girls' schools was expanded to boys' schools. 22/

36. With regard to environmental health, although progress was made in providing indoor water taps and sewage systems to refugee shelters in some camps, a number of problems related to sanitation remained. The incidence of communicable diseases transmitted through environmental channels increased. Head lice and scabies have become endemic among school children. 23/

F. Assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories

37. During the period under review, United Nations bodies and specialized agencies continued to provide assistance to the Palestinian people, including special programmes of assistance for Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territories, mostly directed to the refugee population.

38. UNRWA, as noted earlier, continued to provide both regular and emergency programmes, the latter being particularly important. Food supplies and cash were provided to refugees and to a small number of non-refugees in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank. Additional and temporary health, relief and refugee affairs personnel have been employed to assist in the distribution of the aid and to counsel families in distress (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 7). Assistance was also provided to SHCs, consisting of dry food rations, clothing and cash allowances. It was estimated that, by the end of 1988, out of a total of 183,700 registered refugee families, 8,250 families in the Gaza Strip and 5,170 families on the West Bank would be registered as SHC cases (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 86). Children from these families were given preferential admission to the training centres. Help was given to selected families to establish small enterprises (A/43/367, paras. 86-89). A working relationship between UNRWA and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Centre for Environmental Health Activities has been established to boost the Agency's on-going sanitation programmes. 24/

39. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) directed its assistance through UNRWA, concentrating on immunization and vaccination, and on technical assistance for training and the improvement of infrastructures. It provided technical assistance to local health departments to develop the traditional birth attendants (TBA) training programme and funded the training of 16 midwives (supervisors) and 1,150 TBAs in the West Bank (A/43/367, para. 48). It also assisted in training 652 kindergarten teachers, upgrading facilities in 60 kindergartens, renovating 20 and furnishing 120 others (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 49). In co-operation with the Save the Children Federation and the communities concerned, UNICEF also helped to reduce the incidence of water-related diseases in 25 villages in the northern part of the West Bank, and the southern part of the Gaza Strip (A/43/367, para. 21).

40. The International Labour Organisation (ILO), identified for partial and full financing several United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) projects in vocational training for women (A/43/367, para. 32).

41. UNDP implemented two projects in the field of employment and development: "Youth programme" and "Women's institutions" (A/43/367-E/1988/82, para. 33). A project entitled "Women's institute" will be carried out in the near future. A centre will be established, providing technical and specialized training for women in various fields, and serving as a permanent exhibition to promote and market traditional and new products such as house small-scale industries operated by charitable organizations (A/43/367-E/1988/82, paras. 33 and 34).

42. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) concentrated its assistance mainly on educational supplies and equipment, and on a permanent surveillance of educational institutions and university fellowships (A/43/367-E/1988/82, paras. 41-44).

43. WHO and United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) provided assistance in particular to women and children, in primary health care, environmental health, and the training and education of health personnel. Two centres were designated as WHO Collaborating Centres in primary health care

research: the Ramallah Health Services Research Centre on the West Bank and the Gaza Health Services Research Centre. The Ramallah Centre placed special emphasis on the monitoring and evaluation of an expanded primary health care programme, the evaluation and supervision of the work of dayahs and a review of infant and child mortality (A/43/367-E/1988/82, paras. 60-68).

## II. SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN LIVING OUTSIDE THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

### A. Background information

44. On 30 June 1988, in Lebanon, there were 288,176 refugees registered with UNRWA: 148,007 (51.36 per cent) in 13 camps and 140,169 (48.64 per cent) not in camps. In the Syrian Arab Republic, there were 265,221:77,779 or 29.33 per cent in 10 camps and 187,442 or 70.67 per cent outside the camps. In Jordan, there were 870,490:213,539 or 24.53 per cent in camps and 656,951 or 75.47 per cent outside the camps. 25/

### B. Political matters

45. In the period under review, the situation in Lebanon remained critical. After the lifting of the siege at three camps (two at Beirut, Shatila and Burj el-Barajneh, and the third, Rashidieh, near Tyre) in 1987, refugees were evacuated to the camps in the south. In January 1988, several hundred Palestinian families fled northward seeking alternative shelter. Nearly 100 of these families had occupied UNRWA schools in the region of Saida. Renewed violence erupted later in 1988, resulting in further casualties in Beirut and a new displacement of families. 26/

### C. Social matters\*

46. In Lebanon, in 1987/88, over 30,000 pupils (out of a total of 33,500) were enrolled in 75 UNRWA schools (out of 83) functioning as of March 1988. Some of the schools were closed because of emergency conditions, damage to school premises, or occupation by homeless refugees. Some pupils attended the schools outside the camps, or attended classes organized by "popular committees". Despite these efforts, some schools could not complete their 1986/87 school year programmes.

47. Schools in the Syrian Arab Republic and in Jordan operated satisfactorily throughout 1987/88. There were 111 UNRWA schools in the Syrian Arab Republic served by 1,550 teachers and 195 in Jordan with 3,712 teachers. Enrolment in elementary and preparatory classes in the Syrian Arab Republic was 52,576 and 134,601 in Jordan. A new elementary preparatory school (for 1,300 boys and girls) was completed in Damascus, and several others were under construction in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. 27/

48. Detailed information on the situation of refugee pupils receiving education in UNRWA schools (as of October 1987) is given in table 8.

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\*The information on education is based exclusively on UNRWA reports.

Table 8. Distribution of refugee pupils receiving education in UNRWA schools as of October 1987 a/

Field	Number of schools	Number of teachers	Number of pupils in elementary classes <u>b/</u>			Number of pupils in preparatory classes <u>b/</u>			Total number of pupils
			Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	
Jordan	195	3 712	45 142	46 786	91 928	20 747	21 926	42 673	134 601
Lebanon	83	1 183	11 552	12 430	23 982	4 766	4 685	9 451	33 500 <u>c/</u>
Syrian Arab Republic	111	1 550	17 469	18 496	35 965	7 827	8 784	16 611	52 576

Source: Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), table 5.

a/ Excluding 104,017 refugee pupils attending elementary, preparatory and secondary government and private schools.

b/ Including non-eligible children attending UNRWA schools, of which there were 54,080 in October 1987. Of these, 17,252 were in the Gaza Strip, where all refugee children have always been regarded in practice as eligible for educational services.

c/ No enrolment figures were received in October 1987. This figure shows the January 1988 enrolment in schools that were open and an estimate for the schools that were closed.

49. Training centres in the Syrian Arab Republic and Jordan proceeded normally. The Sibilin training centre in Lebanon, closed since September 1983, was reopened. During its four-year closure, UNRWA provided training for 225 refugee boys and girls in other locations in Lebanon. 28/

50. About 60 per cent of the students in the UNRWA pre-service teacher-training centres (529 out of 881) were young women. At the Sibilin centre in Lebanon, at the Damascus Vocational Training Centre and at the Wadi Seer Training Centre in Jordan, 121 young women completed training in 1987/88 as quantity surveyors, architectural draughtswomen, mechanical engineering draughtswomen, construction technicians, radio and television mechanics, medical laboratory technicians and assistant pharmacists. At the Amman Training Centre in Jordan, some women were attending courses in beauty culture, home and institutional management, business and office practice programmes relating to the advancement of Palestinian women. The discrepancy in vocational training opportunities (except for pre-service teacher training) for Palestinian men and women continued, however, and women constituted only 20 per cent of the trainees at these centres.\*

\*Reply from the UNRWA Executive Office, dated 10 October 1988, to the letter sent by the Secretariat on 20 June 1988.

D. Health\*

51. During the period under review, UNRWA continued to provide health services to the eligible refugee population outside the occupied Arab territories.
52. In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, health education concentrated on activating camp and school health committees to encourage the refugee population to assume responsibility for its own health and that of the community. 29/ The small family planning programme, which advised women of childbearing age on the health advantages of properly spacing their children has been offered on a limited basis through the UNRWA clinic. 30/
53. There was a 20 per cent increase in out-patients' consultations at UNRWA clinics. In the Syrian Arab Republic, one combined health and feeding centre was established. In Jordan, two maternal and child care subcentres were established. 31/
54. In Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, there have been steady improvements in environmental health, including the provision of indoor water taps to five camps in Jordan.
55. The security situation in Lebanon severely affected the use of health facilities, owing to curfews, clashes between the militia and other restrictions on movement. The 76 per cent overall utilization rate of UNRWA out-patient clinics in 1987 for the five fields of operation was offset, mainly in Lebanon, by the limitations imposed on movement of refugees and inaccessibility of the medical care facilities. Four health centres in the central Lebanon, Saida and Tyre areas, could not operate during the year. Health and medical facilities in the Beirut area were also affected: the UNRWA clinic in the Shatila Camp was heavily damaged in 1986 and all the other camps were inaccessible to health teams until the sieges were lifted in January 1988. Supplies for health care services were maintained, in Burj el-Barajneh with the co-operation of the Palestine Red Crescent hospital, and in Rashidieh in limited amounts, sufficient to treat women and children. It was also difficult for some families to receive UNRWA services because they had been displaced from their Camps. Two mobile medical teams were established in the Beirut and Saida areas to help displaced families. The gradual restoration of full services in all areas was again interrupted by new clashes and incidents in April 1988, seriously disrupting the agency's environmental health, nutrition and supplementary feeding programmes.
56. Nevertheless, UNRWA relief services were provided to all categories of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon up to the end of 1988, including the expanded distribution of basic rations. There were no reports of major epidemics of communicable diseases. Vaccination programmes were normal. UNICEF, in co-ordination with UNRWA, WHO and local health authorities carried out a mass immunization campaign for all children, including Palestinians not previously vaccinated. There were some improvements in the health sector and environmental infrastructure. The Polyclinic in Beirut was expanded and the new health centre of Saida was established. Some water supply projects were completed.

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\*The information on health is based exclusively on UNRWA reports, in particular Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13) and World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/5.

Notes

1/ "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine: annual report of the Director of Health of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the year 1987" (A41/INF.DOC/5), para. 2.

2/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/7, annex, appendix 1.

3/ Ibid., document A41/INF.DOC/7, annex, part II, sect. A.2.

4/ Ibid., sect. A.10; Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), chap. II, para. 109; A/43/362-S/19881; A/43/477-S/20052); and A/43/694.

5/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), chap. II, sect. B, para. 30.

6/ World Health Organization, document A41/INF.DOC/7, annex, part II, sect. B.1-B.4.

7/ Division for Palestinian Rights Bulletin, vol. XI, No. 7 (1988), p. 3; and A/43/694, para. 71.

8/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), chap. II, sect. B, paras. 42 and 44.

9/ A/43/694; TD/B/1183; and Division for Palestinian Rights Bulletin, vol. XI, Nos. 5 and 7.

10/ TD/B/1142 and 1183; and A41/INF.DOC/7, annex.

11/ Division for Palestinian Rights Bulletin, vol. XI, No. 7 (1988), p. 3; and A/43/694, para. 71.

12/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/7, annex, part I, sect. B(4).

13/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), chap. II, para. 93.

14/ Ibid., paras. 42-44.

15/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/5.

16/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), chap. II, paras. 38 and 39.

17/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/5, para. 127.

18/ Ibid., para. 90.

19/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), para. 37.

20/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/5, annex, paras. 4, 101, 108, 118, 120 and 125 and table 7.

22/ Ibid., paras. 103, 104, 109, 112 and 136.

23/ Ibid., paras. 117, 118 and 165-167.

24/ Ibid., para. 176.

25/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), table 2.

26/ Ibid., chap. II, paras. 11-13 and 27.

27/ Ibid., para. 60.

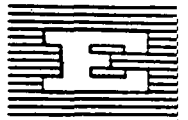
28/ Ibid., paras. 26 and 67.

29/ World Health Organization document A41/INF.DOC/5, annex, para. 135.

30/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/43/13), para. 82.

31/ Ibid., paras. 73, 74 and 76.

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-third session  
Vienna, 29 March-7 April 1989  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

Page 7, Para. 9, penultimate sentence

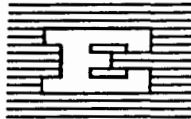
Delete "between 31 and 76".

Page 9, Para. 22, last sentence

For (women's employment on the West Bank...) read (women's  
unemployment on the West Bank ...)



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



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8 February 1990

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-fourth session  
Vienna, 26 February-9 March 1990  
Item 5 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI  
FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women in the occupied  
territories

Note by the Secretary-General\*\*

SUMMARY

The report of the mission of experts analyses various aspects of the living conditions of Palestinian women and, in particular, the impact of the Intifada on the Palestinian family; education; health, including the psychological well-being of women and children; economy and employment, as well as the changing traditional roles of women towards self-reliance and decision-making. Recommendations aimed at the long- and short-term improvement of the living conditions of Palestinian women are presented.

\*E/CN.6/1990/1.

\*\*Annexes I and II have been reproduced in the form in which they were received; only typographical errors and errors of fact or terminology have been corrected.

## INTRODUCTION

1. This report has been prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolutions 1988/25 of 26 May 1988 and 1989/34 of 24 May 1989. In resolution 1989/34, paragraph 1, the Council requested the Secretary-General:

"to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of Palestinian women, making use of all available information, including United Nations reports, information from Governments, non-governmental organizations, missions undertaken by United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to the occupied territories, and reports of meetings and seminars as appropriate, and to submit the report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fourth session."

2. Furthermore, in paragraph 5 of the same resolution, the Council again requested the Secretary-General "to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children, in the light of the drastic deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories". The mission had originally been mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1988/25, paragraph 4, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General, "as a matter of urgency, to send a mission composed of experts on the status of women to investigate the situation of Palestinian women and children, in the light of the recent tragic developments in the occupied Palestinian territories".

3. In view of the reiterated request for the mission, the Secretary-General decided to send a mission composed of three experts plus United Nations staff to those countries in which Palestine refugees resided that would be willing to receive the mission, including the occupied Palestinian territories themselves. In a note verbale dated 3 August 1989, the Secretary-General invited the Governments of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, as the host countries, and the Government of Israel, as the occupying power, to provide the Secretary-General with confirmation of their "support for this fact-finding mission". In a letter dated 3 August 1989, the Secretariat invited the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to provide the Secretary-General with support for the mission.

4. In reply to the note verbale, the Governments of Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic expressed their support for the dispatch of a fact-finding mission. "Assistance and full support" to the mission was communicated to the Secretary-General by the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations (Vienna). The Government of Israel replied as follows:

"The Permanent Representative of Israel would like to draw the attention of the Secretary-General to the fact that the above mentioned resolutions contain already conclusions concerning the situation in the territories which makes - in our eyes - an additional investigation by a mission completely unnecessary. However, the Government of Israel will reconsider its position concerning the support of a fact finding mission if such a request of support will not be part of a resolution with a conclusive condemnatory nature."

5. Since some of the Governments concerned were willing to accept the mission, the Secretary-General decided that the mission should collect the information on the conditions of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territories in the neighbouring countries. It was decided that the mission would visit Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic during the week of 9-16 December 1989. The mission was to be composed of

three experts on the status of women: an expert on women's rights from Argentina, a specialist on education from Norway and an expert on economic questions from the Philippines. Because of conditions in her country at the time, the expert from the Philippines informed the Secretariat two days before the departure of the mission that she would not be able to join it. Its final composition was, therefore, limited to two experts, a consultant and a staff member from the Division for the Advancement of Women, Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Office at Vienna, accompanied by two technical assistants.

6. The experts were Ingrid Morken, Director for the Board of Colleges in Hedmark, Norway, and Ana María Alfonsín de Fasan, member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Ingrid Morken was formerly President of the Women's University at Loten, Norway. Ana María Alfonsín de Fasan was formerly Director-General for Women's Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign and Religious Affairs of the Government of Argentina.

7. On 7 and 8 December 1989, the mission assembled at Vienna. From 9 to 12 December, and on 15 December, it visited Jordan, and on 13 and 14 December, it visited the Syrian Arab Republic. In both countries, the mission established contacts with the authorities and with representatives of the United Nations system and the General Union of Palestinian Women. The mission visited Baqa'a and Jerash Refugee Camps in Jordan and El Ermuk Refugee Camp in the Syrian Arab Republic. The mission also met with the representatives of the Palestinian National Council at Amman.

8. The main task of the mission was to obtain as much information as possible on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied territories. During the visit to Jordan, the mission interviewed people from the occupied Palestinian territories who either came directly from the territories to meet with the mission or were living in Jordan.



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ANNEX I. REPORT OF THE EXPERTS ON THE BASIS OF THEIR MISSION  
TO JORDAN AND THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

## INTRODUCTION

The situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territories is profoundly influenced by the consequences of continued military occupation, following war in 1967, and the tragic events connected with the Palestinian popular uprising against occupation, the Intifada, which began in December 1987.

The findings of the mission reveal that the situation of Palestinian women and children could not be separated from the larger political question. From the point of views of women interviewed, without a political solution such as an independent state, their situation and that of their children would deteriorate further and was not likely to be improved.

That political situation has aspects far beyond the mandate of the mission and which are dealt with in other United Nations bodies. However, for Palestinian women, the struggle for an independent Palestinian state and a Palestinian identity was central to their lives. They expressed a willingness to accept sacrifices, including their children, in order to achieve this.

There is no doubt that women and children are suffering physically, economically and emotionally under the existing situation. There is also no doubt that women are playing a central role in the struggle of their people. This increased participation is changing the nature of their role in society and they are accordingly changing society as such. The society which emerges as a result of these changes could be very different for women.

Given the limited time available to the mission and its inability to visit the occupied Palestinian territories themselves, an effort was made to select interviewees from the broadest possible spectrum of people who could provide information on conditions either from their personal or their professional experience. Because of concern for the physical security of interviewees and their families, the names are being kept confidential. The mission interviewed 22 persons, out of which three were men. Fifteen of the interviewees lived in the occupied territories, the remainder in Jordan. Out of 19 women interviewed, 13 were married, one divorced, one widowed and four single. A few women were separated from their husbands, due to deportation or their husbands' arrests, and were staying with their parents in Jordan. The age of interviewees ranged from 19 to 62 years. Only five of the interviewed women worked although most of them (16) had professional training, including university degrees. Several had doctorate degrees, a few were physicians, others were qualified teachers working previously in educational institutions of different levels from kindergartens to universities. The great majority of those qualified and unemployed women stated that they did not work because of a lack of any job opportunities. A few said they had lost their previous jobs for political reasons, deportation or forced emigration from the West Bank. Only very few stopped working after getting married and never returned to their jobs. The married and widowed women (14) all had at least two children each. In four cases the number of children was four or more.

About half of the interviewed women were involved in various kinds of social activities, working for women's organizations, charity and self-reliance associations, women's networks and workshops. A few of them have been involved, at least in certain periods of their lives, in direct political activities, such as demonstrations or "underground" education.

On the basis of the information obtained in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, the mission drafted its report in Vienna from 17 to 19 December 1989. The statistics included in Annex II were prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

## I. CONDITIONS OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The conditions of Palestinian women and children can be seen in terms of longer-term trends, reflected in statistics and in studies, as well as in testimony about their daily lives under the occupation and in the Intifada. Many of the conditions described could be termed violations of human rights as these are defined in international law. Many of these are reflected in the mission's findings regarding specific sectors like education, health and employment.

Military occupation tightening its grip during Intifada, has involved administrative and judicial measures that have had particular effects on women. This is reflected in the increased levels of violence, in the use of collective punishment such as detentions or searches of houses, or curfews, cutting off of electricity and water supply, closing of schools or demolition of houses.

Practices affecting the lives of women which were important included: land confiscation, demolition of trees and crops, employing cultural taboos in a way to cause stress to women, shooting, imprisonment of women, including pregnant women, health problems facing women in jail, deportation of husband or wife, closing down of women's organizations and women's production centers, destruction of hospital equipment, destruction of property in the home, and destruction of family homes. Women are also affected by punitive measures employed against them and members of their families: arrests and beatings, verbal insults, forced cleaning of slogans from walls and, above all, school closings.

The efforts to suppress the Intifada had included administrative measures which did not involve due process of law. The mission heard extensive testimony on the harsh treatment of women detainees, including women held in administrative detention. Prisons were reported as overcrowded and medical care, especially for pregnant women, was reported as inadequate. Infants born in prison remaining with the mother during her period of incarceration receive very poor health care. The imprisonment of women is particularly stressful to the family since in traditional cultures women are totally responsible for the private sphere of the home. While women from the community may seek to perform a detained woman's roles as best they can, her children are also sometimes cared for by relatives who may live in a distant village or section of town. This upheaval in the family causes stress on the children as well as stress on the mother.

The witnesses interviewed felt that the punitive measures were intended to make life difficult and even impossible in order to encourage emigration.

### A. Impact on the Palestinian family

The situation has an impact on the Palestinian family. On the one hand its traditional structure regained its importance during the Intifada. Its members comfort each other and give more feelings of security to the children. On the other hand, the role of women has become more important and on a more

equal footing with men. Partnership between men and women, including in some cases sharing of domestic duties and child care, is becoming more natural and frequent. The relations within the families are becoming mutually supportive, families unity strengthened. Only in a few cases was there an indication that stress resulted in tension between the husband and the wife.

However, because schools are closed, many parents consider it safer for girls to marry early and for this reason they are beginning to have many children and from a very early age. For women giving testimony, the high fertility of mothers is seen as something positive, as a reassurance of the continued existence of the nation. Although before the Intifada, people were beginning to talk about family planning, now mothers are said to want to have more children. It was stated by many that loss of land and freedom is worse than losing one's children.

In the context of the Intifada, the family lives under tremendous psychological pressure. While children distribute pamphlets and participate in the conflict, it is reported that at night they display psychosomatic symptoms such as convulsions, bed-wetting and even cases of diabetes. Many women indicated a sense of guilt because they could not prevent children from participating in actions that they know could be physically and morally harmful to the child. This may have long-term effects on the child as an adult.

In addition to the stress produced by their direct involvement in community aspects of the Intifada, women must cope with difficult conditions within their families. Women separated from their husbands live in fear for the husbands lives, since they often have no information about what is happening to them. The accompaniment of curfews with cutting off of electricity means that many large families are forced to live in close quarters for many days without amenities. Instances were reported where deportations of wives who had not been born in the occupied territories was employed as a punitive measure to coerce the husbands. If the husband refused to collaborate with the authorities, the wife's permit to stay in the occupied territories was not extended.

This also affects the children. Children are exposed to violence often at an early age and rapidly are made aware of the political realities of occupation. During curfews that sometimes last for several days, fear and aggression is expressed inside the house. This places considerable pressure on the members of the families sometimes causing tension between the parents. The children engage in role-playing the Palestinian/Israeli conflict - acting out the stress by fighting and screaming. If not, they sit frequently in front of the TV watching violence. The psychological impact on the children can be seen in the frustration, nervousness, stress, fear and aggression. The long term effects cannot be predicted with certainty. However, from previous conflicts and wars, research shows that this lack of normal childhood will influence the rest of their lives. Many of the mothers feel that the next generation is going to pay too high a price. Not having schools, children are irritable and nervous and sometimes throw stones at each other; their mothers have to explain to them that the enemy is external. Before, the respectful and obedient child was considered superior; now the strong, muscular and aggressive child is more popular.



In sum, the Intifada, implying a constant state of uncertainty and fear combined with the new roles and responsibilities, place considerable stress and pressure on Palestinian women. They have to assume a major part of domestic and economic responsibilities in order to ensure a minimum of subsistence to their families. They also have to educate their children, making up for closed schools and kindergartens. Their houses have been often searched, children threatened by soldiers breaking in at any time of day or night. Some women lost their children, husbands or other close family members. Others lost their houses, furniture, property, pieces of land or have been deported. Many women live with their extensive families in the overcrowded rooms, without proper nutrition, health care, proper hygienic standards. Having to cope with all those demands often lead to and affect seriously their health in an environment where health services are becoming precarious, as seen below.

### B. Education

Education has long been viewed as an important asset by Palestinians but has become specially important since the occupation of 1967. It is perceived as a way of giving children some security for the future in an uncertain world.

During this period, there have been some marked changes regarding who has access to education, with quite rapid increases in the numbers of girls who go to school, including university level. While women's access to education and the impact it has on their lives are conditioned by the social attitudes to women within Palestinian society, there is full acceptance today that girls, whatever their social background, as well as boys should attend school for at least 6 years.

Palestinian children living in the occupied territories receive formal education through institutions managed by the occupying authorities, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and private organizations. Over 60 per cent are institutions controlled by the Government of the occupation authorities. These institutions include a small number of kindergarten schools for children below 6 years of age; elementary schools for children between 6 and 12 years of age; and preparatory schools for children between 13 and 15 years of age. The elementary and preparatory levels are compulsory serving well over 450,000 pupils. Schools in the Gaza Strip follow the Egyptian curriculum and those in the West Bank the Jordanian curriculum, except for Al-Quds, Jerusalem, where schools are compelled to follow the educational system of Israel, the occupying power.

In rural areas of the West Bank, schools above the primary level are few. This means that children continuing their schooling have to commute, sometimes quite long distances, especially to secondary schools. Many families do not regard commuting as acceptable for girls. In rural areas this often combines existing social pressures to keep girls at home after the primary cycle to help with domestic or agricultural work. The fact that many men are not present in their families - so that the women are heads of households - often leaves the burden on these girls which is viewed as necessary to the family's survival. It certainly seems to be the case that girls in the camps generally stay at school longer than their rural sisters.

Since 1987, intrusions by the military of kindergartens, preschools and school campuses have been commonplace particularly in West Bank. The main current educational problem is that since December 1987, hardly any formal

education at any level has been provided to about 500,000 people in the Occupied Territories. This leads to serious consequences for the pupils and their families. Kindergartens, schools and universities have been closed for weeks and months. The children have to play and act in the streets. This gives them the opportunity to confront the violence they are experiencing: they throw stones and burn tires.

To try to make the best out of the situation, the women are maintaining "underground teaching" and clandestine education. The women - mothers or volunteer teachers - are teaching the children in the mosques and homes. However, at the beginning of the third year of the Intifada this has continued, although some women have had to stop their participation because of harassment and provocation.

As noted earlier with Intifada the Palestinian women found themselves involved in many new roles and tasks. They consider themselves ahead of other Arab women, for example women interviewed referred to new development such as men starting to accept women's involvement outside the house and even encourage women to be active in the community. TV certainly has an important impact in this respect - they can watch what other women are doing, especially in the occupied territories. The fact that school girls frequently have taken part in demonstrations and strikes has certainly altered men's perceptions of them, and these exceptional circumstances have altered what is permitted as far as girls' behavior in public. In that sense, the Intifada is clearly speeding up the process of equal rights for males and females.

The Women's Union, which now is forbidden at the West Bank and Gaza Strip, is running hospitals, schools and kindergartens. Important work for pre-school children is done. This aim to fill the gap which has existed in preschool education, and to develop new, more child-centered and less rigid educational ideas is something which may also help to break down some male-female stereotypes.

For years the universities face constant challenges from the occupation authorities, including military raids on campus, arrests of students, and closures. For persons with vocational and university education, unemployment has reached crisis levels. Job opportunities are limited for any graduate. This fact means that men's needs tend to take priority and women are therefore less likely to seek employment. Because of this, some families do not see the value of higher education for their daughters and prefer early marriages.

The Intifada is, as we see, seriously inhibiting girls from pursuing their education, as well as influencing the quality of education provided. There is no continuity in teaching. Especially at the preschool, primary and secondary level, the most fundamental and necessary equipment are missing. When schools were open, they were frequently invaded by occupation authorities, with accompanying disturbance to the children and teaching staff and damage to furniture and equipment.

### C. Health and psychological well-being

According to a number of witnesses interviewed, the health conditions of the Palestinian population (men, women and children in the occupied territories) is rapidly deteriorating due to an increase in curfews, use of tear gas against the population, wounding by rubber and live bullets, delays in getting wounded to hospitals, beatings and broken bones, and the general decline in economic standards. Casualty statistics indicate that 10 percent of the fatalities and 23% of the injured connected with the Intifada and

measures to suppress it were women. Also, inadequate sanitation, nutrition and water supply, insufficient access to medical facilities and high costs of medical care provided by Israeli authorities continue to be factors contributing to poor health conditions in the area. Pregnant women in particular suffer from the use of tear gas in closed areas and statistics indicate a significant increase in miscarriages as a result. The stressful situation in the occupied territories is linked to the drying up of the mother's breast milk supply causing problems of malnutrition among infants and new born babies. In times of curfew, no other milk can be found to feed the babies. Water mixed with starch has been used as a substitute for mother's milk with unsuccessful results. Also, some families are unable to afford the cost of purchasing canned milk for infants, and consequently the babies suffer from poor nutrition.

In times of general curfews, telephone communications are sometimes cut. Ambulances are prevented from responding to emergency calls, including deliveries. Home deliveries are, therefore, increasing. Complications for mother and infant mortality rates are rising as a result. Jalazoon camp was under curfew for 48 days, other camps as well were under long periods of curfew.

There is as well a deterioration of the psychological well-being of mothers in particular. During prolonged periods of curfew, women are fully responsible for finding food to feed the large Palestinian family. They must also insure that the children stay within the family home which is often over-crowded. Women must also deal with their husband's frustration at his inability to go out and earn an income. It was stated that women seemed to be stronger and more able to cope with the circumstances than men, some of whom had developed psychological problems. However, the combined effect of this stressful situation is linked to an increase in cases of high blood pressure, miscarriages, diabetes, headaches and psycho-somatic illnesses among women. There are few medical services available for these stress-related problems.

#### D. Economy and employment

The deterioration in the economic standards of the territories and the decline in employment rates had a strong impact on the socio-political situation which caused the young generation to resist occupation. The young and the professional class see a dim economic future for them in the Occupied Territories since the economy is set up to absorb and encourage workers who labour for the benefit of the Israeli economy. The situation of the worker is also insecure since most work without official papers and therefore receive no benefits. There was some evidence given that Palestinian workers receive less than an Israeli worker. These are the general conditions that existed in the territories before the Intifada.

Prior to the Intifada women worked in Israel in four main areas: manufacturing, cleaning, sweatshops, and picking fruits. They were paid roughly 50% of what an Israeli worker received, since they were not part of the formal labour force covered by labour regulations. Some women experienced stress because of the distance between their village and their work place. Some women felt that they prefer not to work for an economic system perceived by the local population to be oppressive. During the Intifada many women quit these jobs and sought to replace them with independent work within the home: growing vegetables for the market place, knitting caps and sweaters for prisoners and sewing.

During the last year, firstly because of curfews, fewer workers, including women, worked in Israel. Consequently, in order to survive the population returned to practices that exist in less economically developed cultures where household economies predominate. A second motivating factor was the desire to boycott goods made in Israel. By returning to a more primitive form of economy, i.e., forming small co-operatives for canning, growing small vegetable gardens and raising poultry, women's role in the economic system became more important since women have been traditionally the ones to carry on such work. Should these small industries indeed become the new infrastructure of the new State, as many have said, then women are currently building this infrastructure. Many women felt that it is important to insure their continued participation in socio-economic matters after a solution to the current situation has been reached.

A number of co-operatives planned by women and run by women are operating on the West Bank. These co-operatives produce canned goods, biscuits and cookies, grow and sell vegetables, and raise poultry for local markets. Their objective is to encourage women to earn a living within reach of their children, in the same village. These co-operatives provide a sample of a very productive system of production in which women could become more involved. The women stated that they need more funding and more training in order to improve this system.

Women are also engaged in sewing, knitting and embroidery centers that operate all over the occupied territories. However, some of these centers have been closed down in recent months by the occupation authorities. Women are working in their homes, but the problem they now face is that of marketing their products since the organizations which used to buy these products are having financial problems and the export of many commodities is prohibited..

The closing down of women's organizations such as In'ash al-Usra (family rehabilitation) was considered to be a step that will retard the self reliance measures that women have recently assumed in order to cope with current conditions. Such organizations, run by women for women, account for many home industries such as sewing and embroidery. Through these organizations women can supplement their income without having to leave their children. These institutions were instrumental also in education adult women and in providing them with vocational training. In'ash al-Usra used to provide for 5,400 families, it is now shut down. In order to continue to employ its of staff 198 women, the organization continued to operate on a smaller scale in a clandestine fashion in private homes. The organization had centers for sewing, centers for embroidery, and a production center for making cookies. It used to lend money for small agrarian projects headed by women. Since the organization is now prevented from selling products made before the closing orders went into effect, the organization has been totally disabled financially.

Since men are home due to curfew and unemployment, they are now helping in home industries. Some men learned how to knit caps for prisoners. These developments mark an important role transformation for women in Palestinian society, focussing on self reliant and independent economic system.

The problem facing the population is that they currently have very little control over their economic system, including agrarian and small-scale industries. In times of curfew big trucks loaded with home grown vegetables are left by the sidewalk to rot while the population is in need of these nutrients. During curfews, the electricity is sometimes shut off causing damage to products in co-operatives that need refrigeration or baking. While these

economic steps are helping women heads of households increase their meager income, under the current conditions home economics cannot provide a viable alternative to an economic system that is based on developing the potential of the occupied territories. It must also be noted that home industries cannot absorb the high rates of professionals who cannot find employment in their own fields.

In order to ensure the subsistence of the Palestinian population, it appeared nonetheless necessary in the short term to provide women's co-operatives and organizations with measures that would allow them to continue their efforts towards self reliance. Assistance in marketing products as well as training in production sales and management were identified as important areas that could effectively ameliorate the conditions of women struggling for the survival of the Palestinian economy.

## II. CHANGING TRADITIONAL ROLES TOWARD SELF-RELIANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

A central women's role has been the preservation of tradition, national heritage, culture and its symbols, instilling in their children respect for national values and knowledge of their history. This was regarded as a necessary cultural and social precondition for the Intifada and a sustaining element in the continuing commitment of the Palestinian people to the uprising. The importance of this role has increased during two years of Intifada and clearly contributed to resisting the debilitating effects of the measures adopted by the occupation authorities to suppress the Intifada as well as to maintaining the morale and unity of Palestinian families, communities and nation. The preservation and increased importance of the traditional roles of Palestinian women have been accompanied by changes regarding many aspects of their family, social and political lives. In the context of the Intifada, women have gradually started to assume new roles and responsibilities. In addition to their roles of mothers, wives and sisters, they have become heads of household, main income earners, teachers, as well as social and political activists.

According to the interviewees Intifada would not have broken out and continued without the involvement of women. In particular certain traditional roles which women have customarily played in the family and in society, as well as traditional family structures have been crucial for the survival of Palestinian society under extremely repressive living conditions.

As a consequence of the conditions in the occupied territories, many women have been separated from their husbands and male family members when these were arrested, deported or detained. Some have become widows. In some families, male members have become physically or psychologically disabled. In all these cases many women have had to assume the role of head of households. As a result women have to make all decisions concerning both families and households on a daily basis, they undertake whatever paid work they can obtain to support their families, including work outside their homes and communities. Some women became the only bread winners in their extensive families, providing children, parents, younger brothers and sisters and often other relatives - such as the unemployed, elderly or handicapped - with the bare minimum of subsistence. These new roles, entailing often an economic dependence of male family members on their wives, mothers or daughters, has significantly strengthened the position of women in the family and in the community. It was stated by a number of the women interviewed that even the elderly fathers, who used to believe that a woman's place was at home, fully supported paid work of their daughters outside their households and considered them to be as good as

men in providing for the family. Much of women's empowerment to participate in decision-making derives from their provision of essential income to the family.

It was also noted by the interviewees that women have begun to take increasingly decisions in the community, participate in local committees, prepare protest actions as well as and work for social welfare organizations, professional and labour unions. Women of all ages have begun joining men in public demonstrations, writing political statements on the walls, throwing stones and other forms of public political activities. For those activities, many women have been arrested, detained, deported, beaten or insulted along with men. As mentioned above, many Palestinians killed and injured during the Intifada were women.

Because schools have been closed during most of the Intifada. In particular in the West Bank, women have assumed the major responsibilities for teaching, running what has been termed "underground education" described earlier in the report. Because of the traditional importance of education within Palestinian society, this activity has particularly added to women's visibility and respectability.

Women also have been participating in women's committees, which have been responsible for various aspects of life during the Intifada, including education, health and self-reliance. This is particularly notable in providing support to special hardship cases, such as families with absent heads of household, numerous children and elderly, families without any income. This support takes various forms depending on existing circumstances. For example, women from the community take care of the children, provide the families with some clothes and food, often sewing and cooking in turns. In case of families whose houses were destroyed, women have organized shelter, sharing existing housing facilities or using houses of people from the locality who are living abroad. Whenever possible they also collect money, provide medicines and other basic necessities. A difficulty is that meetings have been prohibited because, at the meeting places, people are allegedly encouraged to participate in the Intifada.

The emerging new position of women in the society is reflected in many aspects of daily life. Besides the fact already noted that women can work outside the home and, by virtue of their income-earning, have a voice in domestic decision-making, women are also active members of various associations, unions and organizations both exclusively for women and with mixed membership. Some co-educational kindergartens and schools exist. Men and women can walk together down the street and attend meetings together.

The Intifada has meant in many respects a revolution for women. Women's issues have begun to be discussed as well as women's role in society. The traditional relations between men and women have been gradually changing, as is women's importance within their families, communities and the society as a whole. For example, more and more women decide themselves on choosing husbands, running households, seeking job opportunities, joining popular committees, and other forms of struggle.

This new role of women and their essential contribution to the Intifada have been accompanied by women's increased awareness of their new status and the wish to strengthen the participation in political decision-making both during the Intifada and in the future independent State. The ten percent participation of women in the Palestine National Council does not reflect - according to some women - their real contribution to and companionship in the struggle and has to be increased.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of its findings the mission reached the following conclusions:

In the long run, the basic improvement of the living conditions of the Palestinian women, their advancement, full equality and self-reliance can only be achieved by an end to the occupation. Until then and taking into consideration the present difficult and dangerous circumstances, some measures can be suggested as short-term, partial solutions to some problems.

- With regard to the legal aspects, there should be strict observance of relevant international legal norms, especially the application of international legal standards on armed conflict to protect women and children, such as the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949;
- With regard to the living conditions of Palestinian people the occupying power should stop collective punishment measures such as curfews, cuts of water supplies, electricity, demolishing of houses, closure of schools and hospitals, as those measures are particularly harmful to the Palestinian women and children.

Concerning women's self-reliance the following can be recommended:

- Israeli authorities should allow women's production centers to reopen;
- Governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations system, should encourage and assist in existing income generating activities for Palestinian women, and in the creation of new jobs, whenever possible;
- Palestinian women should be assisted to create a women's centre that would provide possibilities for child care, education, discussion, cultural activities women's solidarity and some production. Such a centre could serve as a model for creation of similar institutions in other places, including refugee camps;
- Palestinian women should be encouraged to take part, whenever possible, in seminars and training workshops on equality rights, political participation and decision-making.

Palestinian women are part of what can only be termed a tragedy, but one which can and must be ended. It is a situation where people who were good, and still have the capacity for goodness, commit acts that violate the most elementary principles of humanity. It is reflected in the fact that young children are brought up in hatred and the need to participate in the strife, even being considered heroes and martyrs. It is also reflected in the fact that soldiers of the occupation, who are also young, kill and wound children and women and engage in other extreme behaviour. The mental stability of both occupied and occupier is endangered by this situation and it seems particularly important now, at a moment when humanity is celebrating the elimination of walls separating peoples elsewhere, that the wall between Palestinians and Israelis should come down as soon as possible, with a secure peace, with each people in its own land, so that the two peoples can develop culturally and economically, complement one another and even begin to look upon each other as brothers and sisters.

ANNEX II. MAIN STATISTICAL INFORMATION

POPULATION ESTIMATES, BY SEX AND AGE

1986	WEST BANK						GAZA STRIP					
	Females			Males			Females			Males		
	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
AGE	Thousand	within fem.	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total	Thousand	within fem.	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total
0-4	77,300	18.5	9.2	81,700	19.5	9.8	52,300	19.2	9.6	55,500	20.3	10.2
5-14	111,800	26.7	13.3	120,400	28.7	14.4	74,300	27.3	13.6	81,300	29.8	14.9
15-19	43,300	10.3	5.2	48,600	11.6	5.8	27,900	10.3	5.1	30,800	11.3	5.7
20-24	42,600	10.2	5.1	45,700	10.9	5.5	25,600	9.4	4.7	27,700	10.1	5.1
25-34	54,900	13.1	6.6	57,000	13.6	6.8	35,700	13.1	6.5	38,500	14.1	7.1
35-44	25,800	6.2	3.1	16,900	4.0	2.0	19,900	7.3	3.7	12,100	4.4	2.2
45-54	25,500	6.1	3.0	17,400	4.2	2.1	16,300	6.0	3.0	10,600	3.9	1.9
55-64	21,000	5.0	2.5	16,400	3.9	2.0	11,700	4.3	2.1	9,700	3.6	1.8
65+	16,700	4.0	2.0	14,700	3.5	1.8	8,300	3.1	1.5	6,900	2.5	1.3
TOTAL	418,900	100.0	50.01	418,800	100.0	49.99	272,000	100.0	49.9	273,100	100.0	50.10
Grand TOTAL	837,700						545,100					

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1988, No. 39 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1988), table XXVII/3.

POPULATION ESTIMATES OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, BY SEX AND AGE

1989	WEST BANK						GAZA STRIP					
	Females			Males			Females			Males		
	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
AGE	Thousand	within fem.	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total	Thousand	within fem.	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total
0-4	11,453	5.8	2.8	12,339	6.0	3.1	16,753	7.1	3.5	18,297	7.4	3.8
5-14	39,292	19.9	9.7	42,485	20.6	10.5	60,349	25.7	12.6	64,627	26.3	13.4
15-19	20,307	10.3	5.0	22,066	10.7	5.5	24,834	10.6	5.2	26,966	11.0	5.6
20-24	18,515	9.4	4.6	20,331	9.8	5.0	22,302	9.5	4.6	23,813	9.7	5.0
25-34	32,061	16.3	7.9	35,141	17.0	8.7	36,833	15.7	7.7	39,864	16.2	8.3
35-44	25,333	12.8	6.3	27,606	13.4	6.8	25,905	11.0	5.4	29,020	11.8	6.0
45-54	20,371	10.3	5.0	21,864	10.6	5.4	19,534	8.3	4.1	21,337	8.7	4.4
55-64	13,836	7.0	3.4	11,647	5.6	2.9	14,936	6.4	3.1	11,511	4.7	2.4
65+	16,098	8.2	4.0	12,952	6.3	3.2	13,342	5.7	2.8	10,583	4.3	2.2
TOTAL	197,266	100.0	48.86	206,431	100.0	51.14	234,788	100.0	48.8	246,018	100.0	51.17
Grand TOTAL	403,697						480,806					

Source: UNRWA Statistics of Palestine Refugees, REF. WWR 730/B run date 30/11/89



POPULATION ESTIMATES OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, BY SEX AND AGE

J O R D A N							L E B A N O N					
F e m a l e s				M a l e s			F e m a l e s			M a l e s		
1989	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
AGE	Thousand	within females	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total	Thousand	within females	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total
0-4	26,099	5.9	2.9	27,331	5.8	3.0	10,017	6.9	3.4	10,561	7.0	3.6
5-14	90,771	20.5	9.9	96,176	20.4	10.5	31,309	21.6	10.6	33,110	22.0	11.2
15-19	51,597	11.6	5.6	55,162	11.7	6.0	14,852	10.2	5.0	15,840	10.5	5.4
20-24	48,892	11.0	5.4	53,072	11.3	5.8	15,035	10.4	5.1	15,883	10.5	5.4
25-34	71,988	16.2	7.9	80,364	17.1	8.8	25,216	17.4	8.5	26,923	17.9	9.1
35-44	50,049	11.3	5.5	55,740	11.8	6.1	15,586	10.7	5.3	16,600	11.0	5.6
45-54	42,110	9.5	4.6	49,500	10.5	5.4	12,955	8.9	4.4	14,180	9.4	4.8
55-64	27,003	6.1	3.0	24,563	5.2	2.7	8,201	5.6	2.8	7,711	5.1	2.6
65+	34,650	7.8	3.8	28,702	6.1	3.1	12,068	8.3	4.1	9,895	6.6	3.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>443,159</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>48.50</b>	<b>470,610</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>51.50</b>	<b>145,239</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49.1</b>	<b>150,703</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>50.92</b>
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>913,769</b>						<b>295,942</b>					

Source: UNRWA Statistics of Palestine Refugees, REF. WWR 730/B run date 30/11/89

POPULATION ESTIMATES OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES, BY SEX AND AGE

S Y R I A N A R A B R E P U B L I C						
F e m a l e s				M a l e s		
1989	Number	Percentage	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Percentage
AGE	Thousand	within females	from Total	Thousand	within males	from Total
0-4	11,808	8.6	4.3	12,411	8.9	4.5
5-14	31,390	23.0	11.4	32,895	23.6	11.9
15-19	14,337	10.5	5.2	11,777	8.4	4.3
20-24	13,812	10.1	5.0	17,283	12.4	6.3
25-34	23,038	16.9	8.3	23,914	17.1	8.7
35-44	14,236	10.4	5.2	14,779	10.6	5.4
45-54	11,494	8.4	4.2	12,488	8.9	4.5
55-64	7,164	5.2	2.6	6,768	4.8	2.5
65+	9,331	6.8	3.4	7,278	5.2	2.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136,610</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>49.46</b>	<b>139,593</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>50.54</b>
<b>Grand TOTAL</b>	<b>276,203</b>					

Source: UNRWA Statistics of Palestine Refugees, REF. WWR 730/B run date 30/11/89

**ENROLMENT RATIO OF FEMALE REFUGEE PUPILS IN UNRWA, GOVERNMENT(a) AND PRIVATE(a) SCHOOLS, DISTRIBUTED BY SINGLE YEAR AGE GROUP, 1987-1988**

West Bank							Gaza Strip						
AGE	POPULATION		ENROLMENT		RATIO (%) *		AGE	POPULATION		ENROLMENT		RATIO (%) *	
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS		BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS
6	3594	3431	2324	2044	64.7	59.6	6	6367	5942	5629	5185	88.4	87.3
7	4015	3634	3037	2441	75.6	67.2	7	6400	6064	5912	5372	92.4	88.6
8	4175	3814	3116	2639	74.6	69.2	8	6522	6077	5797	5286	88.9	87
9	4119	3891	2913	2764	70.7	71	9	6206	5809	5573	5117	89.8	88.1
10	4253	3890	2855	2562	67.1	65.9	10	5861	5403	5163	4626	88.1	85.6
11	4255	3991	2926	2605	68.8	65.3	11	5933	5494	5175	4620	87.2	84.1
12	4236	3892	2762	2439	65.2	62.7	12	5768	5218	4903	4177	85	80
13	4284	4031	2859	2446	66.7	60.7	13	5818	5392	4662	4126	80.1	76.5
14	4480	3986	2797	2270	62.4	56.9	14	5526	5137	4297	3737	77.8	72.7
15	4242	4028	2008	1789	47.3	44.4	15	5114	4672	3067	2474	60	53
16	4352	3976	1368	1388	31.4	34.9	16	4886	4478	2417	2300	49.5	51.4
17	4177	3848	1046	1097	25	28.5	17	4395	4178	1922	1940	43.7	46.4
18	4159	3755	455	453	10.9	12	18	4856	4490	839	826	17.3	18.4
19	3895	3610	134	115	3.4	0.2	19	4152	3912	243	207	5.9	5.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58236</b>	<b>53777</b>	<b>30600</b>	<b>27052</b>	<b>52.5</b>	<b>50.3</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>77804</b>	<b>72266</b>	<b>55599</b>	<b>49993</b>	<b>71.5</b>	<b>69.2</b>

Jordan							Lebanon							Syrian Arab Rep.						
AGE	POPULATION		ENROLMENT		RATIO (%) *		AGE	POPULATION		ENROLMENT		RATIO (%) *		AGE	POPULATION		ENROLMENT		RATIO (%) *	
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS		BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS		BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS
6	8654	8271	8069	7586	93.2	91.7	6	3429	3245	2272	1977	66.2	60.9	6	3229	3036	2903	2641	89.9	87
7	9483	8815	8343	7833	88	88.9	7	3486	3075	2232	1928	64	62.7	7	3271	3098	2804	2515	85.7	81.2
8	10041	9468	8562	8054	85.3	85.1	8	3372	3133	2137	1791	63.4	57.2	8	3145	3035	2777	2722	88.3	89.7
9	10115	9590	8435	7991	83.4	83.3	9	3285	3082	1802	1902	54.9	61.7	9	3114	2961	2710	2464	87	83.2
10	10225	9445	8309	7676	81.3	81.3	10	2811	2777	1827	1765	65	63.6	10	3022	2930	2705	2553	89.5	87.1
11	9668	9167	7740	7182	80.1	78.3	11	2901	2804	1783	2031	61.5	72.4	11	2852	2796	2671	2364	93.7	84.5
12	9827	9171	7761	6875	79	75	12	2969	2750	1905	1771	64.2	64.4	12	2780	2677	2655	2425	95.5	90.6
13	10815	10086	7895	7168	73	71.1	13	3138	2999	1553	1603	49.5	53.4	13	2976	2882	2802	2301	94.1	79.8
14	10933	10245	7503	6773	68.6	66.1	14	2986	2780	1855	1698	62.1	61	14	2867	2730	2254	1988	78.6	72.8
15	11090	10375	4205	4197	37.9	40.4	15	3159	2977	1687	1429	53.4	48	15	2988	2924	1464	1364	49	46.6
16	11015	10260	3094	3440	28.1	33.5	16	3218	2955	1173	978	36.4	33.1	16	3008	2896	1155	1122	38.4	38.7
17	11114	10332	2536	2761	22.8	26.7	17	3099	2903	870	676	28.1	23.3	17	2844	2845	919	914	32.3	32.1
18	10976	9930	1118	1150	10.2	11.6	18	3196	3019	348	263	10.9	8.7	18	2871	2757	396	386	13.8	14
19	10131	9479	324	286	3.2	3	19	3275	3056	95	54	3.1	1.8	19	2825	2730	116	96	4.1	3.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>144087</b>	<b>134634</b>	<b>83894</b>	<b>78972</b>	<b>58.2</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44324</b>	<b>41555</b>	<b>21539</b>	<b>19866</b>	<b>48.6</b>	<b>47.8</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>41792</b>	<b>40297</b>	<b>28331</b>	<b>25855</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>64.1</b>

\*: Ratio of enrolment of pupils to the total number of population of each age group.

Source: UNRWA Department of Education Statistical Year book 1987-88, Table 9.

HEADS OF FAMILIES, BY SEX, 1989.

SEX/REGION	West Bank	Gaza Strip	Jordan	Lebanon	Syrian Arab Republic	T O T A L
Males	58728	84932	102145	52755	44619	343179
Females	33291	17796	22731	14846	12987	101651
TOTAL	92019	102728	124876	67601	57606	444830
% of female heads of family	36.2	17.3	18.2	22.0	22.5	22.9

Source: UNRWA Statistics of Palestine Refugees, REF. WWR 760/A /1989

HOUSEHOLDS, BY SIZE, HOUSING DENSITY, AND SIZE OF DWELLING, 1987

	West Bank	Gaza Strip
<b>PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1987</b>
1	4.5	3
2	8.1	8.4
3	7.8	9.4
4	9.4	10.3
5	10.9	10.5
6	11.5	11.6
7 +	47.8	46.8
<b>ROOMS IN DWELLING</b>		
1	11	17.6
2	29.3	28
3	29.4	26.4
4	20	17.3
5 +	10.3	10.7
<b>PERSONS PER ROOM</b>		
less than 1	7.3	5.2
1	10.3	7
1.1-1.9	20.4	18
2-2.9	29.1	32.1
3-3.9	17.3	19.5
4-4.9	8	9.6
5-5.9	3.8	4.3
6 +	3.8	4.3
<b>Average No. of persons per household (incl. singles)</b>	<b>6.51</b>	<b>6.5</b>

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1988, No. 39 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1988), Table XXVII/15.

NUMBER AND DISTRIBUTION OF "SPECIAL HARDSHIP CASES" \* ( As at 30 June 1989)

Field	Number of families	Receiving rations	Not a) receiving rations	Total	% of refugee population
West Bank	5841	21854	2353	24207	6.1
Gaza Strip	9052	39942	1959	41901	8.6
Lebanon	8157	31348	371	31719	10.8
Syrian Arab Republic	4011	13004	1240	14244	5.2
Jordan	6186	27237	2535	29772	3.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33247</b>	<b>133385</b>	<b>8458</b>	<b>141843</b>	<b>6.1</b>

a): includes children under 1 year of age, men serving compulsory military service or imprisoned, students studying away from home etc.

\*: Families with no male between the ages of 18 and 55 years in the household, or with one who is incapable, for medical reasons, of earning a living.

Source: Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty fourth Session, Supplement No. 13, (A44/13) Table 3.

POPULATION AGED 14 AND OVER, BY YEARS OF SCHOOLING, AGE AND SEX.

WEST BANK

SEX and AGE	YEARS OF SCHOOLING					Thousands
	Percentage					
	13+	9 to 12	7 to 8	1 to 6	0	
<b>MALES</b>						
1970	1.4	21.3	14.7	34.8	27.8	153.7
1975	8.6	26.0	14.7	30.5	20.2	177.2
1980	11.0	30.9	15.1	28.8	14.2	193.3
1985	13.7	32.5	16.2	24.2	13.4	215.1
1986	14.2	32.9	16.8	23.9	12.2	222.9
<b>TOTAL 1987*</b>	13.9	34.2	14.7	24.8	12.4	221.3
15-17	0.4	62.2	22.6	14.1	0.7	27.0
18-24	20.6	46.0	15.9	16.1	1.4	66.6
25-34	21.3	33.1	17.9	25.2	2.5	61.3
35-44	12.7	27.7	13.9	36.4	9.3	17.2
45-54	6.5	11.8	7.5	44.1	30.1	18.5
55-64	1.8	4.9	4.9	43.6	44.8	16.3
65+	0.7	1.4	2.1	23.1	72.7	14.4
<b>FEMALES</b>						
1970	0.5	8.8	6.7	18.9	65.1	169.2
1975	2.3	13.9	9.5	21.5	52.8	189.7
1980	3.9	19.0	10.5	24.8	41.8	207.7
1985	6.6	22.2	11.9	23.0	36.3	228.7
1986	7.1	22.8	12.2	23.7	34.2	236.7
<b>TOTAL 1987*</b>	6.8	24.4	10.5	23.7	34.6	234.5
15-17	0.4	55.2	21.0	21.0	2.4	25.1
18-24	14.2	39.6	14.3	26.1	5.8	60.6
25-34	10.0	24.3	12.8	36.8	16.1	58.3
35-44	3.8	12.7	6.7	28.5	48.3	26.8
45-54	1.2	5.0	2.7	13.1	78.0	25.7
55-64	-	0.9	2.3	6.9	89.9	21.8
65+	-	1.2	1.2	3.8	93.8	16.2

GAZA STRIP

SEX and AGE	YEARS OF SCHOOLING					Thousands
	Percentage					
	13+	9 to 12	7 to 8	1 to 6	0	
<b>MALES</b>						
1970	0.6	31.5	9.1	24.6	34.2	90.4
1975	7.7	33.6	10.0	23.5	25.2	104.8
1980	10.6	36.6	1.5	23.9	18.4	115.8
1985	15.5	36.5	10.4	23.5	14.1	125.8
1986	16.3	37.7	10.4	22.3	13.3	138.9
<b>TOTAL 1987*</b>	14.6	39.8	9.3	23.3	13.0	137.0
15-17	0.6	66.5	13.4	18.9	0.6	16.4
18-24	20.8	44.3	11.2	22.2	1.5	41.0
25-34	21.7	41.9	10.5	22.8	3.1	39.1
35-44	15.6	49.2	5.5	24.2	5.5	12.8
45-54	6.3	20.5	5.4	33.9	33.9	11.1
55-64	2.1	4.1	3.1	30.9	59.8	9.7
65+	-	1.5	1.5	13.4	83.6	6.9
<b>FEMALES</b>						
1970	0.4	18.4	5.6	10.3	65.3	106.4
1975	2.6	24.8	7.3	14.1	51.2	120.2
1980	3.6	29.0	10.0	16.6	40.8	126.9
1985	6.0	33.8	9.5	16.9	33.8	135.6
1986	6.4	34.9	9.5	16.9	32.3	147.7
<b>TOTAL 1987*</b>	6.1	37.1	8.8	17.2	30.8	145.5
15-17	0.7	67.5	13.6	15.6	2.6	15.4
18-24	11.8	50.8	12.1	21.1	4.2	37.9
25-34	8.6	49.7	12.5	20.0	9.2	36.0
35-44	5.1	28.6	6.0	22.1	38.2	19.9
45-54	0.6	3.6	2.4	13.2	80.2	16.5
55-64	-	0.8	0.8	7.1	91.3	12.7
65+	-	-	-	1.4	98.6	7.1

\*: Data refer to persons aged 15 and over.

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1988, No. 39 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 1988) table XXVII/46.

**DISTRIBUTION OF REFUGEE PUPILS IN UNRWA SCHOOLS a) (As of 15 October 1988)**

Field	No. of schools	No. of teachers	Number of pupils in elementary classes c)			Number of pupils in preparatory classes c)			Total number of pupils
			boys	girls	Total	boys	girls	Total	
WEST BANK b)	98	1340	12696	15225	27921	5207	6147	11354	39275
GAZA STRIP	147	2619	33735	31743	65478	13569	12175	25744	91222
LEBANON	76	1183	11385	11315	22700	5039	5087	10126	32826
SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC	110	1557	19123	17917	37040	8576	7762	16338	53378
JORDAN	197	3736	47505	46026	93531	21115	19789	40904	134435
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>10435</b>	<b>124444</b>	<b>122226</b>	<b>246670</b>	<b>53506</b>	<b>50960</b>	<b>104466</b>	<b>351136</b>

a): Excluding 110339 refugee pupils attending government and private schools

b): 90 out of 98 schools in the West Bank were closed under Israeli military orders for almost all of the 1988-1989 school year, and so 36592 pupils were thus deprived of education

c): including all non-eligible children attending UNRWA schools, who now number 55790.

Of those, 18428 are in the Gaza Strip, where all refugee children are regarded as eligible for education services.

In addition, 2502 pupils in Lebanon have been accepted in Agency schools owing to the situation prevailing in the country.

Source: Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty fourth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/44/13), Table 5.

**EMPLOYED PERSONS AND EMPLOYEES, BY OCCUPATION AND SEX.**

WEST BANK	YEAR	TOTAL/Thousand	Scientific & academic workers	Other professional, technical & related workers	Administrators & managers	Clerical & related workers	Sales workers	Service workers	Agricultural workers	Skilled workers	Other workers in	TOTAL %
										in industry, mining building, transport & other skilled workers	industry, transport, building & unskilled workers	
all employed persons	1986	167000	2.7	5.9	1.1	2.7	10	6.9	23.2	25.4	22	99.90
	1987	177600	2.4	5.6	1.1	2.5	10.1	8	20.6	27.2	22.5	100.00
Thereof: Males	1986	143700	2.0	3.3	1.1	2.1	9.6	6.3	15.7	24.2	21.9	86.0
	1987	156200	1.9	3.3	1.1	1.9	9.7	7.3	14.8	25.7	22.3	88.0
Thereof: Females	1986	23300	0.7	2.6	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.6	7.5	1.2	0.1	13.85
	1987	21400	0.5	2.3	0.0	0.6	0.4	0.7	5.8	1.5	0.2	12.05
all employees	1986	99800	3.7	9.5	0.2	4	2.3	9.5	7.8	28.6	34.4	100.00
	1987	111100	3.3	8.6	0.4	3.5	2.4	10.6	8.4	28.7	34.1	100.00
Thereof: Males	1986	89600	2.7	5.2	0.2	3.0	2.2	8.6	6.9	27.0	34.1	90.0
	1987	101100	2.5	4.8	0.4	2.7	2.4	9.7	7.6	27.0	33.9	91.0
Thereof: Females	1986	10000	1.0	4.3	0.0	1.0	0.1	0.9	0.9	1.6	0.3	10.02
	1987	10000	0.8	3.8	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.9	0.8	1.7	0.2	9.00

GAZA STRIP	YEAR	TOTAL/Thousand	Scientific & academic workers	Other professional, technical & related workers	Administrators & managers	Clerical & related workers	Sales workers	Service workers	Agricultural workers	Skilled workers	Other workers in	TOTAL %
										in industry, mining building, transport & other skilled workers	industry, transport, building & unskilled workers	
all employed persons	1986	94200	1.3	5.9	1.4	2.4	10.7	8.2	18.9	30.7	20.4	99.9
	1987	100200	1.8	5.9	1.3	2.2	11.4	8.5	18.1	31.7	19.1	100
Thereof: Males	1986	90200	1.1	3.6	1.2	2.2	10.6	8.0	18.6	30.0	20.3	95.8
	1987	96000	1.6	3.4	1.3	2.1	11.0	8.4	17.7	31.2	19.1	95.9
Thereof: Females	1986	4000	0.2	2.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.1	4.1
	1987	4200	0.3	2.5	0.0	0.1	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.0	4.2
all employees	1986	64300	1.4	8.2	-	3.3	1.1	10.6	17.2	30.3	28	100.1
	1987	66900	2.2	8.2	-	3.1	1.7	10.9	16.1	31.4	26.5	100.1
Thereof: Males	1986	61200	1.2	4.9	-	2.8	1.0	10.5	16.8	29.9	27.9	95.1
	1987	63600	1.8	4.8	-	2.7	1.7	10.7	15.9	31.0	26.5	95.1
Thereof: Females	1986	3100	0.2	3.3	-	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.4	0.1	5.0
	1987	3300	0.4	3.4	-	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.0	5.0

Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel 1988, No.39 (Central Bureau of Statistics,1988), table XXVII/25.

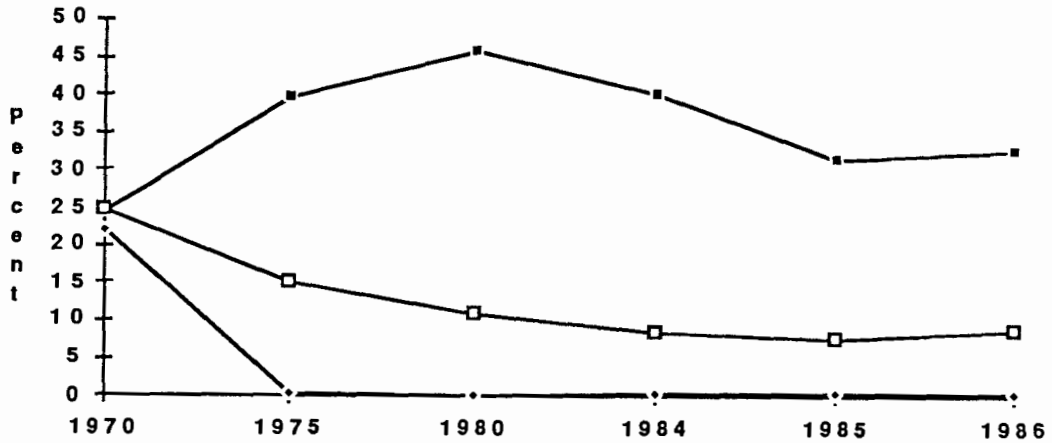
Employed Palestinian population by economic sector and sex (in thousands)

WEST BANK												
Economic sector	1970			1975			1980			1986		
	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	11	34	24.4	14.5	21.8	39.9	16.3	19	46.2	12.7	25.9	32.9
Industry (Mining and Manufacturing)	4.1	12.4	24.8	3.3	18.7	15.0	2.5	20.3	11.0	2.4	24.8	8.8
Construction Building and Public Work	3.7	13.1	22.0	0.1	29.9	0.3	0	30.5	0.0	0.2	40.8	0.5
Commerce, Restaurants & Hotels	0.7	12.1	5.5	0.6	15.1	3.8	0.8	16.4	4.7	0.8	22.2	3.5
Transport, Storage and Communication	0.6	4.1	14.6	0	6	0.0	0.1	5.9	1.7	0	8.1	0.0
Public and Community Services	6	8.6	41.1	4.8	12.8	27.3	5.1	12.8	28.5	6.5	14.7	30.7
Other Sectors	0.3	3.9	7.1	0.6	4.3	12.2	0.4	4.7	7.8	0.4	7.5	5.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26.4</b>	<b>88.2</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>108.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>25.2</b>	<b>109.6</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>13.8</b>

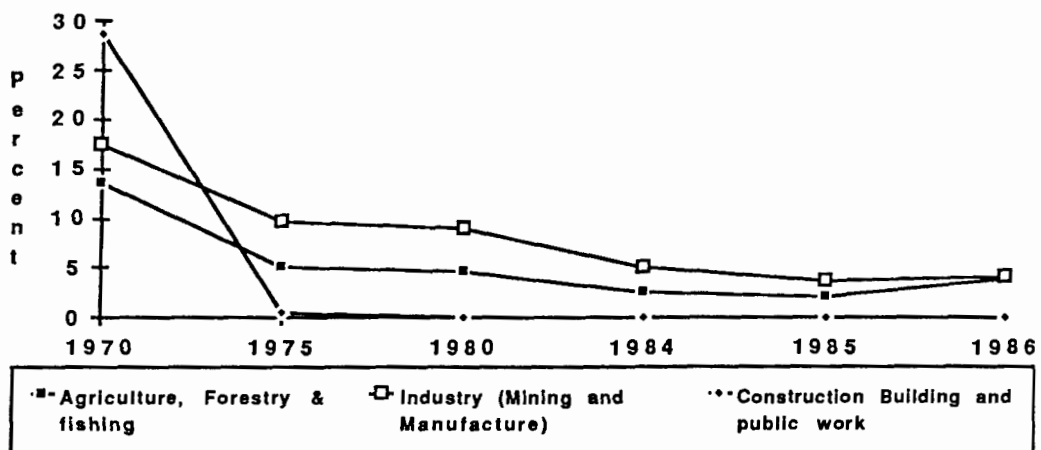
GAZA STRIP												
Economic sector	1970			1975			1980			1986		
	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field	Females	Males	% of wom. by field
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	2.8	16.6	13.5	0.9	16.5	5.2	0.7	14.4	4.6	0.7	17.4	3.9
Industry (Mining and Manufacturing)	1.2	5.7	17.4	1	9.3	9.7	1.4	14.4	8.9	0.7	15.7	4.3
Construction Building and Public Work	2.1	5.2	28.8	0.1	16	0.6	0	18.7	0.0	0	23.6	0.0
Commerce, Restaurants & Hotels	0	9.5	0.0	0.4	9.8	3.9	0.2	11.1	1.8	0.2	13.2	1.5
Transport, Storage and Communication	0	3.5	0.0	0	5.3	0.0	0.1	5.2	1.9	0	4.8	0.0
Public and Community Services	2.8	6.2	31.1	2.3	7.3	24.0	2.5	8	23.8	2.4	9.6	20.0
Other Sectors	0.6	2.8	17.6	0.2	3.5	5.4	0	4	0.0	0.2	5.6	3.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>15.8</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>67.7</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>75.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>89.9</b>	<b>4.5</b>

Source: S. ROY paper, tables 2.17 & 2.18/ PLO, Industrial Statistical Bulletin for the West Bank and Gaza Strip 1988, (Damascus: Central of Bureau Statistics, Economic Department, 1988)

Percent of Palestinian women of total employment in selected economic sectors in the West Bank.



Percent of Palestinian women of total employment in selected economic sectors in the Gaza Strip.



■ - Agriculture, Forestry & fishing	□ - Industry (Mining and Manufacture)	● - Construction Building and public work
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**NUMBER OF CASUALTIES, BY SEX, from the beginning of the Intifada until 7 December 1989**

<b>SEX</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Females	95	10.0
Males	851	90.0
Total	946	100

Source: Table 6, p. 5, Palestinian Statistical Abstract presented to delegation, Amman, December 1989

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
Thirty-fifth session  
Vienna, 27 February-8 March 1991  
Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women

Note by the Secretary-General

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\*E/CN.6/1991/1.

1. This note has been prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1990/11. In this resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General "to ensure that the experts continue to monitor and investigate further the situation of Palestinian women and children inside and outside the occupied Palestinian territories, and to ensure that their report is submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-fifth session".

2. In the same resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the mission of experts (E/CN.6/1990/10) to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic in 1989, and to report to the Commission at its thirty-fifth session "on the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the mission of experts, taking into consideration all available information, including reports of the United Nations, its specialized agencies and its expert missions, reports of meetings, as appropriate, and information from Governments and non-governmental organizations".

3. In a note verbale of 7 August 1990, the Secretary-General, in view of the new request that the mission monitor and further investigate the situation, requested the Government of Israel to provide confirmation of its "support for the visit of the mission in order to proceed with the necessary administrative arrangements".

4. The Government of Israel, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations (Vienna), replied on 13 November 1990 as follows:

"The Permanent Representative of Israel would like to emphasize the fact that the above-mentioned resolution contains already conclusions concerning the situation in the territories which makes - in the opinion of Israel - an additional investigation by a mission completely unnecessary. However, the Government of Israel will reconsider its position concerning the support of a fact-finding mission if such a request of support will not be part of a resolution with a conclusive condemnation nature."

The mission could not, therefore, be sent to the occupied Palestinian territories.

5. A recommendation made by the 1989 mission and reflected in Council resolution 1990/11, was that "Palestinian women be assisted in the creation of a women's centre that would provide possibilities for child care, educational discussion, cultural activities, women's solidarity and small-scale production". Information on the situation of women's centres, provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is annexed to the present note.

Annex

RELIEF AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES FOR PALESTINE REFUGEE WOMEN  
IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Introduction

6. In 1948, nearly three quarters of a million Arabs became refugees during the disturbances before and after the creation of the State of Israel in the former British mandate territory of Palestine. The refugees fled to eastern Palestine, now better known as the West Bank (of the river Jordan); and to Gaza, subsequently administered by Egypt until 1967; others to Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic; some even further afield. Following the 1967 war, refugees again fled from the affected areas, and the West Bank and Gaza were occupied by Israel.

7. Emergency assistance was provided promptly by international voluntary agencies supported by funds channelled through the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR). Then, as hopes for the immediate return of refugees to their homes faded, the General Assembly, by resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949, set up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) as a temporary organization and successor to UNRPR. UNRWA began operations on 1 May 1950.

8. By 31 December 1990, there were almost 2.5 million Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA. Some 856,200 (34.71 per cent) of these registered refugees live in 61 refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The majority of the refugee population lives in cities, towns and villages together with other Palestinians or host country nationals.

9. UNRWA provides humanitarian support and services to Palestinian refugees in the sectors of health, education, direct relief, social services and general assistance. A Special Hardship programme is extended to those refugee households that have no male adult present who is medically fit to earn a living and that have no other identified source of finances adequate to meet basic needs. By the end of December 1990, the number of refugees registered as Special Hardship Cases had reached 155,980 or 7.5 per cent of the refugees eligible for UNRWA services. Of these 29,358 were in the West Bank and 47,642 were in Gaza.

A. Palestinian refugee women

10. Women and girls account for 48.8 per cent of the Palestinian refugee population. Half of the households receiving assistance under the Special Hardship programme are headed by women. Women also carry heavy responsibilities in those refugee families where husbands are invalids, disabled or imprisoned. The intifadah in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza, and the armed conflicts and violence in Lebanon during the past 15 years have greatly added to these responsibilities.

B. Programmes for Palestinian refugee women

11. Palestinian refugee women have always received assistance and services from UNRWA, benefiting directly from the health, education and relief projects

and programmes. The annual reports of the Commissioner-General to the General Assembly of the United Nations describe these services.

### Health

12. Recognizing the vulnerability of women and children, UNRWA has focused on preventive and community health programmes with women and children as the major target group. The programmes and services are carried out through a network of 104 health centres and sub-centres located in the refugee camps and in cities, towns and villages throughout the five fields of operation of UNRWA. Detailed information is available in the annual reports of the UNRWA Director of Health.

### Education

13. UNRWA offers basic schooling at the elementary and preparatory levels, covering the age group 6-14 years, to all eligible Palestinian refugee children. Of these children, 49 per cent are females.

14. UNRWA operates eight Training Centres, all of which provide vocational and technical training. While the proportion of women attending courses in teacher training is 53 per cent (440 out of 823 students), it is only 20 per cent in vocational training. Efforts are being made to increase the proportion of women attending vocational training by offering a wider range of courses attractive to them such as computer sciences, business and office practice, and nursing. Detailed information is available in the Statistical Yearbook of UNRWA, Department of Education.

### Relief and social services

15. Since 1989, the Relief and Social Services programme has given stronger emphasis to refugee women as a group requiring special attention, whose needs and priorities must be brought into the mainstream of UNRWA programmes and not addressed as a minority or as a secondary issue. This has involved not only developing tailored skills training and income-generation programmes for economic self-reliance, but also creating appropriate opportunities and the environment for enhancing their awareness, self-confidence, capacities and capabilities, and ensuring that their perspectives and concerns are explicitly taken into account, together with those of the man and the formal representatives of the refugee community, in the development of plans and schemes for the benefit of the family and the refugee community.

16. The Relief and Social Services programme has adopted a three-pronged objective for those activities that particularly address the needs and aspirations of refugee women: to enable more disadvantaged refugee women, especially from "Special Hardship" families, to acquire the skills and secure opportunities to earn a living; to enable such women to cope effectively with family and social problems; and to facilitate their role in the development of their own community.

### Women's programme centres

17. The focal point of this endeavour is the multi-purpose Women's Programme Centres (WPC). WPCs offer facilities and opportunities to women and girls to participate in a diverse range of socio-economic activities.

18. By request of the women themselves, these include a sewing programme, a basic 11-month course in various techniques of hand- and machine-sewing, pattern-making, cutting and fitting, and in the traditional embroidery for which Palestinian women are renowned. Each course accommodates 30 trainees; on its successful completion, they are awarded a diploma recognized by potential employers.
19. On graduation, the trainees are able to use their newly acquired knowledge to make clothes for themselves and their families. Some find employment as neighbourhood seamstresses in the camp, or in workshops or factories. Others work in centres that produce fine traditional embroidery, in old and modern designs to suit the tastes of an expanding market both local and foreign.
20. Other courses organized at the WPCs include dress-designing and dress-making, typewriting, flower-making, knitting and hairdressing. Sessions in health education, first aid, environmental education, home economics, leadership training, sports and cultural events are also held.
21. Literacy instruction is given to illiterate women in WPCs. The inability to read, write and do simple arithmetical calculations limits women's roles as both beneficiaries and agents of development in their community. The women who are not functionally literate are very conscious of their handicap and many of them have requested assistance. Projects to expand classes in functional literacy and numeracy have been submitted to potential donors.
22. Group income-generation schemes among women are beginning to be developed based at WPCs. Technical assistance, advice and facilities are made available. Women can safely meet, plan and organize their productions, until the enterprise is firmly established to move to its own premises.
23. Since January 1988, in partnership with the British non-governmental organization, Co-operation for Development, UNRWA has implemented a scheme of loans for small-scale economic enterprises in the West Bank and Gaza. By the end of December 1990, there were 205 projects funded by loans in both territories in the approximate amount of \$US 1.5 million. Twenty of these projects were run by refugee women themselves, and included micro-knitting, food-processing, children's clothing, a beauty salon, dental laboratory, medical laboratory and poultry farm. In most of the other projects women's labour was critical to the functioning of the enterprise.
24. WPCs provide an important forum where community workers - social workers, community health nurses, educators and others - can meet with the refugee women to discuss and share common issues, perceptions and concerns, and plan concerted action, projects and programmes.
25. Though skill training and all other activities were frequently disrupted in the Occupied Territories due to curfews since the start of the intifadah on 8 December 1987, the number of women attending WPCs has significantly increased. The need for women to get the necessary training to work and earn money has increased greatly with so many husbands and fathers unable to contribute regularly to the family. Moreover, the solidarity and mutual support that the refugee women give each other has become ever more important in coping with the stress of living under occupation.

26. At present there are 12 WPCs in the West Bank and 13 in Gaza. In the latter, funds have been sought to construct a new WPC in the Khan Younis camp, and project proposals to construct another two centres in the Beach and Rafah camps are under negotiation with two separate donors. Funds for constructing WPCs in Daraj, Gaza town and Jabalia camp were secured from two separate donors but the Civil Administration in the Occupied Territories blocked the two projects.

27. In the West Bank, a new centre funded by a non-governmental organization opened in May 1989 in Askar camp, and the centre in Arrub was upgraded. Another centre in Ama'ri was approved for funding by one Government and three other project proposals to construct WPCs in Fara'a, Jalazone and Shufat camps are under negotiation with different potential donors.

### C. Future plans

28. The main functional objectives until 1993, as stated in the Relief and Social Services medium-term plan 1991-1993, are given below.

1. To support social workers in assisting women in Special Hardship families to cope with family and other problems;
  - (a) To conduct workshops to sensitize social workers to the perspectives and needs of wives and mothers in relation to family concerns;
  - (b) To equip social workers with information on services and programmes which can support women.
2. To develop the health education classes conducted at the Women's Programme Centres, in association with the Health Department;
  - (a) To open them to other women as well as those participating in the sewing courses;
  - (b) To build up the components relating to healthy life-styles;
  - (c) To include a component on the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of the disabled.
3. To use the Women's Programme Centres as a vehicle for education in early childhood development:
  - (a) Where possible, and in partnership with a non-governmental or other organization, to associate the Women's Programme Centres with a pre-school programme, in which the women themselves participate;
  - (b) To seek the co-operation of the United Nations Children's Fund and other interested organizations in arranging sessions in early childhood stimulation;
  - (c) In fields where mothers are coping with trauma in their young children, to use the Women's Programme Centre as a place where

problems can be discussed in a supportive group, with professional help, and with the offered assistance.

4. To develop multi-purpose Women's Programme Centres as the focal points in the community for UNRWA programmes with and for women, with the active involvement of the women themselves in selecting appropriate activities, and with UNRWA staff attached to the Centres acting as facilitators; in particular for skill-training courses, group income-generation projects, social and cultural activities, and meetings with women on community issues.
5. To provide, at the Women's Programme Centres and other UNRWA centres offering training courses for women, facilities for babies and infants whose needs might otherwise prevent mothers from attending.
6. To continue offering classes in functional literacy and numeracy for the refugee women and adults who lack these skills.
7. To identify specific employment possibilities for disadvantaged refugees, including women, unemployed youth and the disabled, with local employers or through an UNRWA sponsored income-generating enterprise.
8. In direct relation to identified employment opportunities, to introduce other appropriate skill-training courses targeted especially on women, unemployed youth and the disabled.



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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

The situation of Palestinian women and children

Note by the Secretary-General

1. By its resolution 1991/19 of 30 May 1991 entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to continue his investigation of the situation of Palestinian women and children and to report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session on the implementation of the recommendations and conclusions contained in the report of the mission of experts. 1/ In the same resolution, the Council requested the Secretary-General to monitor the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the mission of experts to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children 1/ in order to improve the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory.

2. Accordingly, plans were made to send a consultant to the region to acquire the required information. In a note verbale of 5 August 1991, the Secretary-General, in order to continue his investigation of the situation, and to present to the Commission a report on the status of women in the occupied territories, particularly in relation to education, employment, health and decision-making, requested the Government of Israel to provide confirmation of its "support for this consultant's visit to take place in order to proceed with the necessary administrative measures".

3. The Government of Israel, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations (Vienna), replied on 20 August 1991 as follows:

"The Permanent Representative of Israel refers to his note dated 13 November 1990 and would like again to emphasize the fact that the above mentioned resolution contains already conclusions concerning the situation in the territories, which makes - in the opinion of Israel - an additional investigation completely unnecessary."

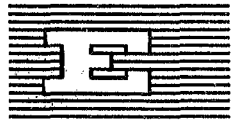
\*E/CN.6/1992/1.

4. In the absence of an appropriate means of acquiring the information required by the resolution, the Secretary-General is not in a position to provide a report.

Note

1/ "Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the advancement of women: The situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territories: Note by the Secretary-General" (E/CN.6/1990/10, annex I).

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to present to the Commission on the Status of Women the annexed report, prepared in pursuance of Economic and Social Council resolution 1992/16.

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\*E/CN.6/1993/1.

AnnexREPORT PREPARED BY THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
HUMANITRIAN AFFAIRS

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1992/16, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-seventh session, using all available sources, a report on the situation of Palestinian women and children in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the refugee camps.

2. Reports on the subject have been submitted regularly to the Commission. The last (E/CN.6/1990/10) was submitted to the Commission at its thirty-fourth session and was based on the findings of a mission of experts sent by the Secretary-General to Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic to investigate the condition of Palestinian women and children. That report examined the extent to which effect had been given to the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in preceding reports. When, however, plans were accordingly made to send a consultant to the occupied territories, in accordance with Council resolution 1991/19, the Government of Israel, through its Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Vienna, replied on 20 August 1991 as follows:

"The Permanent Representative of Israel refers to his note dated 13 November 1990 and would like again to emphasize the fact that the above-mentioned resolution contains already conclusions concerning the situation in the territories, which makes - in the opinion of Israel - an additional investigation completely unnecessary." (See E/CN.6/1992/6, para. 3.)

3. The Secretary-General, in his note to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-sixth session, stated that, in the absence of an appropriate means of acquiring the information required by Council resolution 1991/19 of 30 May 1991, he was not in a position to provide a report (E/CN.6/1992/6, para. 4).

4. Given the impossibility of visiting the occupied territory, the Council had given the Secretary-General the mandate to use all available sources in compiling this report on the Palestinian women and children in the occupied territory and in the refugee camps. The present report is therefore based on the findings of various documents published by the United Nations, as well as a number of publications from other sources. In it, the present situation of women in the critical areas of family life, economy and employment, education and health, with special attention to psychological well-being, is described. Political matters, as such, do not fall within the competence of the report. It is recognized, however, that the lives of Palestinian women in the occupied territory are profoundly affected by the complex political situation in the region. It is further recognized that all women are affected by the political consequences of the occupation.

#### I. SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

5. It should be noted that the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory remains characterized by the state of military occupation, which has lasted now for twenty-six years. The tense situation, which has been heightened by the popular uprising (intifadah), now in its sixth year, has been further aggravated as a consequence of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the occupied territory and the massive and rapid extension of these settlements.

6. The lack of coordination between positive developments at the diplomatic level and the rigid pattern of Israeli occupation policies, which affect the daily life of Palestinians living in the occupied territory, has further contributed to heightening the tension. 1/

7. According to the information available, in the period between 9 December 1987 (commonly accepted as the day of the outbreak of the intifadah) and 30 September 1992, 75,225 Palestinians had been injured. A total of 17,080 of those injured - representing 22.7 per cent of the total - were women. Nearly all those injuries were caused by bullet wounds, beatings or the effects of tear-gas inhalation. Out of the 1,131 Palestinians killed during the same period in incidents involving the Israeli security forces, 82 were women (55 in the West Bank and 27 in Gaza), which represents 7.2 per cent of the total casualties.\*

8. Along with the Palestinian men, many women were administratively detained without being charged during the intifadah, while many others were subjected to torture and various forms of harassment while in prison. Incidents have also been recorded of pregnant women being denied medical care. 2/

9. The imprisonment of women is generally considered unacceptable in the traditional societies of the region. Moreover, in traditional Palestinian society, women remain totally responsible for the care of children, as well as for the private sphere of the home. The imprisonment of women is therefore more distressful to the family than the imprisonment of its male members.

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\*The figures for fatalities do not include killings of alleged collaborators (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), October 1992).

10. The situation of Palestinian children in the occupied territory has deteriorated considerably in recent years. According to the data available from the beginning of the intifadah to the end of September 1992, a total of 26,527 children under the age of 15 - representing 35.2 per cent of the total injured - were injured in clashes involving the Israeli security forces. A total of 180 children under the age of 15 - representing nearly 16 per cent of the total - were among those killed in clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces.\* According to several reports, detainees, including women and minors, have continued to be subjected to various forms of ill-treatment, both physical and psychological. 3/

11. Moreover, children in the occupied territory are exposed to severe psychological stress: they live under the constant threat of violence, are often separated from one of their parents because that parent has been deported or imprisoned, they may be witnesses to the forced deportation of parents and relatives, as well as to the beating and arrest of family members, and they suffer from the prolonged curfews and closure of their schools.

12. The exercise of family rights and customs has also been impeded by family reunification laws that have led to the deportation of husband or wife and children and denial of their right to return on a permanent basis, and in some cases, denial of registration for the children. Although the family reunification laws do not discriminate against women per se, they are detrimental to family life, and particularly to the lives of the children of marriages affected by these laws, who are denied registration in the occupied territory.

13. An analysis of population data over a number of years shows that the male-to-female ratio has been increasing since the occupation, particularly in recent years. The number of males for every 1,000 females increased from 985 in 1967 to 1,014 in 1989. This increase is mainly due to the growth in the male population group between 25 and 34 years of age, which rose from 9.7 per cent of the population in 1967 to over 15 per cent in 1989. 4/ A plausible explanation could be an increase in the return migration of adult male Palestinians to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from the other countries in the region.

14. In recent years there has been a further deterioration of the economy of the occupied territory. The continuing state of military occupation makes it impossible for an economy to function in a healthy manner. 5/ The economy of the occupied territory remains precarious and overdependent on that of Israel. The security measures, including frequent curfews, travel restrictions and other constraints imposed by the occupying authorities as a response to the intifadah have had - and continue to have - serious repercussions for the workers of territories. Unemployment and underemployment in the occupied territory have reached alarming proportions. 6/ Moreover, collective punishment measures such as the uprooting of trees and crops and confiscation of land have significantly contributed to the poor economic performance of the occupied territory. 7/

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\*The figures for fatalities do not include killings of alleged collaborators (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), October 1992).

15. In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war the territory was, in addition, deprived of the considerable income that had been hitherto available from remittances sent by Palestinians working in the Persian Gulf States.

16. The above factors have significantly contributed to the decline in the living standards of Palestinian families. The latest data available indicate that the population registered as refugees accounted for approximately one third of the population in the West Bank and two thirds of the population in the Gaza Strip. Out of the registered refugee population, 26.3 per cent lived in camps in the West Bank and 55 per cent lived in camps in Gaza. 8/ The spread of poverty has had - and continues to have - serious repercussions on the Palestinian family (see section II below).

17. In recent years, there has been a parallel growth in the occupied territory, particularly in Gaza, of fundamentalist movements. There is evidence that a relationship exists between poverty and fundamentalism and that, living in an atmosphere of constant violence and economic hardship, the Palestinians have seen fundamentalism as an effective means of recovering their cultural identity - in the narrow sense of the word - and using it to oppose the occupation. In effect, the rise of fundamentalism is a manifestation of the radicalization of the protests of the Palestinians against 25 years of occupation. It is beyond dispute that the tight security measures taken by the occupying power as a response to the intifadah have contributed to both the spread of poverty and the restriction of movement among the Palestinians. Specific measures, such as the prolonged closure of institutions of higher learning, have directly led to a substantial restriction of the opportunities for women as well as curtailment of their movements, which have contributed to the spread of fundamentalism, manifested by the enhancement of the family's control over its female members.

18. There are, however, indications that the effects of fundamentalist movements on women has stabilized in the past year, owing to a number of inter-related socio-economic factors. First, the traditional paternalistic image of the family began to be eroded as its adult male members were subject to beatings and abuse by the occupation authorities, often in front of the entire family. Secondly, an alarmingly high rate of unemployment among the traditional male breadwinners compelled the family to accept women as wage-earners, particularly in the informal sector, in small-scale domestic enterprises. The reliance of the family on women's earnings has enabled these women to gain a certain degree of self-reliance and has led to an enhancement of their freedom of movement. These factors have helped to mitigate the effects of the spread of fundamentalist ideologies on women's lives. Moreover, the reopening of the educational institutions has also contributed to the breaking down of traditional constraints on women's mobility.

19. As things are, Palestinian women in the occupied territory are experiencing considerable hardship in all spheres of life - family, education, health, economy and employment. Out of their efforts to cope with the situation a new role for women has emerged. The increased participation of women, particularly in the economic sphere, has led to profound changes in the nature of their role in society. Their society's perception of the role of women is itself in the throes of change. Only time can tell, however, how many of these changes will be permanent.

## II. GENDER RELATIONS IN THE PALESTINIAN FAMILY

20. The lack of an internationally recognized central authority in the occupied territory leaves the family to bear the main responsibility of protection and support of its individual members. As a basic unit of society, Palestinian families in the occupied territories are profoundly influenced by the economic, political and social changes that affect their society. These transformations of the socio-economic fabric in turn influence the ability of the Palestinian family to provide support to its members.

21. The Palestinian family was traditionally hierarchical, with the father as the head figure and sole decision-maker. Women tended to occupy a relatively lower place in the hierarchy, their contribution to the family stemming mainly from their reproductive capacity.

22. With the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, major changes started to take place in the patterns of social relations inside the Palestinian family. There was a shift in the society's sense of commitment from the needs of the family to the cause of the nation, which led to the development of a new and more democratic environment in the family. Moreover, with their loss of control over their land and water resources and marginalization of their economy, the Palestinians developed a strong commitment to education as the only means of ensuring a certain degree of economic security and began to encourage their daughters as well as their sons to pursue higher education. Education, discussed in more detail in the sections below, has been a significant force in the liberation of women from certain traditional constraints on mobility and segregation between the sexes.

23. Women have played a major role in the popular uprising of the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. In their role as the conservators of national heritage and culture, women have helped to create the necessary social preconditions for the intifadah by instilling in their children respect for their culture and knowledge of their history. The widespread participation of women in the intifadah side by side with men has resulted in their assumption of new public roles and responsibilities. In addition to their roles as mothers, wives and daughters, women have become heads of households, main income-earners and teachers, as well as social and political activists.

24. According to the data available, among the registered refugee population in 1992, 30.6 per cent of the families in the West Bank and 20.1 per cent of the families in Gaza were headed by a woman. Moreover, in 22 per cent of the families that qualify for the "special hardship" programme in the occupied territory, the head of the household is a woman, usually a widow or divorcee with dependent children. <sup>9/</sup> These estimates are relatively high for a region where, according to official census figures, about 16-19 per cent of the households are headed by a woman. <sup>10/</sup>

25. In both the region in general and in the occupied territory in particular, however, estimates of households headed by females are, in practice, much higher, for cultural reasons and because of the gap between the actual and legal definitions of the "headship" of the household. Moreover, in Middle Eastern societies, many women deliberately conceal the fact that they are the head of the household in an attempt to protect themselves from the law and the customary practices of society.

26. In the occupied territory, in the majority of the other families where the registered head is a male, the burden of ensuring survival in practice



falls on a woman, particularly where the head of the household is imprisoned (8.4 per cent of the "special hardship" cases) or suffers from a disabling injury or illness (29 per cent of the cases). 11/

27. It has been noted that, after the first six months of the intifadah, which were characterized by spontaneous popular uprisings, often involving the participation of entire camps, villages or towns, the direct participation rate of women began to decline. Studies on segments of the Palestinian population by sex and age indicate, however, that the direct participation rate could be a function of age, social background or geographical location. The responsiveness of men over the age of 40 to direct participation in the intifadah, for example, was found in a study to be less than that of females, who are mostly students below the age of 18. 12/

28. Nevertheless, in recent years changes have occurred in the socio-economic structure that have influenced gender relations within the Palestinian family. With the spread of poverty, the household size has increased as deteriorating economic performance has compelled young couples to move in with their extended families in an attempt to save money. Simultaneously, the prolonged closure of educational institutions, particularly those of higher education, has considerably curtailed the movement of women. Moreover, the presence of men and children inside the house for longer periods owing to travel restrictions and frequent curfews has increased the amount of housework women are expected to perform. As a result, the family as a unit has begun to increase its authority over its members, especially its female members.

29. In recent years, women have begun to marry at an earlier age. The high fertility rate, particularly among young women, is a reflection of the general perception that having more Palestinian children would ensure the continuity of the nation. The tendency of young women to marry early, however, and to have more children does not seem merely to be a cultural choice of the Palestinians. Poverty correlates with lower levels of education and a higher rate of childbirth. The measures taken by the Israeli authorities as a response to the intifadah have contributed significantly to the spread of poverty. Living in an atmosphere characterized by violence, always fiercely protective of their women's honour, the members of the family see marriage as the only "safe" option for their young women.

30. It is too early to say whether early marriages are the norm in Palestinian families in the occupied territory, or whether they have been encouraged by the family, because of the prolonged closure of schools and universities in an atmosphere of continued violence, as an interim, "safe" option for young women. But the recent trend of early marriages and high fertility, if continued as an established pattern, is bound to have serious implications for the women's movement by imposing considerable restrictions on educational opportunities, especially the attainment of higher education, and on the mobility of women. There are indications, however, that the reopening of all educational institutions, particularly institutions of higher education, could lead to an improvement in the situation of women (see section IV below).

31. Moreover, economic necessity has increased the extended family's dependence on women for financial support, since it is not possible to rely solely on the traditional male breadwinner, who is often unemployed, has been imprisoned or, in some cases, deported, or is suffering from a disabling injury or illness. Traditional family-based income, mostly controlled by women, has become an indispensable source of income for the Palestinian family. Home-based

economies, such as the cultivation of vegetable gardens and cottage industries, have also been encouraged in Palestinian society as part of the attempt to boycott goods from Israel.

32. On the subject of family reunification, a particularly acute problem has arisen in recent years in cases of marriages entered into by male residents of the West Bank with women, mainly from Jordan, who had applied for residence and were permitted to live in the West Bank only on short-term renewable visitors' permits. Under a new military order introduced in 1987, if the father is a legal resident but not the mother, then a child of the union, born in the West Bank, cannot be registered as a resident and is denied the right to remain as a permanent resident of the West Bank. The wives and children of these marriages have little scope for legal recourse. The enforced deportations by the Israeli military authorities of those women and their children - in 1989 totaling approximately 200 people, mainly women and children - created a climate of considerable stress and uncertainty for their families. 13/

33. Although the Israeli military orders that govern family reunification do not formally discriminate against women, they nevertheless have a serious detrimental effect on family life and have put the women of these marriages under considerable psychological pressure. In the traditional Palestinian society, the wife, on marriage, is expected to move to her husband's residence, but the new order has, in effect, deprived these women of a minimum stability in which they could live out their marriages and raise their children. Israeli authorities continue their policy of deportation 14/ in contravention of article 49 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949. 15/

34. Almost all Palestinian families have been affected directly by measures taken by the Israeli authorities in response to the popular uprising. Apart from physical suffering, Palestinian families in the occupied territory have undergone considerable psychological stress, particularly during the last five years (see section V below). The long-term psychological impact of the continuous exposure of children to violence cannot be predicted with certainty. It is certain, however, that this lack of a normal childhood will influence them for the rest of their lives. During the prolonged closure of schools and curfews, which lasted several days in a row, the children expressed their fear and aggression inside the house. While both male and female members of the family suffered, the women were subjected to much greater stress. They not only had to assume additional domestic and economic responsibilities to ensure a minimum level of subsistence for their families but also had to educate their children in an attempt to compensate for the closed classrooms and at the same time take care of family members who had been injured.

### III. ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

35. The latest data show that, in 1989, women accounted for 49.7 per cent of the Palestinian population in the occupied territory. 16/

36. Participation by females in the labour force has been low compared with male participation, particularly in the Gaza Strip. An analysis of employment data over a number of years indicates, however, that the Israeli occupation has had a negative effect on the participation rate of women in the labour force. In the West Bank, the rate fell from its peak of 14.3 per cent in 1974 to 12 per cent in 1987, to approximately 10 per cent in 1990. Figures for the

Gaza Strip reveal a steady decline in the female participation rate, from 6.4 per cent in 1968, to 4.6 per cent in 1974, to 4.2 per cent in 1987, declining to less than 2 per cent in 1990. The male participation rate was over 90 per cent in 1990. 17/

37. The Israeli occupation and the resultant economic decline had a particularly detrimental effect on female participation in the labour force in the industrial sector. After the Israeli occupation, the percentage of female workers in industry declined sharply, from 24.8 per cent of the West Bank residents employed in industry in 1970 to 11 per cent in 1980 and from 8.9 per cent in 1987 to 6.2 per cent in 1990. Similarly, in Gaza, the female labour force in industry declined from 17.4 per cent of all residents of the Gaza Strip employed in industry in 1970 to 8.9 per cent in 1980 and from 2.7 per cent in 1987 to almost nothing in 1990. The industrial sector, albeit small, is currently almost totally dominated by a male labour force. 18/

38. Although there is a cultural factor behind the low participation by females in the labour force, particularly in the Gaza Strip, it is not in itself a sufficient explanation. Deteriorating economic conditions and demographic factors have also contributed to the relatively low female participation rate in the occupied territory. In conditions of rising unemployment (currently estimated at 40 per cent of the registered workforce in the Gaza Strip, for example), women find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position where employment is concerned. Either they lose their jobs because they have been employed in enterprises that cannot survive the loss of purchasing power in the community, or they are put under pressure to make way for male job-seekers. Particularly during the past five years, a large number of males have lost their jobs in Israel as a result of the additional security measures taken by the Israeli authorities. These males have usually sought employment in the occupied territories, reducing the opportunities open to female labour.

39. There are indications that the traditionally weak integration of women into the productive sectors of the economy, particularly in the industrial sector, is in the process of change. As discussed in section IV below, there is a growing trend for women to enrol in industry-related vocational training programmes, including courses in commerce, computer science and electronics. These women, upon graduation, will have an important role to play in meeting future labour demands in the productive sectors of an independent Palestinian economy. It should also be recognized, however, that overall female enrolment in vocational training and the enrolment of women in university technical courses, such as engineering and management, remain relatively low.

40. The integration of women, particularly among the poor and refugee population, may largely be shaped by the economic changes that have evolved as a result of the intifadah. As the domestic economies of the occupied territory have declined to a subsistence level, alternative economic activities have been created (for example home production, sharing and unofficial markets), in which women play a key role.

41. As employees of small firms and subcontracted industries inside the occupied territories, women are, at present, more exposed to the production and marketing process: they are learning how to adapt their products to local markets and are learning new skills in industries in which they have traditionally been employed, such as animal husbandry and horticulture. Through their involvement in the domestic small-scale industries, women are, in fact,

restructuring the domestic production base and helping to build self-reliance in their domestic economy. These income-generating women's projects have particularly benefited from the popular boycotts of Israeli goods and the corresponding rise in demand for locally manufactured products.

42. The availability of credit facilities, albeit limited, from several international sources, has also helped the small-scale industries that are run by women. The Palestine Women's Initiative Fund of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which began its operations in 1992, finances group schemes, including a pilot business centre in Nablus to serve as a marketing and distribution centre for women's enterprises in the area; a cooperative in Aqabat Jabr, in the training phase where women are being taught business skills to enable them to select and set up an enterprise with potentially good economic viability; workshops at three centres in Gaza for household maintenance; and a library run by the women of Khan Yunis for their community. <sup>19/</sup> Women are also eligible for loans under the income-generation programme, under the auspices of UNRWA.

43. Women's participation in the generation of alternative sources of income, albeit at a subsistence level, has enabled them to gain a certain degree of self-reliance. As mentioned above (see section I) the reliance of the extended family on women's earnings during this time of economic hardship has resulted in a greater degree of freedom of movement for women than would have otherwise been possible in the presence of fundamentalism.

44. The women's commitment to enhancing their living standards is evidenced by the sharp increase in women's programmes in the occupied territory and refugee camps over the years (see table), where refugee camps in Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic account for the majority of the participants and most of the centres. The West Bank and Gaza area accounted for 25 centres out of the Agency-wide figure of 65, and 2,494 participants out of the Agency-wide total of 9,143. In order to transform these initial and relatively modest efforts of women to generate alternate sources of income into sustainable businesses, however, intensive training in management and marketing is needed, as well as further training of the workers in technical skills. <sup>20/</sup>

Participation in UNRWA women's programmes, 1967-1992 <sup>a/</sup>

Participation	1967	1975	1985	1988	1990	1991	1992
Number of centres	49	47	47	47	49	58	65
Number of participants	2 057	1 345	1 450	1 516	3 526	5 818	9 143

Source: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, 1992.

<sup>a/</sup> Agency-wide.

45. Many Palestinian initiatives could not, however, achieve their aims, owing to the administrative obstacles placed in their way by the Israeli

authorities. 21/ In addition to Israeli Government control over land and water, Israeli policies include restrictions on trade and the protection of Israeli industries, licensing and institutionalized credit.

#### IV. EDUCATION

46. As noted earlier, since the occupation in 1967, Palestinians have regarded education as their only means of obtaining a certain measure of income security. Because of the correlation of education with better employment opportunities and higher living standards, Palestinians have traditionally encouraged their children to pursue higher education and training. Education has contributed significantly to liberating women from traditional constraints on mobility and segregation of the sexes.

47. The majority (60 per cent) of the schools in the occupied territory are managed by the Israeli authorities. Palestinian children also receive formal education through institutions managed by UNRWA and private organizations. 22/ These institutions include kindergarten schools, elementary schools, preparatory schools and post-primary schools.

48. Over the period in question, schools have been closed for long periods, especially in the West Bank, by order of the Israeli military authorities. While no general closure order has been issued in Gaza, pupils have still, on average, lost approximately one third of their school days because of curfews, military closures, general strikes and disturbances.

49. This serious disruption of education has left considerable gaps in the knowledge of pupils at all levels, regardless of age and sex. An analysis of achievement tests administered by UNRWA staff to assess the effect of the interruption of education and school closure on pupils in the school year 1991/92 revealed that all students, but particularly those in the lower grades, were affected detrimentally. 23/

50. In recent years, there has been a steady increase in the number of female pupils at all levels of education. These figures, however, must be compared with regional data in order to assess accurately the situation of women's education in the occupied territory. In 1992, female pupils represented 49 per cent of the total pupils enrolled in all first-level educational institutions, covering the age range 6-14 years. 24/

51. In 1989, the percentage of females in total secondary enrolment in the West Bank (44 per cent) was higher than that of the Arab region as a whole (41 per cent). In Qatar, Israel and the United Arab Emirates, women accounted for half of the total secondary school enrolment. 25/ Taking into account the disruption of the educational system caused by the intifadah and the response thereto of the Israeli authorities, it seems logical to infer that the female enrolment figures would probably be higher were the general conditions in the occupied territory more conducive to the functioning of a healthy education system.

52. The disruption of education, especially at the higher levels, regardless of gender, is reflected in official statistics. According to the Israeli Statistical Abstract, 1991, in 1986, the year before the intifadah, 6.4 per cent of the women (16.3 per cent of the men) in Gaza and 7.1 per cent of the women (14.2 per cent of the men) in the West Bank had 13 or more years of

schooling. In spite of an annual population growth rate of more than 3 per cent, the enrolment numbers had fallen by 1989 to 4.9 per cent of the women (12.5 per cent of the men) in Gaza and to 6.2 per cent of the women (12.3 per cent of the men) in the West Bank. 26/

53. All Palestinian universities were closed officially by order of the Israeli authorities from early 1988. The closure of the universities lasted much longer than that of the schools. The six universities in the occupied territory were allowed to open by stages, starting from mid 1990. Bir Zeit University in the West Bank was allowed to reopen after four and a half years of closure, at the end of April 1992. The closure of universities and other educational institutions for that length of time would be contrary to article 26, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)), in which the right of everyone to education is affirmed.

54. The latest figures available (for 1987) indicate that 39 per cent of the students enrolled in the West Bank universities were women. 27/ These figures are roughly equivalent to the average female university enrolment ratio of the Arab countries in the region, although there are many countries whose female university enrolment ratio exceeds 50 per cent: in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, for example, 65 per cent of the students enrolled at universities in 1988 were women. At 50 per cent, the female enrolment rate in Israeli universities remains higher than that of the occupied territory, but low compared with some Arab States in the region. 27/

55. The relatively low level of female enrolment at institutions of higher learning, including universities, in the occupied territory (compared with Israel) is largely due to socio-economic factors, and particularly the extent to which the Governments are willing or able to invest in the human resources of their peoples. In 1987, Israel's total educational expenditure was 9.2 per cent of total government expenditure. Jordan devoted 13 per cent of its total government expenditure to education in 1985. For Kuwait, the proportion of government expenditure on education was 12.1 per cent, and for the Arab region as a whole it was, on average, 6.3 per cent in 1989. 28/

56. Even before the beginning of the intifadah, Palestinian educational institutions were experiencing a number of difficulties. Material deficiencies have always been a great problem. The quality of teaching has seriously suffered owing to overcrowded classes, the decrepit state of the existing buildings, inadequate library and laboratory facilities, and underpayment of teachers.

57. Overcrowding in schools has been identified as a critical problem: in Gaza, 70 per cent and in the West Bank 46 per cent of the classes in schools managed by UNRWA were operated in double shifts in 1991/92. The construction of new schools is said to have been delayed by lengthy administrative procedures on the part of the Israeli authorities. 29/

58. An increasing number of Palestinian women in the occupied territory have enrolled in recent years in departments that were traditionally male-dominated. Data indicates that, in 1989, 31 per cent of the women were enrolled in scientific and technical departments at universities in the occupied territory. In hard-core technical fields such as engineering, however, the percentage of female enrolment was still relatively low, at 20 per cent. Against that, women comprised 48 per cent of the students enrolled in the arts faculties and 40 per cent of those enrolled in education. 30/

59. The enrolment of women in the UNRWA vocational training centres also reflects the trend for women to study traditionally male-dominated subjects: during the academic year 1991/92, 43.5 per cent of the female vocational trainees were studying subjects traditionally reserved for men, including courses in technical and commercial subjects, electronics, computer science and paramedical work. These women, upon completion of their training, would qualify for jobs in architectural draughting and as quantity surveyors, as land surveyors, mechanical engineering technicians and assistant pharmacists. The enrolment of women in mechanical, metal, electrical and building trade-oriented courses, however, was still low, at 13.4 per cent. 31/

60. All institutions of higher learning in the West Bank, including training centres, were closed by military order from early in the intifadah until the spring of 1990. The training centres have continued to be disrupted for the past two years - particularly during the Persian Gulf crisis - by curfews, disturbances and strikes. Training centres in Gaza had lost 20 per cent of teaching days during this period. 19/

61. In a general atmosphere characterized by tension and violence, the prolonged closure of schools has added to the feelings of insecurity and fear, particularly among children. Not having regular schooling, children have had to play in the streets, which has exposed them to considerable violence. In Gaza, schools experienced major disruptions as recently as May 1992 from incursions of Israeli settlers and security forces into school compounds and subsequent curfews. 32/

62. During this period, women have contributed to "underground teaching" and clandestine education. Pupils have studied in mosques and other private locations and have achieved an attendance rate of approximately 95 per cent for both boys and girls. Most of the teaching in private locations was done by women - mothers or volunteer teachers.

#### V. HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

63. Health conditions have been affected by the five years of continuous tension in the occupied territory, particularly in terms of psychological well-being.

64. The atmosphere of constant mourning has also added to the stresses in the family. Many women have lost children, husbands or other close family members. Some have been detained, while others have forfeited their property. Given the precarious health services in the occupied territory, living with their extended families in overcrowded rooms, women suffer from a general lack of nutrition, health care and proper hygienic standards.

65. Inadequate sanitation, nutrition and water supply, insufficient access to medical facilities and the high cost of medical care provided by the Israeli authorities continue to contribute to poor health conditions in the occupied territory. In the Gaza Strip, for example, although the population has increased by at least 70 per cent since the occupation, the ratio of beds to population had fallen to a level of 1.3 per 1,000 in 1989 from 2.4 per 1,000 before the occupation. 33/

66. In the Gaza Strip, salinization and the depletion of water resources by over-drilling, including drilling done in Israel, have reached a dangerous

level. Salinization is also a growing problem in the West Bank. The latest figures indicate that Palestinians in the West Bank were granted access to an average of 150 cubic metres per person, while Israeli settlers in the West Bank received an average of 2,000 cubic metres per person. 34/

67. Pregnant women and children were badly affected by the prolonged curfew and emergency regulations in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf crisis, when telecommunication lines would often be interrupted or cut and special permits had to be obtained for ambulances during curfews, leading to general delays in transporting patients to hospitals. 35/ The curfews and worsening economic conditions in the occupied territories have led to a substantial fall in income, giving rise to nutritional problems, including iron-deficiency anaemia, which particularly affects women of reproductive age and children under three years old. 36/

68. Fertility-related factors and short intervals between births are the main cause of the remaining infant mortality and maternal ill-health and death. 19/ The population data suggest an average rate of population growth of 3.4 per cent over the period 1988-1990, the highest rates being registered in the Gaza Strip. 37/ The data indicates that the population growth is mainly due to natural increase. The reasons behind the high fertility rate, particularly among younger women, are discussed in section II above.

69. The frustrations, the emotional deprivation and the physical and psychological humiliation, as well as the destruction of the paternal image, have been found to cause severe psychological stress to children and adolescents. 38/ These factors have resulted in a significant increase in psychopathology, such as personality disorders and delinquency, which, in addition to personal psychological disturbances, also have a feedback effect on the entire family, leading to disturbances of relationships within the family. These disturbances place additional stress on the mother, since, traditionally, it is she who is responsible for the household.

70. One form of psychopathology is the increase of physical and verbal forms of violence in young adolescents. This is manifested by the rise in intransigence among children and young adolescents accompanied by symptoms of psychopathology, such as depression, loss of sleep, loss of appetite and loss of concentration. Few children have escaped physical or psychological abuse by Israeli soldiers. Their fear of being abused by Israeli soldiers were reflected in the results of a study conducted in 1990 in the occupied territory, which indicates that nearly half of the Palestinian children sampled were terrified of Israeli soldiers, and more than one fourth said that they were afraid to leave the house. Boys seem to be relatively more prone to aggressive behaviour than girls. 39/

71. The United Nations and international non-governmental organizations are attempting to deal with the issue of mental health care in the occupied territories. A joint WHO/UNRWA Mental Health Programme, for example, was begun in May 1991 in the West Bank. In resolution WHA 45.26, entitled "Health conditions of the Arab population in the occupied Arab territories, including Palestine", adopted by the forty-fifth World Health Assembly on 14 May 1992, deep concern was expressed at the Israeli refusal to permit the Special Committee of Experts to visit the occupied territories.



Notes

1/ See the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories (A/43/694), para. 610.

2/ "Workshop I: Development of Palestinian women's movements in Palestine" (NGO/IMQP/VII/16 pp. 2-3), and "Report on Workshop I: Women" (NGO/IMQP/VII/25, p. 3), papers submitted to the Seventh United Nations International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine, held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 29 to 31 August 1990.

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4/ Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1991, No. 42 (Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 1991), table 27.2.

5/ See Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories (United Nations, Department of Public Information, 1988), pp. 3 and 13.

6/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices (vol. 2), International Labour Conference, 79th session, Geneva, 1992, pp. 8 and 20.

7/ Question of Palestine, 1979-1990 (United Nations Secretariat, July 1991), p. 37.

8/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, June 1992.

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17/ International Labour Office, Report of the Director-General, Appendices (vol. 2), International Labour Conference, 79th session, Geneva, 1992, p. 14; Statistical Abstract of Israel, 1988, No. 39 (Jerusalem, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1988), table XXVII/25; and Palestinian Liberation Organization, Palestinian Statistical Abstract, 1980 (Damascus, Palestine National Fund, Central Bureau of Statistics, 1980).

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19/ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, July 1992.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In its resolution 1993/15, entitled "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing recommendations and a programme of action aimed at improving the condition of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. The report describes how, in the context of rapid political change, the concern of the Commission on the Status of Women about the situation of Palestinian women and children may be entering a new phase.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1993/15, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-eighth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, containing recommendations and a programme of action aimed at improving the condition of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation. The report should use all available sources of information, including missions of experts to the occupied territory.

2. Reports on the subject had been submitted regularly to the Commission, most recently at its thirty-seventh session, based on findings of various documents published by the United Nations and a number of publications from other sources. In 1989, a fact-finding mission had examined the situation of Palestinian women living outside the occupied territory and had interviewed women from the occupied territory. In 1993, missions of experts to the occupied Palestinian territory as requested in Council resolution 1993/15, could not take place in view of the changing political situation.

3. It has consistently been emphasized that, in preparing reports on Palestinian women and children for the Commission on the Status of Women, political matters were considered to fall outside the competence of the report. There has been general recognition, however, that the lives of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory are conditioned by the complex political reality in the region. The status of women of all ages had been profoundly affected by the political consequences of the occupation. Like previous reports submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women, the present report describes the situation of women in the critical areas of family life, economy and employment, education and health, with special attention to psychological well-being.

4. The report is based on various recent documents published by the United Nations and other sources, most of which do not yet take into account recent political developments. An effort has been made to seek out information about how the situation of women and children has evolved since September 1993. It should be noted that, despite the considerable documentation published on the Palestinian conflict, there is a lack of reliable statistics on the status of women, health, housing conditions, labour force participation, household composition and education. For example, population data on the occupied Palestinian territory are based on a census conducted in 1967 that has been updated annually. The figures may well underestimate the population by 10-15 per cent because of underreporting at the time of the census and underestimation of births and infant deaths. To obtain additional information, the present report has drawn on sample surveys which have been conducted recently in the occupied Palestinian territory.

5. The signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Governments of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September 1993 (A/48/486-S/26560, annex) has transformed the political perspective of the region and has affected the future situation of women and children in the occupied territory. As repeatedly stated by the

General Assembly, the question of Palestine was at the core of the Middle East conflict, and peace in the region should be based on a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, under United Nations auspices. The peace process would of course have an impact on all the women in the region. During the period in which the present report was prepared, the details of the Declaration of Principles, in particular the specific understandings and agreements set out in the Agreed Minutes, were still being negotiated. There has been a rush to define strategies for economic development during the interim period and afterwards by all partners concerned, including bilateral and multilateral donors.

6. In this context of rapid political change, the concern of the Commission on the Status of Women about the situation of Palestinian women and children may be entering a new phase. The forthcoming establishment, for a transitional period, of a Palestinian interim self-government authority and elected council for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip implies a shift of focus. In addition to monitoring the living conditions of Palestinian women and children, the authority will emphasize the enhancement of women's participation in the elaboration of a permanent settlement of the conflict and the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of legislation, infrastructure, human resource and economic development.

7. The rapidity of events has made it impossible for the present report to contain the requested recommendations and programme of action. They will have to await the outcome of the political developments that are now occurring.

8. This change of focus is taking place at a moment when the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women is drawn to preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. At the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, 1985), the issue of Palestinian women and children was a main area of concern under the rubric "peace", as reflected in paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies:

"For more than three decades, Palestinian women had faced difficult living conditions in camps and outside, struggling for the survival of their families and the survival of the Palestinian people who were deprived of their ancestral lands and denied the inalienable rights to return to their homes and property, their right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty. ... The special and immediate needs of Palestinian women and children should be identified and appropriate provisions made. United Nations projects should be initiated to help women in the fields of health, education, and vocational training. Their living conditions inside and outside the occupied territory should be studied by the appropriate United Nations units and agencies, assisted, as appropriate, by specialized research institutions from various regions." 1/

9. In light of the recent political developments, monitoring the implementation of paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies has gained new momentum. The second review and appraisal of the Forward-looking Strategies should acknowledge the progress achieved and identify the remaining

obstacles. In the preparation of the report on the review and appraisal for presentation at the Fourth World Conference, all changes that have affected the situation of Palestinian women and children will have to be carefully investigated and taken into account. This will certainly be a concern of the Western Asia Regional Preparatory Conference, which will be convened in Amman from 6 to 10 November 1994.

#### I. THE SITUATION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN WITH RESPECT TO GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

10. According to the information available, the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied territory is still characterized by the state of military occupation. In the period under investigation, living conditions drastically worsened - in particular during the first half of 1993. Despite the positive developments and increased hope for peace after the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, no substantive or immediate improvement of living conditions could be reported.

11. The continuation of the occupation, buttressed by armed force, affected Palestinian society and its livelihood and resulted in serious human rights violations. In fact, during 1993 the number of total fatalities and injuries, particularly among children, was significantly higher than during the preceding period. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reported that security forces were responsible for the death of 80 Palestinians from the West Bank, including 8 children and 120 persons from the Gaza Strip, among them 28 children. 2/ Since the beginning of the intifadah the total number of Palestinian casualties by shooting, beating or tear gas had risen to 1,240 by August 1993, and the total number injured to an estimated 130,000. Approximately one fourth of the fatalities continued to be children under 16 years. 3/ Palestinian women had similarly experienced violence and maltreatment caused by the situation of unrest and armed conflict. In Gaza, 722 women reported serious injuries and had to undergo medical treatment, as did 108 women in the West Bank. Eight of 48 women prisoners suffering from injuries and maltreatment were said to have been denied adequate medical treatment. During the reporting period, a total of nine Palestinian females were reported to have been killed as a result of direct or indirect actions of the Israeli security forces and settlers, among them three schoolgirls aged below 13 years and one 4-year-old girl.

12. Women and their families had been increasingly harassed - in particular when persons declared as "wanted" had been pursued. Military assaults were carried out massively against the homes of fugitives in February and April 1993 in the Gaza Strip, rendering hundreds of Palestinians homeless. Since the beginning of the intifadah, over 2,400 homes had been demolished or sealed. 4/ Women and their children were especially affected by measures of collective punishment. The Israeli-ordered closure of the Gaza Strip on 30 March and the West Bank on 31 March 1993 had a serious impact on the daily life and overall economic conditions of Palestinians, because it divided the occupied territory into four isolated regions. Special permits were required for entry into Jerusalem and Israel and travel between the West Bank and Gaza and within the West Bank itself. This had a negative effect on commerce, medical care,



education and access to services, including those provided by UNRWA, and it caused unemployment to rise to over 50 per cent. 5/ Gaining access to medical facilities in Jerusalem necessitated permits and ambulances were refused entry in several emergency cases. In some areas, road blocks had created enclaves, depriving the Palestinians living in them of access to their families, places of work, schools, medical facilities, places of worship in Jerusalem and utility services. 6/ The closures resulted in a substantial rise in socio-economic hardship since some 130,000 Palestinians were suddenly cut off from their sources of income. Palestinians began to liquidate savings and sell personal belongings and household appliances to buy food, pay debts and cover rent. A change in consumption patterns and nutritional habits was noticed. There was concern that the percentage of growth-retarded children under three years of age and the number of child deaths could rise since protein-energy malnutrition was closely associated with infant and child mortality. 7/

13. A rapid worsening of the environmental situation in the occupied Palestinian territory has been noted. As reported by UNRWA, the ecological problems stemmed mostly from the over-exploitation by the Israeli authorities and the settlers of the available water resources, the lack of adequate waste management systems and the destruction of thousands of olive and fruit trees. The contamination and degradation of the environment had reached crisis dimensions in the Gaza Strip and presented a direct health threat to the population - in particular to the children. Palestinian households suffered from the poor condition of water distribution networks and considerable water losses. 8/ According to a recent survey, household indoor standards have remained relatively poor. Only approximately half the households in the West Bank camps and villages had a separate bathroom and inside flush toilets. Not even 10 per cent had fitted kitchens. 9/ Poor standards and scarcity of safe water affected women in particular since it has been their role to manage food preparation and hygiene.

14. The life of Palestinian families has been characterized by frequent separations. The absence of male family members due to detention, expulsion, imprisonment or death has increased the number of female-headed households. Over the past year, there were an estimated 12,000 Palestinian political prisoners held in Israeli prisons and detention camps. Deportations of male political activists had continued. The number of female-headed households had always been high among the Palestinian refugee population, since men tended to leave the camps in search of work. Thus, the camp population consisted in the beginning mainly of women, children and the elderly. Women were the backbone of refugee camp life. According to UNRWA data, 30.6 per cent of households in the refugee population in the West Bank and 20.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip were female-headed. UNRWA reported that 22 per cent of the families that qualified for the "special hardship" programme were headed by women. An analysis of the population of the occupied territory by age structure and sex showed large gender gaps for the age groups from 35 to 64 years, where women outnumbered men - in particular for the age groups 40-44, 45-49, and 50-54 years. 10/ Men of the concerned age groups migrated from the occupied territory in search of employment abroad, while women stayed behind. Family reunification laws had also led to the deportation of family members, including children, and have denied them the right to return on a permanent basis. Children had even been denied registration. In December 1992, the Government of Israel granted

renewable visitor permits to the non-resident spouses and children of Palestinians carrying Israeli-issued identification cards. This decision affected about 1,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children who had entered the occupied territory on visitor permits in mid-1992. 11/

15. Female-headed households were particularly vulnerable to poverty, since women traditionally depended on men as providers of family income. The majority of women could not ensure a living for their families since they were impeded by lack of education, vocational training, skills and employment opportunities and were subject to socio-cultural restrictions concerning their freedom of movement. The condition of widows was particularly difficult and has not received sufficient attention in relation to the question of de jure headship, property rights and guardianship of the children. Certain customary practices, such as a widow's marrying her husband's brother or other close kin, were still widespread in the occupied territory. Large age gaps between spouses, which are common in Palestinian society and in countries of the region, have increased the likelihood of a woman being widowed, often at a young age. Social and legal pressures often force single women and their children to join the household of their kin and to give up independent living in the absence of a male head of family.

16. In Palestinian society, marriage determines a woman's life in social and economic terms. Marriage status has an impact on access to property and income and freedom of movement. Age at marriage is an indicator of women's education and expected fertility. A recent survey carried out in the West Bank and Gaza found that during the first period of the intifadah the age at marriage fell. In the previous two decades education and urbanization had led to a relative rise in marriage age. Thirty-seven per cent of the female population married under the age of 17, the legal minimum age required for marriage. The reasons for the increase in early marriages were said to be linked to the long term school closures and the deteriorating economic situation, which discouraged parents from continuing their daughters' education. The bans on wedding parties during the intifadah made weddings affordable for those who had not planned to marry for some time because of the costs involved. Furthermore, parents fearing for the lives of their sons encouraged early marriages since the loss was considered less tragic if the victim left behind a male heir.

17. According to a recent survey a relatively high number of women in the age group 30-39 were not married (17 per cent). Given the fact that marriage was less likely in the Palestinian society once a woman reached her thirties, this figure is important. It might imply that a certain number of women in this age group either chose not to marry or did not have an opportunity to do so. It confirmed the assertion that higher education might be counterproductive and an impediment to marriage. A greater percentage of the non-married women of this age group had a higher educational level and worked outside the home. 12/

18. Women experience the severe restrictions on movement within their communities which were imposed by the Israeli authorities on a daily basis, just as men do. Prolonged curfews and the fear of going out in the evening have profoundly affected the social life of Palestinian society. However, freedom of movement for women is also linked to marital status and age. It was considered indecent behaviour for a woman to be alone with a male non-family member.

Unmarried women are more restricted in their movements than married women of all ages, although freedom of movement increases steadily with age. Seventy-six per cent of women aged 50-59 said that they were free to move at will, but only 22 per cent of the 15-19-year-old young women said so. Only 71 per cent of women working outside the home felt free to move about freely. 13/

19. Despite the political and social changes that had occurred, the legal conditions governing the status of women had not been changed since the occupation of the West Bank in 1967. All the legislative, executive and administrative powers previously held by the Government of Jordan in the West Bank and Government of Egypt in the Gaza Strip were transferred to the General Military Commander and remained unchanged, unless modified by a provision from the Israeli Military Commander. Legislation relating to the status of women remained the same, with two exceptions. The law of personal status is governed by religious courts, which remain entirely outside the powers of the Israeli military authorities. This religiously based legislation is similar to laws in Israel and neighbouring Arab States and has had an important impact on issues affecting women and families. The second change concerns women's voting rights and candidacy rights for municipal posts, which was granted by Military Order 627 of 1976. Women had no right to vote under the 1955 Jordanian electoral law. The only occasion when women could vote was in the municipal elections of 1976; municipal elections were banned afterwards. 14/

## II. IMPACT OF THE MIDDLE-EAST PEACE AGREEMENT ON PALESTINIAN WOMEN

20. The implementation of the Declaration of Principles will have an impact on the situation of Palestinian women. With political developments entering a new phase, the concerns of Palestinian women can be considered part of the development agenda. A women-specific agenda, similar to that of various developing countries, seems desirable. The prevailing approaches to "women in development" are either to add women's concerns to the development agenda set by others or to transform development agendas on the basis of women's analysis of what would both meet their basic needs and empower them. Donors and development agencies have an important role to play in the implementation of women-in-development policies. But little can be achieved without the active involvement of all concerned at all levels.

21. The process of structuring new governmental institutions and the capabilities to manage them will be taking place with the transfer of certain administrative responsibilities from the Israeli civil administration to Palestinian control. Palestinian women can bring a gender perspective to these developments. All of the areas mentioned in the Agreement, starting from direct, free and general elections for the council of Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to human resource development, environmental protection and cooperation in the field of communication and media, can benefit from the scrutiny of women for their gender components and impact. Development projects in agriculture, the setting up of infrastructure, housing, education and health facilities can best be elaborated with the participation of female experts. At

the outset, however, a particularly important step would be the provision of de jure equality for women.

22. It is clear that Palestinian women are aware of the present challenge. The Palestinian Federation of Women's Action called for constitutional and judicial legislation to ensure equality and equal opportunities and confirmed the continuation of its struggle against the economic, social, political and cultural marginalization of women. It recognized the urgency of the need to have equality enshrined in the constitutional declaration of the national authority. Women's participation in the drafting of laws, regulations and legislature of the new national authority and in community life in all its aspects needed to be guaranteed. The Federation also asked for the participation of leading female professionals in the formation of the transitional national government and a larger proportion of women in principal and subsidiary organizations and institutions dealing with social, economic, educational, administrative and other matters. Their request covered civil rights, education, health provision, the planning and implementation of growth and development, and the media.

23. The question of accountability takes on a specific definition in the case of interim self-government arrangements which will have an impact on future developments and governmental structures. Adequate funds and resources should be given to women-in-development programmes and women-in-development personnel of sufficient authority should be included in all policy, planning and programming activities. Appropriate quantitative and qualitative national targets need to be identified. A national machinery for the advancement of Palestinian women is already in place but needs recognition, authority and influence at the highest political level. Women need to participate in future governance structures and in existing development institutions, and most importantly, need to be involved in the formulation of development strategies. Skills-training and gender-awareness are important tools for achieving these goals.

24. Besides providing adequate health services and improved education, the most important programme will be to enhance the development of sustainable income-generation activities for women. Realistic, feasible possibilities and basic support facilities need to be identified. Palestinian women need support from the international community, non-governmental organizations and donor agencies in this respect.

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In its resolution 38/4, entitled "Palestinian women", the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation of and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission, at its thirty-ninth session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The present report responds to that request and highlights the issues of concern for Palestinian women within the present political context. It monitors the situation in the fields of violence, governance, health, education and employment. Emphasis is put on the development aspects and the participation of women in political decision-making. Preparing for *de facto* and *de jure* equality has gained importance as has the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of legislation, infrastructure development and human resource and economic development.

\* E/CN.6/1995/1.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 38/4, entitled "Palestinian women", the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation of and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission, at its thirty-ninth session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. It requested the Commission on the Status of Women to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, in particular paragraph 260 concerning Palestinian women and children.

2. The World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, 1985), considered the issue of Palestinian women and children under the rubric "peace" and concluded in paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies:

"For more than three decades, Palestinian women have faced difficult living conditions in camps and outside, struggling for the survival of their families and the survival of the Palestinian people who were deprived of their ancestral lands and denied the inalienable rights to return to their homes and their property, their right to self-determination, national independence and sovereignty. ... The special and immediate needs of Palestinian women and children should be identified and appropriate provision made. United Nations projects should be initiated to help Palestinian women in the fields of health, education, and vocational training. Their living conditions inside and outside the occupied territories should be studied by the appropriate United Nations units and agencies, assisted, as appropriate, by specialized research institutes from various regions." 1/

3. In preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in Beijing in 1995, the monitoring of the implementation of paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies is being undertaken, including consideration of recent political developments and their impact on the status of women. The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting, convened in Amman from 6 to 10 November 1994, states in its general framework:

"A comprehensive and just peace and stability in the region are prerequisites to development and equality. A comprehensive and just peace would free the human and financial resources that are being spent on military equipment and wars, when they could be geared toward development that provides women with equal opportunities for participation." 2/

4. Since 1985, reports on Palestinian women have been submitted on a regular basis to the Commission on the Status of Women, most recently at its thirty-eighth session. The present report describes the situation of Palestinian women related to violence, equal rights, governance, employment, education and health. In view of the planned establishment, for a transitional period, of a Palestinian interim self-government authority and elected council for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, emphasis is placed on the development aspect and on the enhancement of women's participation in the



elaboration of a permanent settlement of the conflict and the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of legislation, infrastructure development and human resource and economic development. The transitional period began in Gaza and Jericho, which in May 1994 became self-rule areas under the newly established Palestinian Authority. The present report is based on various recent documents published by the United Nations system and specialized agencies, as well as other sources. No information was available on the specific conditions of women in the self-rule areas.

## I. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

5. The period under review was characterized by a decline of the overall level of violence in the occupied territories following the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in September 1993 and the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area (A/49/180-S/1994/727, annex). Since the beginning of the intifadah, dozens of Palestinian women have been killed by Israeli soldiers, settlers or collaborators, often random victims of violent clashes. Women have been harassed by soldiers, in particular when their homes were being searched. A number of female political prisoners remain in jail, several of them under the age of 18. Women prisoners have experienced violence in interrogation and imprisonment.

6. Sporadic outbreaks of protest and demonstration have been met by the Israeli authorities with repressive measures against the civilian population. Collective punishment such as prolonged curfews and closures has brought with it economic and social hardship and increased the level of poverty. <sup>3/</sup> In particular, the sealing of the occupied territories after the Hebron massacre on 25 February 1994 and its aftermath led to increased economic losses for Palestinian workers employed in Israel. Since the movement of goods between Israel and the occupied territories and within the occupied territories themselves had also been interrupted, Palestinian manufacturers and farmers lost considerable income. During the period under review the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) distributed food on an emergency basis to 75,000 families in the West Bank and 95,000 families in the Gaza Strip. <sup>4/</sup> In addition, continued confiscation of land and destruction of houses negatively affected the economic resource of Palestinian families.

7. The experience of violence during the intifadah and afterwards has had negative and chronic effects on the psychological well-being of children and their mothers. Children who were subjected to traumatic events such as torture or who witness the killing of a relative or friend display high levels of anxiety and psychosomatic illnesses. Curfews that confine family members to their home for extended periods, and other measures of collective punishment, continue to put psychological strain on family members. There has been an erosion of male authority within the household, since men were subjugated and helpless in situations of violence during the intifadah. Problems of depression, fear and aggressiveness have increased dramatically among children. Manifested symptoms include lack of concentration, disobedience and increased aggressiveness. Psychosomatic illnesses and ailments were reported at epidemic

levels among traumatized mothers during the intifadah and continue to have an impact. 5/ Mental health care projects have been established in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to offer treatment and alleviate the harrowing effect of trauma in children and mothers. 6/

8. Besides the violence arising from the occupation, the Palestinian woman is confronted with various kinds of physical, sexual or psychological violence from her family or from society in general. Women's organizations have begun to collect evidence of domestic violence against women, which has previously been a taboo subject. They denounce traditional forms of social control such as urging girls to quit school prematurely, wear the veil or get married against their will.

## II. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND GOVERNANCE

9. With the launching of Palestinian self-rule women's contribution to institution-building and legislation has gained importance. There is increased public awareness about women's status, respect for and acceptance of the work of women's organizations is high, and women are prepared to play an active role in government.

### A. Women's organizations and committees

10. A historic review shows that Palestinian women's organizations have grown within the national movement and have been influenced by political events. The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) was formed in 1965 as a women's section within the PLO. 7/ With the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967, traditional charitable organizations increased their relief activities, but also started to develop income-generating activities and vocational training for girls and women. These activities remained concentrated in the urban areas of the West Bank and were carried out by middle- and upper-class women.

11. In the late 1970s, a new generation of women activists, highly politicized and well-educated, emerged. Women's committees, relying on the various political factions and parties, were established to address the national and social oppression of women. The unified women's committees successfully mobilized women throughout the occupied territories, in refugee camps as well as in remote villages, which has engendered increased awareness among all women involved. Barriers between urban and rural, middle- and lower-class women were overcome.

12. Women's popular committees have often been considered as alternative institutions and part of a possible infrastructure within a future Palestinian Government. During the intifadah, which began in December 1987, women became actively involved in agriculture, education, food storage, medical and guarding committees. They developed home economy as a community-based form of self-reliance. Women continued their former charitable activities such as food distribution and support of homeless families and families of prisoners and

victims. Their activities were recognized by the political leadership as an important support to the uprising.

#### B. Equal rights for women

13. In their early years, women's committees gave priority to the national struggle for liberation and neglected the issue of emancipation and achievement of equality in a patriarchal society. Women did not want to split their activities and open an internal argument at a time when all efforts were needed for the resistance against occupation. Living under occupation had impelled the Palestinian people to hold onto their customs and traditions as a mechanism for preserving their national, cultural and social identity. This has played a major role in enforcing many stereotypes that are discriminatory towards women. 8/ The active participation of women of all ages and social backgrounds in demonstrations and in confrontations with the army contributed to a change in the public image of women. Increased awareness and self-confidence encouraged women to take on leading positions and to publicly criticize the long neglect of social and gender issues. Women's participation in decision-making increased as a result of the experience in the popular committees. 9/ A new feminist consciousness set up a "gender agenda" for the women's movement. Palestinian women increasingly questioned their initial assumption that they would legally and automatically obtain their rights along with national independence. Women's committees and international organizations, including UNRWA, organized courses to inform women about their rights and to raise awareness on legal matters. 10/

14. Women's organizations and human rights groups prepared amendments to the proposed personal status, social and civil laws. Efforts were made to include the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women into the draft National Authority Law, the equivalent of a future constitution. Palestinian women's organizations knew that they had to grasp the historic moment to ensure that equality was enshrined in all Palestinian legal instruments. Leading Palestinian women inside and outside the occupied territories set up a special committee for the drafting of a declaration of principles, which was adopted in June 1994. This Women's Charter highlights personal status law, socio-economic rights, education and health. 11/

#### C. Women in leadership positions

15. The number of women in leadership positions has been growing. At present, women represent about 10 per cent of the Palestinian National Congress. From 25 members in 1980, their number increased to 35 in 1986 and 43 in 1992. Women did not hold any diplomatic position until 1980. In 1992, out of 93 women, two reached the level of ambassador. The 15-member Palestinian delegation to the Madrid Peace Conference, which began in October 1991, included three women. The spokesperson for the delegation was a woman. After the implementation of the self-rule agreement, a woman was appointed Minister for Social Affairs of the Palestinian Authority. A woman was appointed head of the women police, which enrolled about 70 women. 12/

16. In preparing for the future administration and establishment of interim self-government, the Palestinian Authority has set up a number of technical committees to define policies, and to assist the negotiating team in planning strategies and policies in all sectors. At the request of women's organizations, a Women's Affairs Technical Committee has been established. Its objective is to establish a system of governance that eliminates all forms of discrimination against women and ensures equal participation in the future legislative, executive and judicial structures. 13/

### III. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

17. Palestinian educational achievement is, on average, the highest in the region, with 18 college graduates per thousand inhabitants. The high-quality human resource base has been recognized as the most important asset for the sustainable development of the occupied territories. 14/ The considerable increase - by 74.6 per cent - of the number of students in the past 20 years is partly due to the higher enrolment of girls. In 1967/68, girls represented 41 per cent of the school population; in 1989, their number reached 48 per cent.

18. Gender differences in enrolment appear in the final years of the preparatory cycle and in secondary schools. As much as 14 per cent of girls in the West Bank and 7.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip have not completed schooling. The major reasons given for the drop-out of girls above fourth grade elementary education include slow learning capacity, the political situation and the need to help at home or marry. 15/ Girls' lack of academic ability is linked to crowded classrooms, inadequacy of training material and non-availability of intervention programmes to allow girls a second entry after drop-out or failure.

19. Despite the success in providing compulsory primary education for girls and boys under adverse conditions, the quality of the education system and educational achievement are not satisfactory because of overcrowded schools, double shifts at the elementary level, lack of maintenance, inadequate teacher training, lack of educational material and low salaries. 16/ Girls' education is doubly affected by these adverse circumstances. Their enrolment in the non-compulsory secondary level remains low given the customary restriction on girls' mobility at the onset of puberty. Costs for education and the unequal geographical distribution of secondary schools are an additional obstacle.

20. The frequent closure of schools during the intifadah has had a long-term negative impact on educational achievement at the elementary level and will make it difficult to catch up in higher-level classes. It resulted in demotivation for continued education, in particular among girls, and increased illiteracy rates. During the period under review, disruption in education as a result of military closure orders, curfews and general strikes continued to decline. In UNRWA schools, only 10 per cent of school-days were lost, compared to 16 per cent in the previous year. Students from the Gaza Strip who were enrolled at UNRWA training centres in the West Bank did not get permission from the Israeli authorities to attend their classes owing to movement restrictions imposed in late February 1994. 17/

21. Illiteracy still persists among members of the adult population who have had no schooling or less than six years of schooling. Women of all ages were more likely than men to be illiterate, especially women over 34 years of age and those living in rural areas or refugee camps. In 1990, the data collected on illiteracy in West Bank villages and the Gaza Strip showed that between 30 and 55 per cent of women and between 10 and 35 per cent of men were reported as illiterate. 18/ The popular committees, in particular women's committees, have undertaken a large programme of literacy training for women of all ages in the rural areas and refugee camps. Methods of functional literacy training have been used, linking literacy training to education about health, nutrition, hygiene and child care. However, many women after graduating from a literacy programme gradually lose their skills because of lack of practice. 19/

22. The opening of various institutions of higher learning in the occupied territories between 1967 and 1987 brought with it the most significant change in women's education. Since the 1960s, eight universities have been set up in the occupied territories. In 1991, 25,393 students were enrolled in universities and other third-level institutions. Female students comprise 44 per cent of the total student population in the Gaza Strip and 46 per cent in the West Bank. Young women, who had no opportunity to pursue their education previously, could enrol in universities located close to their homes. This launched a democratization process which engendered broader participation in higher education, since the local universities offered educational opportunities for students from rural areas and refugee camps. The important percentage of women in tertiary education has created a new elite of highly educated women who became politicized during their university education and have become actively involved in setting up women's committees. Women still opted for typical female studies, with 26 per cent in education science and the humanities and only 5.7 and 0.5 per cent in engineering and agriculture, respectively. 20/ Local universities were closed by the Israeli authorities at the beginning of the intifadah and only resumed their full activities in 1992. Access to universities in 1994 was frequently hampered by the Israeli authorities.

#### IV. EMPLOYMENT AND ACCESS TO ECONOMIC RESOURCES

23. Women's access to economic resources is difficult to assess in a society in which women's participation in the formal labour force has been very low. Traditionally, the main mechanism used to ensure women some form of independent economic resources has been the payment of a dowry at marriage. This has continued as an important social practice, although it is no longer a sustainable source of income or economic support for women, given increased living costs. Jewellery, land, livestock, bank savings or tools of the trade were the main form of women's independent property. With increasing age, women are giving away their dowry resources and investing them in the family. 21/ In times of economic hardship, families have had to fall back on accumulated resources. Women's individual resources were used up for family maintenance, which, in return, increased women's economic dependence on husbands or male family members. There is evidence that Palestinian families exhausted their resources during the years of the intifadah, especially during periods when they were cut off from any sources of labour income.

24. Women's participation in the labour force averaged 11.7 per cent in the West Bank and only 3.9 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Restriction on women's mobility has made it difficult to search for employment inside Israel. However, a significant number of women, in particular female heads of household, have worked as migrant agricultural workers despite social inhibitions. Israeli enterprises specialized in garment production set up subcontracting in the occupied territories, and exploited women by paying wages 50 per cent lower than wages for equivalent work in Israel. 22/

25. Unemployment has been very high for women with high school, vocational or university education. Early surveys of university graduates suggested that few of the female graduates went on to pursue professional careers. Women remained concentrated in secretarial and service work and in the caring professions, in particular nursing and teaching. The female concentration in teaching was very high, especially in primary education.

26. In the 1990s, many women's organizations established income- and profit-generating projects for women. 23/ A survey on Palestinian women's organizations in the occupied territories conducted in 1992 reported a total of 174 women's organizations, including cooperatives, voluntary services, committees, centres and production projects. They run specialized educational, training and production projects, day-care centres, kindergartens and rehabilitation and health centres. In the economic and social context of the occupied territories, income-generating activities provided by women's organizations offer possibilities for female access to the labour market, even if they remain in the realm of traditional female occupations.

27. There is a lack of information on women in the private sector. Data provided by the Chambers of Commerce of five cities in the occupied territories indicate that women constitute only 2 per cent of investors in trade offices, most of them operating with very low capital. Information was provided on an oil factory, in which 13 per cent of investors were women, and on a medical company in Jerusalem, where women constituted 65 per cent of the investors, although no woman was on its board of directors. 24/

#### V. HEALTH CONDITIONS AND SERVICE PROVISION

28. Health conditions and provision of services in the occupied territories have been negatively affected by the political situation since 1967 and deteriorated during the intifadah. A recent development assessment suggested that too little attention was being given by medical services to reaching out to groups, especially women. 25/ The health-care system focused on female reproductive health and did not provide for women's health problems throughout the life cycle.

29. The West Bank has a high birth rate, at about 4.5 per cent, which has an adverse effect on the health of mothers. Infant mortality has been persistently high, at 50 to 100 deaths per thousand live births in the late 1970s and early 1980s. 26/ The disruption of all aspects of routine life during the intifadah may have resulted in a non-reporting of infant deaths. Birth practices have changed over the past 20 years, including a progressive increase in the

proportions of births occurring in hospitals and medical centres. In 1990, only 20 per cent of mothers in the Gaza Strip and 32 per cent in the West Bank gave birth at home. The discrepancy between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip can be explained by the greater number and closer availability of medical services in the Gaza Strip, in particular through UNRWA clinics where pre- and post-natal care is provided. UNRWA also expanded its services of family planning in the context of maternal health. A rise in maternal anaemia in the third trimester of pregnancy has been reported for the West Bank (48 per cent) and the Gaza Strip (67 per cent). 27/

30. A recent survey conducted by UNRWA in 1990 suggested that there had been an improvement in nutritional status in the refugee camps since 1984. Other surveys carried out in the rural areas of the West Bank, however, suggested that malnutrition of children outside the camps was more prevalent. The difference could be explained by the fact that poor families in the refugee camps were receiving substantial food supplies through UNRWA. The economic recession, aggravated in particular in 1993 by measures of collective punishment, had negative effects on nutritional standards. The incidence of childhood anaemia, which has been as high as 70 per cent in camps in the Gaza Strip and 58 per cent in the West Bank, has an impact on a child's physical and psychological development. 28/

31. There is an acute shortage of doctors and clinics in the occupied territories. Non-governmental organizations and medical committees play an important role in providing health services in the West Bank, where they reach 45 per cent of the population through 132 clinics. One of the health service non-governmental organizations, the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees is providing health services adapted to women's needs and priorities without focusing only on maternity health care. It is functioning with a network of volunteers and mobile clinics and puts emphasis on education campaigns and the training of rural women as village health workers. 29/

## VI. VULNERABLE GROUPS

32. The violence to which the occupied territories have been exposed since the outbreak of the intifadah greatly increased the number of persons with disabilities. UNRWA has been running a physiotherapy programme, together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in six clinics in Gaza and five in the West Bank, but has not been able to meet the need for treatment. A great number of the injuries have led to permanent disability for which specific community care is needed. The UNRWA community-based rehabilitation programme for the disabled has had to further expand its provision of vocational rehabilitation. Since most of the injured are young men, women have had to take on the role of caregivers and providers of family income.

33. The number of female-headed households is high in the occupied territories. Some 36.6 per cent of all households in the West Bank are headed by women, compared to 17.9 per cent in the Gaza Strip. These figures do not include de facto female headship, where male heads of household have migrated for a longer period. 30/ Women heads of household face numerous legal, social and economic problems. The agreements between Israel and the PLO had a favourable

impact on household composition since a number of long-term deportees returned to the occupied territories.

## VII. PRIORITIES FOR ASSISTANCE

34. Following the signing of the Declaration of Principles, the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system have intensified their efforts to promote sustainable economic and social development in the occupied territories. In May 1994, the Secretary-General appointed a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to facilitate coordination among the programmes and agencies to ensure an integrated and unified approach to development.

35. UNRWA identified projects that would improve social and economic conditions and infrastructure in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and that could be turned over to the Palestinian Authority in the future. The women's programme of UNRWA was gradually being integrated into the broader network of women's organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in order to achieve greater independence. Two of the 14 women's programme centres were given over for management by elected women's committees, while still being assisted technically and financially by UNRWA staff. 31/

36. The United Nations Development Programme sent a Needs Assessment Mission for Palestinian Women to the West Bank and Gaza Strip in early 1994. The purpose of the mission was to collaborate closely with the evolving leadership of Palestinian women in developing a policy framework for facilitating equal access to and participation in all development efforts as well as in defining the requirements for nation-building efforts. The report of the mission sets out recommendations for action in all fields and policy interventions and operational action to achieve the objectives concerning women and governance. 32/

37. Following a review and analysis of previous cooperation, UNICEF has updated its programme of cooperation for Palestinian women and children in the West Bank and Gaza in close dialogue with the Palestinian Authority and its various institutions, United Nations agencies, non-government organizations and donor partners. UNICEF assistance gives priority to empowering women and girls to become full participants in the economic and social development process. The health programme focuses on maternal and child health, including safe motherhood and reduction of maternal mortality, and education relating to childbirth, motherhood and nutrition. The education component addresses gender disparities and promotes girls' education through formal and non-formal means. In support of greater participation of women in economic life, UNICEF is helping to develop a system of early child care. A youth and community development component, with a focus on girls, aims at constructive action for young people.

38. The International Labour Organization (ILO) sent an interdisciplinary mission to the occupied Palestinian territories in December 1993, the objective of which was to establish a plan of action to assist in the transition to political autonomy, in particular in the areas of human resource development, employment creation, labour institutions, social protection and equality for women. The proposals of the mission aim at promoting women's employment



opportunities in agriculture, and small business and industrial development, through targeted poverty alleviation schemes and entrepreneurship development programmes. The integration of the principle of equality of opportunities for men and women in the current process of planning, priority setting and institution-building, with a special emphasis on labour law and international standards, is underlined. In view of the release of thousands of detained persons and prisoners, specific education and training needs have arisen. 33/

39. The World Bank estimated that US\$ 5 million would be needed to fund programmes for women and youth during the interim period leading to the autonomy of the occupied territories. UNICEF, as a possible coordinating and implementing agency in this area, would earmark \$2 million to mother and child health. 34/

#### VIII. CONCLUSIONS

40. As the peace process in the occupied territories and the self-rule area of Jericho and the Gaza Strip is being consolidated, many actors have recognized the importance of integrating the gender perspective in all areas of legislation, infrastructure development and human resource and economic development at this crucial period. Preparing for de facto and de jure equality between men and women is of primary importance. Palestinian women need practical support and assistance at all levels, from counterparts inside and outside the occupied territories, in their endeavour to become citizens with equal rights and responsibilities. The findings in the present report show that there is potential for development and that resources and support need to be made available immediately in order to create the necessary infrastructure, especially in the field of education, health and employment.

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29/ United Nations Development Programme, At the Crossroads ...

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MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NAIROBI FORWARD-LOOKING  
STRATEGIES FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

In its resolution 1995/30, entitled "Palestinian women", the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation of Palestinian women and to assist them by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fortieth session a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report monitors conditions of human rights during the period under review and describes new developments, focusing on projects supported and carried out by the United Nations system. It also discusses emerging concerns and provides suggestions in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The emphasis of the report has shifted from monitoring the general living conditions of Palestinian women to monitoring aspects of their development and human rights, while not neglecting the specific political framework.

\* E/CN.6/1996/1.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for Women, 1/ the situation of Palestinian women and children has been monitored regularly by the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. In its resolution 1995/30, on Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General "to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission ... at its fortieth session a report on the progress made in the implementation" of the resolution. It requested the Commission to continue to monitor and take action with regard to the implementation of the Strategies. The Commission on the Status of Women, in its resolution 39/3, entitled "Women in the Middle East peace process", stressed the importance of, and need for, achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It urged Governments, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations to include women in the peace process and to expedite economic, financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women.

3. Since the signing by the Government of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, on 13 September 1993, the situation in the occupied territories has undergone major changes. Palestinian autonomy has taken shape with the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in May 1994, following the signing of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area, and has been further consolidated following the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Elections for a Palestinian Council and for the Ra'ees of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council were held on 20 January 1996. The Palestinian interim self-government authority will serve for a transitional period not exceeding five years.

4. As a result of these political developments, the focus of the present report has shifted from that of previous reports: instead of monitoring the general living conditions of Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, the present report focuses on the monitoring of violations of human rights that might persist as a result of the occupation and the consideration of women's participation and role in the establishment of a new political, economic and social regime. The report emphasizes aspects of development, accountability and respect for the human rights of women within a specific political framework. This new approach is in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 2/ However, the rapid pace of the political changes of the past year have made it difficult to obtain reliable data and up-to-date detailed information for the report.

### I. RESULTS OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

5. The Fourth World Conference on Women, without making reference to any particular national context, considered "women under occupation" in the strategic area of concern "Women and armed conflict". It established a link between the advancement of women and the peaceful settlement of conflicts:

/...

"An environment that maintains world peace and promotes and protects human rights, democracy and the peaceful settlement of disputes, in accordance with the principles of non-threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence and of respect for sovereignty as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, is an important factor for the advancement of women. Peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development. Armed and other types of conflict and terrorism and hostage-taking still persist in many parts of the world. Aggression, foreign occupation, ethnic and other types of conflicts are an ongoing reality affecting women and men in nearly every region." 3/

6. The Platform for Action acknowledged the necessity for women to contribute to conflict resolution and their crucial role during times of armed conflict and collapse of communities:

"The equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. Although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peace-keeping and defence and foreign affairs mechanisms, they are still underrepresented in decision-making positions. If women are to play an equal part in securing and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically and represented adequately at all levels of decision-making." 4/

"(Women) often work to preserve social order in the midst of armed and other conflicts. Women make an important but often unrecognized contribution as peace educators both in their families and in their societies." 5/

7. The Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Amman, 9-10 November 1994) makes specific reference to peace in the region:

"A comprehensive and just peace and stability in the region are prerequisites to development and equality. A comprehensive and just peace would free the human and financial resources that are being spent on military equipment and wars, when they could be geared toward development which provides women with equal opportunities for participation." 6/

## II. GENERAL LIVING CONDITIONS

8. Despite significant progress in the implementation of the agreements between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization throughout 1995, conditions in the occupied West Bank remained tense, and life in the self-rule areas continued to be affected by measures undertaken by the Israeli authorities, including various military and economic measures that have been detailed in other United Nations reports. 7/ For example, the Israeli authorities sealed the West Bank and Gaza Strip entirely on several occasions, preventing workers with valid permits from entering Israel and East Jerusalem. These measures exacerbated the economic hardship of many families. In view of

/...

the harsh economic situation, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories stated that the standard of living of Palestinians living under the autonomous region of Gaza had declined by 50 per cent since the signing of the Interim Agreement. 8/ A special appeal was launched to the donor community to support the Palestinian authorities in this crucial period.

### III. EFFECTS OF THE PEACE PROCESS ON WOMEN

9. The peace process, welcomed by the majority of the Palestinian population, has had a significant impact on the lives of women and the activities of women's organizations. One of the most significant questions has been the release of Palestinian prisoners, including a small number of women, whose health conditions had deteriorated. In accordance with the Interim Agreement, Israel was to release about 1,200 prisoners and detainees, including all female detainees and prisoners as soon as the Agreement went into effect. In October 1995, 21 women were released, but five others were not. Only one woman, who had been in solitary confinement, walked free; 20 others refused to leave their cells, protesting that Israel was not fulfilling its commitment regarding all female prisoners and detainees. The 25 women remaining in prison launched a hunger strike on 10 January 1996 in protest against Israel's continuing refusal to release them. 9/

10. Palestinian women, who played an active role during the intifadah, have remained involved since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. Women's organizations and human rights groups formed coalitions in the areas of human rights and legal services. They drafted a bill of women's rights following the release of the Palestinian Draft Basic Law and focused on procedural and administrative law important for its implementation. Women activists undertook a legal analysis of existing laws from a gender perspective and a review of their implementation, which was included in a handbook for legal literacy training. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other international standards on women and human rights were widely discussed at the grass-roots level. 10/ The issue was raised about which models or mechanisms for addressing women's issues would be most appropriate in the future government. It was debated whether the recently created Women's Affairs Bureau should be an integrated part of the Palestinian Authority or a separate body. 11/ The Women's Affairs Technical Committee, set up by the Palestinian Authority, became a forum for the concerns expressed by women's non-governmental organizations and dealt with the mainstreaming of gender issues in development policies. Recently a Gender Mainstreaming Department was established within the Ministry of Planning.

11. For the Palestinian elections on 20 January 1996, women's organizations undertook their own preparations. Non-governmental organizations had closely observed the elections in South Africa and the role of the women's charter there. The introduction of a quota system in the Palestinian elections was regarded as controversial at the level of the women's movement. There was concern that, through the quota system, women candidates who were not gender-sensitized would be appointed to governmental posts. It was also asked whether women would stand for election from within their political parties or independently of any political party. Despite the limitations, a view in favour



of the quota system prevailed. Women led protests demanding a quota for women on the Palestinian Council, arguing that women faced difficulties in competing with men in the elections because of the historical inequalities in the male-dominated society. The Palestinian Election Law provided for a system of regulations that determine the number of assembly seats in each constituency in proportion to the population. Based on the registration of voters in the different constituencies, quotas were allocated only for Christians and the Samaritan sect, but no provision was made to ensure an equal representation of women. 12/ According to the Central Election Commission, 1,013,235 Palestinians aged 18 and over were registered in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem to vote in the elections. Forty-nine per cent of the registered voters were women. Among the 676 candidates for the 88-seat legislative council, there were only 28 women (4 per cent). The sole opponent to PLO Chairman Arafat in the election for Ra'ees of the Executive Authority of the Palestinian Council was a woman, Ms. Samiha Khalil of Ramallah. Five women, representing 5.6 per cent, were elected to the Palestinian Council.

#### IV. ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN WOMEN BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

12. During the period under review, a number of projects for Palestinian women were carried out and initiated by the United Nations system and bilateral donors in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations.

13. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), in addition to its ongoing work for women, financed new projects under the Palestinian Women's Initiative Fund, including a community-run kindergarten in the West Bank and a training workshop in the maintenance and repair of sewing and knitting machines in Gaza. It operated a solidarity group-lending programme in the Gaza Strip to make credit available to women working in micro enterprises and as street vendors in the informal sector of the economy. The programme offered loans averaging \$400 to individual women for the expansion of their income-generating activities. Under the Peace Implementation Programme, it established nine women's programme centres, and construction began for a College of Nursing and Allied Health Science. In the field of education, UNRWA awarded university scholarships to 863 Palestine refugee pupils, including 371 women. 13/

14. THE UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), through its Gender in Development Programme (GIDP), carried out a variety of projects, including cooperation with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling on the improvement of Palestinian women's legal status. It organized a workshop for Palestinian media agencies and individuals on the portrayal of gender roles in the media and supported the Palestinian Coalition for Women's Health which aims to improve the provision of health services for Palestinian women by addressing their needs using a life-cycle approach. To improve access to education - so far limited for women in particular due to lack of adequate educational facilities and overcrowding in schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip - classrooms in villages and rural areas were constructed and renovated, primarily for girls. UNDP/PAPP is upgrading a cultural and educational complex in Jericho to provide 23 additional classrooms for primary and secondary girls'

schools and is engaging in an extensive school rehabilitation project to provide supplementary facilities for schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including at least 25 classrooms in primary and secondary girls' schools. A school drop-out study, sponsored by UNDP, to be carried out by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, will target Palestinian female youth. Women's enrolment in agricultural schools is encouraged in a project for agricultural education and training which will offer both pre-service and in-service training and target women as 50 per cent of the beneficiaries. The gender-in-development initiatives of UNDP/PAPP include a strategy of upstream interventions which aim at enlarging constituencies in advocacy and working directly with the Palestinian Authority ministries in order to enhance a gender-sensitive approach to policy planning and strategy formulation. They support the established women's units in the various ministries in order to build and strengthen their efforts for mainstreaming gender at the policy level.

15. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) focused on preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, September 1995), providing support and training to the Palestinian participants at the Conference and the NGO Forum. One specific area of support was institution-building, in particular, efforts to institutionalize gender planning within the emerging bodies of the Palestinian Authority. Other areas were political participation and conflict resolution, with emphasis on awareness-building for women in elections, and follow-up to the Conference, including the preparation of a national strategy for women based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. 2/ UNIFEM also launched a permanent WID Facilitation Initiative to coordinate the multiplicity of donors, non-governmental organizations and initiators of WID projects.

16. In addressing the needs of Palestinian children, youth and women, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) moved away from emergency interventions towards longer-term basic services for development and sustainability. For the first time since 1980, when its programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was launched, UNICEF could work in cooperation with a central Palestinian authority which provided the framework for planning, policy development and harmonization of basic services to children and women on a national level. Strategies to promote basic education for all, health promotion and empowerment of women were carried out and included, for example, the standardization of women's health services through the development of a Unified Maternal Health card. UNICEF gave priority to programmes reaching out to children in underprivileged communities in refugee camps, rural and urban areas, with special focus on the girl child. Gender issues were integrated into programming and training to upgrade the skills of health care and education professionals. UNICEF also supported the Palestinian preparation for and participation in the Fourth World Conference on Women. For the collection of disaggregated data on health and education indicators, UNICEF launched a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey in collaboration with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Support for capacity-building of the Palestinian Authority institutions was a priority for UNICEF in 1995 and included the formulation of a national programme of action in order to ensure political and social mobilization and long-term planning for children, in particular girls.

17. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) undertook jointly with UNRWA and the World Health Organization (WHO) a needs assessment mission, whose recommendations will be taken into account in formulating projects to address the needs of Palestinian women. UNFPA also implemented two expanded maternal and child health and family planning projects in Gaza and the West Bank.

#### V. EMERGING CONCERNS

18. The need for sustainable economic development has been persistently underlined as crucial to the successful establishment of Palestinian interim self-government. In this respect the international community, including the donor agencies, made substantive commitments and were aware of their responsibility for providing support to the launching of an independent economy and for establishing a viable infrastructure. 14/

19. With regard to the inclusion of gender aspects, the development policies and planning in the Palestinian self-rule areas follow patterns similar to those that have been observed in other developing countries. From a number of critical assessments it seems apparent that women's status and potential roles in socio-economic development and their needs and interests were not given systematic consideration in the preparations of overall economic and social development plans or in the design of development proposals. An important study undertaken by the World Bank, for instance, did not consider women's role in the labour market. In a three-year emergency programme, only a pilot programme for youth and women in development was proposed. 15/ Conversely, the international donor community, particularly through their programmes on women in development, made a commitment to ensuring a more equal role for women in Palestinian society. From 1990 onwards, substantive support has been given for the development of women's institutions, income-generating projects and vocational training. 16/ This has contributed to the launching of small income-generating projects and greater professionalism in the work of the women's organizations, whose relevance for the overall economic development might, however, be questioned.

20. The approach taken in the design of development programmes had an impact on the elaboration of Palestinian national development priorities. Researchers on gender issues have been critical of the form and conceptualization of social entitlements and citizen's rights in the emerging policies of the Palestine authority. They have voiced concern that discussion of the Palestinian economy had been limited to macroeconomic trends and the formal market, with no regard to gender needs. They argued that, in the outline of a gender-biased and unequal system of social support, secure entitlements were based largely on waged employment and women's unpaid contribution; no recognition was given to unremunerated work. Women were not listed as components in the major programmes of national economic reconstruction. The household and, in consequence, women's multiple roles in it were considered important in the social welfare system only in the sense that they would have to absorb shocks and ensure service that could not be provided by the Authority. Scholars also identified a male bias in research, leadership, expertise and staffing by the international community as well as the local implementing authorities. 17/

21. Women's current roles in the economy, in particular in income-generating projects, and other economic projects have been scrutinized by scholars. A number of income-generating projects were set up during the intifadah, including women's cooperatives, home economy projects and a variety of small business projects. An evaluation of these projects found that the majority failed to survive and were closed not long after their establishment. At the root of their failure was disregard for the socio-economic and political context in which they operated. 18/

22. One particular concern of social scientists and policy researchers was the absence of reliable primary data on Palestinian society, which represents a serious obstacle when projects are being defined and future policies outlined. No reliable and comparable gender-segregated data existed on Palestinian women with regard to household composition, labour-force participation, access to property and resources, education or health. The lack was due to the different sources of collection and the number of researchers who could collect data on particular population groups only, such as the refugee population. A national census, as already envisaged by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, is urgently needed, as are in-depth sectoral and topical studies of selected aspects of society. 19/

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

23. Support to Palestinian women during the transitional period was requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1995/30. In addition to other United Nations bodies with mandates concerning the Palestinian people, including the United Nations Relief And Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and others, the Commission on the Status of Women has shown a long-term commitment by monitoring the situation of Palestinian women, as set out in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies 1/ and recalled in its various resolutions.

24. In view of the progress achieved in the peace process and the establishment of a Palestinian Authority, the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2/ and in view of the shift in its monitoring of the situation of Palestinian women towards aspects of development, accountability and respect for the human rights of women, may wish that appropriate assistance be given to the following:

(a) Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution and decision-making;

(b) In implementing their agreements, the parties concerned should respect the human rights of Palestinian women;

(c) Ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making;

(d) Integrate a gender perspective in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects;

(e) Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice;

(f) Prepare for ratification of and accession to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, without reservations;

(g) Create a national machinery and other governmental bodies for the advancement of women at the highest possible level of government;

(h) Reduce the female illiteracy rate to at least half of its 1990 level;

(i) Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education;

(j) Promote women's economic rights and independence;

(k) Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade;

(l) Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and high quality health care and information and related services;

(m) Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

#### Notes

1/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

2/ "Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995", chap. I, sect. 1.

3/ Ibid., para. 131.

4/ Ibid., para. 134.

5/ Ibid., para. 139.

6/ "Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000 adopted at the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women" (E/CN.6/1995/5/Add.5, para. 14).

7/ "Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories" (A/50/170), covering the period from 27 August to 31 December 1994; "Report of the Special Committee ..." (A/50/282), covering the

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period from 1 January to 31 March 1995; "Report of the Special Committee ..." (A/50/463), covering the period 26 August 1994 to 18 August 1995; "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli settlements on the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, occupied since 1967, and on the Arab population of the Syrian Golan" (A/50/262).

8/ See A/50/170.

9/ The New York Times, 8 October 1995.

10/ Report of the Workshop on Women, at the United Nations International NGO Meeting and European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine; Geneva, 29 August-1 September 1994.

11/ Suha Hindiyeh-Mani, "Working towards self-determination and promoting civil society", paper presented at the United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine; New York, 19-21 June 1995.

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FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN:  
REVIEW OF MAINSTREAMING IN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

Progress achieved in the follow-up to the Fourth World  
Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender  
perspective within the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

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\* E/CN.6/1997/1.

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the items to be included on the agenda of the Commission. As regards documentation for the sessions of the Commission, the Council decided, *inter alia*, that under item 3 (a) of the Commission's agenda a report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken and progress achieved in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. Reporting requirements contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203 and 51/69 request the Secretary-General to report annually to the Assembly, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization and of the United Nations system to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way, including human and financial requirements.

3. The present report has been prepared in response to those two mandates. Given the need for integrated reporting, mandates contained in Commission resolution 39/5 on the preparation of a joint work plan between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations Secretariat are reflected in section I of the present report. Section II of the report fulfils the reporting requirements of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/5 on Palestinian women and Commission resolution 40/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned.

4. The Secretary-General, in his report on the implementation of the outcome of the Conference (A/51/322), noted the understanding of the Secretariat that the report requested in General Assembly resolution 50/203 would be provided on a rolling basis. While briefly summarizing results from previous intergovernmental meetings, new material would be added to each report. Therefore, the three separate reports to be submitted in the course of a year to the three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism under the broader heading of follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and mainstreaming of a gender perspective would be self-standing. The complete picture of relevant intergovernmental, national-level and United Nations system activities taking place over a year, however, can be obtained only by consulting all three reports.

5. A particular effort was to be made in those reports to provide information that was most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate intergovernmental decision-making. Thus, the reports to the Commission on the Status of Women would emphasize efforts undertaken by the secretariat of the Commission in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and other follow-up activities. They would also cover inter-agency activities and provide an overview of national action and action by civil society. Bearing in mind the need for integrated reporting, information requested under long-standing mandates or particular resolutions would be incorporated into those reports.

6. The emphasis of the reports to the Economic and Social Council would be on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. Thus, they would focus on activities in the area of the advancement of women and gender mainstreaming by other bodies reporting to the Council, as well as at the inter-agency level, with a view to supporting the Council's responsibilities in system-wide coordination in mainstreaming of a gender perspective, a task requiring the Council's ongoing and long-term attention. The Commission secretariat is assessing opportunities for including an annual thematic focus as well into the reports to the Council in order to increase their overall usefulness for intergovernmental decision-making.

7. It is intended that the reports to the Assembly should contain information from all intergovernmental bodies and United Nations system entities not reporting to the Council, including information from specialized agencies and international financial institutions. An analysis of activities undertaken at the national level by non-governmental organizations and civil society would also be provided. The reports would contain a section on means of implementation at all levels, including human and resource needs. To the extent possible and practical, reports required under specific resolutions would also be included.

I. PROGRESS IN THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE  
ON WOMEN AND IN MAINSTREAMING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE WITHIN  
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

1. Results of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly

8. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322) contained a section on mainstreaming a gender perspective. The report outlined the implications of gender factors for research, analysis, programme and policy development, and decision-making, and proposed a series of steps to mainstream a gender perspective. Noting that considerable experience already existed in certain areas of United Nations system activities, the report concluded that further steps were necessary to strengthen the conceptual basis for the system-wide mainstreaming of a gender perspective and its practical implications and requirements.

9. The report was in general favourably received, and the Secretary-General was invited to focus on the practical implications of mainstreaming a gender perspective. Accordingly, in its resolution 51/69 of 12 December 1996, the General Assembly made a number of references to mainstreaming by different actors, including by States and the United Nations system, and in different areas, including the human rights of women. In particular, the Assembly welcomed the contribution of the report of the Secretary-General to translating the concept of mainstreaming into practical action, including the ongoing work to develop methodologies to facilitate the application of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes throughout the United Nations system.

2. Substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council: coordination segment

10. In General Assembly resolution 50/203, the Economic and Social Council was invited to devote one high-level segment, one coordination segment and one operational activities segment to the advancement of women and the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Accordingly, in its decision 1996/310, the Council decided to consider, at its coordination segment in 1997, the cross-sectoral theme "Mainstreaming of gender perspectives into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system".

11. In anticipation of that decision, the first steps for preparing the report of the Secretary-General on the issue were taken at the first session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (New York, 22 and 23 October 1996). A background paper on mainstreaming and coordination, prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), served as the basis for discussion. The Committee agreed on the need to further clarify the system-wide implications for mainstreaming.

12. The preliminary outline of the report of the Secretary-General for the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session of 1997 covers:

(a) Clarification of the concept of mainstreaming a gender perspective: qualitative change from Nairobi to Beijing;

(b) Concise overview of intergovernmental actions taken since the Fourth World Conference on Women to mainstream a system-wide gender perspective: towards a comprehensive approach to mainstreaming a gender perspective at the intergovernmental level;

(c) Institutional requirements for mainstreaming a gender perspective, including policies, institutional cultures, incentive systems, operating procedures and gender training:

(i) At the intra-institutional level: administrative instructions, programme budgets, gender training etc.;

(ii) At the ad hoc inter-institutional level: parameters for lessons learned;

(iii) In the integrated follow-up to all United Nations conferences;

(iv) At the formal inter-agency level, in particular through the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality;

(e) Resource allocation for mainstreaming: the need for a common base for the quantification of financial allocations;

(f) Assessment and proposals for further action.

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13. The Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) Women in Development (WID) Subgroup is preparing three discussion papers for the second session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, covering three aspects of mainstreaming: indicators, parameters for evaluating best practices, and policy enforcement and accountability. All entities of the United Nations system were invited to contribute to the preparation of those papers; together with a background paper on mainstreaming and coordination and additional information on specific questions that is being gathered in accordance with the preliminary outline given above, those papers will form the analytical core of the above-mentioned report.

14. A preliminary draft of the report will be reviewed at the second session of the Committee, in March 1997, and guidance is expected for the finalization of the report.

15. Any comments that the Commission as a whole or individual members in their statements may make on the issue of mainstreaming would provide valuable input into the preparations of the report for the Economic and Social Council.

B. Activities in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations system

16. Since the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, steps taken in support of implementation of the Platform for Action included a number of initiatives undertaken by the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective.

17. Following the endorsement by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/34 of 25 July 1996, of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Secretariat informed United Nations entities of the endorsement, in particular the comments made on the plan by the Commission on the Status of Women in its resolution 40/10 and the annex thereto, and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC). It will be recalled that the Commission had commented, inter alia, that the United Nations Secretariat as a whole should undertake activities in the critical areas of concern, and it identified a number of Secretariat entities not included in the activities reflected in the plan.<sup>1</sup> CPC agreed to ensure, in its examination of the plan for the period 1998-2001, that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective was reflected in its individual programmes.

18. The above-mentioned communication by the Department/Division to the United Nations entities noted that the comments of the Commission required careful consideration, and would need to be clearly accounted for in the comprehensive mid-term review of the plan in 1998. It was noted that the Secretary-General had been requested to ensure the mainstreaming of a system-wide gender perspective in all United Nations activities, including in decision-making as part of the accountability of senior managers. The need for ongoing support and commitment to that task was emphasized.

19. In order to support efforts by a number of entities to mainstream a gender perspective, the Division for the Advancement of Women initiated a series of meetings with the Office of Legal Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat. During those meetings, the concept and practical implications of mainstreaming were discussed. Possible areas were identified within the work programmes of those departments that would seem to lend themselves most readily to mainstreaming efforts, including in their proposed programme budget for 1998-1999.

20. The Department of Political Affairs subsequently identified a number of steps that could be taken to ensure participation in the implementation of the Platform for Action, and to promote mainstreaming within the Department's areas of responsibilities, including the organization, in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women, of workshops and seminars for its staff members. Existing collaboration between the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Electoral Assistance Division of the Department of Political Affairs on compilation of data disaggregated by sex and gender impact assessments is being strengthened.

21. At the invitation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, senior staff of that Department were briefed by the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women on the requirements for mainstreaming. Although difficulties were acknowledged in achieving certain goals, in particular the numerical goals of gender balance in peacekeeping missions, the importance of pursuing mainstreaming in the programmatic and policy orientations of the Department and its operations was emphasized. In a preliminary manner, ideas for conducting an analysis of one or several existing peacekeeping operations from a gender perspective were discussed with a view to developing a framework for mainstreaming in the operations of that Department.

22. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of requests to provide input and comments from a gender perspective to reports from different departments of the United Nations Secretariat, including the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. Notably, the Division contributed to the Department's work in the area of poverty eradication, and is supporting preparations for the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of Agenda 21 in order to integrate a gender perspective into those processes.

23. Similarly, in preparation for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), a paper on gender aspects of Habitat II was prepared by the Division, which was made available at the Conference; the paper addressed the incorporation of the results of the Fourth World Conference on Women into the Habitat Agenda. The Division remains actively involved in the follow-up to Habitat II, with a special focus on mainstreaming. A paper was prepared for the World Food Summit, focusing on the gender aspects of land ownership.

24. Among activities jointly executed by several entities, cooperation continued among the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

(INSTRAW) in the development of WomenWatch, a United Nations Internet site on the advancement and empowerment of women. The site will facilitate global information exchange for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action through the use of computer networking technology. It is expected to be launched in March 1997, and will be accessible via the World Wide Web, a gopher site and electronic mail. Although partial funding from extrabudgetary resources has been allocated, additional resources will be needed to implement the project. Phase one of the project will ink the Web pages of the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and INSTRAW. It will contain archival information on the Fourth World Conference on Women and other recent global United Nations conferences, providing a single on-line source for key information and data on global women's issues, and will be linked with other relevant sites on the Internet. In a later phase, it is hoped that non-governmental organizations and other United Nations entities will become active partners in the expansion of WomenWatch. A training component is included in the project. In that regard, a seminar on information technology was held in January 1997 in Peru. Training on the use of electronic networking technology, which was provided by the Division at that seminar on a pilot basis, will be developed for use elsewhere.

C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality

25. Following the decision of ACC, at its first regular session of 1996 (Nairobi, 28 and 29 April 1996), to establish the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the first session of the Committee was held on 22 and 23 October 1996 at United Nations Headquarters, New York. It was chaired by the Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues on behalf of the United Nations. The Division for the Advancement of Women serves as the secretariat of the Committee.

26. The Committee's terms of reference, as adopted by ACC, entrust the Committee with cooperation and coordination of United Nations system-wide efforts to implement the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, as well as gender-related recommendations emanating from recent United Nations conferences within the purview of the system. The Committee is also entrusted with supporting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the work of the United Nations system.

27. The Committee is expected to draft an advocacy or mission statement for the United Nations system on the advancement and empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming, for adoption by ACC. The statement will identify performance indicators, mechanisms for accountability and best practices, and will develop practical tools and approaches for mainstreaming and for monitoring and implementing the Platform for Action and the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001.

28. Following its initial discussion, the Committee noted that mainstreaming was a responsibility of the United Nations system as a whole and of all staff in all policy and programme areas and in decision-making, and that responsibility for mainstreaming started at the highest level. The Committee agreed that it would follow carefully and would monitor regularly progress made throughout the

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United Nations system in incorporating a gender perspective in institutional structures, and in policies and programming. It also emphasized the need for the inter-agency task forces set up by ACC for integrated Conference follow-up to fully reflect a gender perspective in their work, including at the country level. It called on ACC to underline the importance of integrating a gender perspective in the work of the task forces and in subsequent activities on integrated follow-up to global conferences. Mainstreaming will be an ongoing concern of the Committee.

29. The Committee put in place a short-term and a long-term programme of work. Among the short-term areas of work are the following: interaction with ACC inter-agency task forces on conference follow-up; indicators, evaluation of best practices, and accountability; and gender balance in the United Nations system. Among the long-term areas of work are: indicators; interaction with ACC machinery; and issue-specific concerns. For example, the Committee decided to review the issues of women in the peace process, women in conflict resolution and violence against women in March 1997. At subsequent sessions, it will discuss gender training and the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 1996-2001, among other issues.

30. The second session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality will take place on 5 and 6 March 1997 in New York. An oral report on the results of that session will be before the Commission.

D. Joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations Secretariat

31. In its resolution 39/5, the Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to prepare annually a joint work plan for the Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women, which would help to facilitate the mainstreaming of women's human rights, and to inform the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights of the plan at their annual sessions.

1. Assessment of the implementation of the current work plan

32. In implementing the joint work plan (see E/CN.6/1996/13), the systematic exchange of information between the Division and the Centre, including in meetings between the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, continued and was expanded in the course of 1996.

33. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Centre for Human Rights cooperated closely during the first session of the open-ended working group on the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, held during the fortieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 1996. The Centre also provided comments and information for the report of the Secretary-General on a comparative summary of existing communications and inquiry

procedures and practices under international human rights instruments and under the Charter of the United Nations (E/CN.6/1997/4). The Division provided written information on the work undertaken at the first session of the open-ended working group of the Commission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its elaboration of a proposal for an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Division was represented at the fifteenth session of the Committee during discussion of the draft protocol to the Covenant.

34. In order to strengthen the cooperation and links between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other human rights treaty bodies, the exchange of information between the Division and the Centre regarding the work of the human rights treaty bodies serviced by them occurred on a regular basis, and included the provision of information to the experts on the work of other treaty bodies. Regular exchange of calendars of events took place to facilitate that coordination. The Division participated in the seventh meeting of persons chairing human rights treaty bodies in September 1996. It also participated in a meeting convened by the American Association for the Advancement of Science in October 1996, which prepared a background paper concerning the revision of reporting guidelines to ensure greater gender sensitivity in reporting under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. That paper was submitted to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its fifteenth session in November. The Division provided support to the Chairperson and members of the Committee in attending the joint meeting with the Committee on the Rights of the Child at Cairo in November 1996, and it joined with UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in sponsoring a dialogue between the chairpersons of the two Committees on 12 December 1996 at United Nations Headquarters.

35. The Centre made significant inputs into the preparation of a report for the Committee on ways and means, which examines the working methods of various treaty bodies with a view to enhancing the work of the Committee (CEDAW/C/1997/5).

36. The Division provided input into the work of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women contributed a paper to an expert group meeting on violence against women migrant workers, which was held at Manila from 27 to 31 May 1996.

37. The Division for the Advancement of Women has endeavoured to support the integration of a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations system with regard to the human rights dimension of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). That work will continue, especially through the Division's participation in the development of human rights guidelines and by encouraging contributions by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS to the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

38. The Division, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNFPA, convened the first meeting ever of



members of all human rights treaty bodies to discuss an issue of common concern. The round table, comprising members of treaty bodies and representatives of United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations and held at Glen Cove, New York, from 9 to 11 December 1996, allowed for an exchange of views on human rights approaches to women's health in the work of all human rights treaty bodies, with a focus on reproductive and sexual rights.

39. The Division and the Centre were both represented at a meeting on women's health and reproductive rights (Toronto, 26-29 September 1996), convened by the Commonwealth Medical Association as follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the International Conference on Population and Development. The meeting provided an opportunity to highlight the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women under article 12 of the Convention.

## 2. Joint work plan for 1997

40. During 1997, the cooperation between the Division and the Centre on the work of and cooperation among the treaty bodies, the elaboration of optional protocols and special rapporteurs will be further consolidated. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women will continue to systematically exchange information about the work of each human rights mechanism for which they provide substantive servicing. Briefing notes will be exchanged, in particular on the outcome of the sessions of treaty bodies. There will also be a number of targeted activities that are expected to support the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all human rights activities implemented by the Centre for Human Rights. Most notably, a joint project on the integration of a gender perspective into technical cooperation practices and procedures will become operational in 1997.

41. The Division will prepare a background paper on the relevance of gender in the enjoyment of rights covered by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as an input to the elaboration of a new general comment on article 3 by the Human Rights Committee for its forthcoming session, in March 1997. It will also provide input to the work on a general comment on the right to health by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and will continue to contribute to the Committee's revision of its reporting guidelines so that they reflect a gender perspective. The Division will provide a selected number of briefs on the status of women in countries whose reports are considered by treaty bodies.

42. The Division will provide information relevant to the elaboration of concluding observations/comments of the other treaty bodies, ensuring that the concluding comments of CEDAW are immediately available to the other treaty bodies, and also that relevant concluding comments are available to thematic and country-specific rapporteurs.

43. The Division will provide the Centre with targeted inputs to the work of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, which will include the establishment of direct contact with the experts entrusted with the preparation of studies on systematic rape and sexual slavery

during periods of armed conflict, and on human rights and income distribution. The Division will also provide information on the status of women to country-specific rapporteurs. In addition, the High Commissioner/Centre for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women will coordinate their activities and exchange information in connection with the following mandates for which they are respectively responsible: (a) the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on armed conflict and children, and (b) reports on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned.

44. Cooperation between the Division and the Centre will be expanded and strengthened as they develop and maintain their respective Internet sites. The Centre's Web site already incorporates a number of the reports of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. A link will be established from the Centre's site to the Division's CEDAW site, and vice versa, to provide for fast electronic cross-referencing.

45. The Division will contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the above-mentioned round table of human rights treaty bodies on human rights approaches to women's health, which was held at Glen Cove in December 1996. One of the priority actions emerging from the round table is the preparation of a resource book on human rights to be used for training staff members of bodies of the United Nations in the field of human rights. It will be prepared jointly by the Division, the Centre for Human Rights and UNFPA.

46. Based on preparatory work that commenced in late 1996, a global project was elaborated and subsequently endorsed by the Board of Trustees of the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights, in November 1996. The project, implementation of which is expected to commence in the first quarter of 1997, aims to facilitate the integration of a gender perspective into all aspects of technical cooperation practices and procedures, from the needs assessment and project formulation phases to monitoring and evaluation. The project will be implemented and funded by the Centre for Human Rights, with the Division contributing gender expertise and advice in the various stages of the project's implementation.

47. In the meantime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights will continue to seek the assistance and expertise of the Division for the Advancement of Women for specific technical cooperation initiatives, including, as appropriate, needs assessment and project formulation missions. The Division will also continue to participate in training courses on reporting under human rights treaties organized by the Centre, as well as other ad hoc activities, such as national workshops on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Centre and the Division will also work together to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to permit the organization of similar initiatives, including training courses that seek to sensitize women and men to the rights to which women are entitled under international law.

E. Follow-up by Governments: national strategies  
or action plans

48. In the Platform for Action, Governments have made a commitment with regard to institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Platform at the national level. The importance of effective national machinery is stressed in paragraph 296. Paragraph 297 calls for the preparation of implementation strategies or plans of action by the end of 1996. Particular emphasis is placed on their comprehensiveness, the provision of time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring, and resource allocation or reallocation for implementation. The role of non-governmental organizations in such processes is noted in paragraph 298. The Platform also suggests improving the role of the United Nations resident coordinator system to take full account of the Platform for Action (para. 341).

49. The General Assembly, in its resolution 51/69 of 12 December 1996, welcomed the progress made by Governments in developing comprehensive implementation strategies or plans of action, including time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring. It also urged all Governments that have not yet done so to undertake efforts in that regard in order to fully implement the Platform.

50. In a note verbale of 13 May 1996, the Secretary-General invited all Member States to provide the Secretariat with copies of their national implementation strategies or plans of action as soon as they are completed. As recommended in Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/6, those national action plans will serve as a basis for the preparation of a synthesized report on implementation plans of Governments and the United Nations system, which will be submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session, in 1998.

51. As of 15 January 1997, 25 member States have complied with this request. Several others have informed the Commission secretariat that such information will be forthcoming. Although a limited number of national plans of action have been made available to the secretariat, the discussion at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly emphasized that a significant number of Member States have undertaken steps in implementing the Platform, and that many Governments are either in the process of preparing their national strategies or action plans or have already done so.

52. Based on a preliminary analysis of the national plans received to date, the following general trends can be identified. In addition to completed plans, a few of the replies received in response to the note verbale either provided a draft of a national plan or preview of a plan under preparation, or indicated that the preparatory process would be concluded within a certain period of time. The status at the national level of a few plans received was unclear (i.e., whether the plan had been adopted or endorsed by the Government, whether it had been brought to the attention of Parliament, whether it had been promulgated by decree, or a similar action). In such instances, it was not fully apparent how the process of implementation of the plan would proceed. In some cases, a plan had been prepared by the national machinery for the advancement of women without any indication of its subsequent adoption by the Government. In some cases, the implementation of the Platform is subsumed under existing action plans for the advancement of women, or will be incorporated into the next medium-term

development plan. Information was also provided on activities already implemented.

53. Many of the plans indicated that the Platform for Action had been given wide publicity in the country, had been translated or summarized into the national language, or had been disseminated by the Government or by non-governmental organizations.

54. In a number of countries, a special body or coordinating committee has been set up to guide follow-up. Several plans indicated that there would be a strengthening of institutional mechanisms, in particular of national machinery. Many of the plans have been prepared in a cooperative effort between the national machinery, Government ministries and other governmental entities at the national/local level, non-governmental organizations and actors of civil society. Many of the plans state that, although the national machinery will assume a coordinating and monitoring role, individual ministries are responsible for incorporating relevant follow-up to the Platform into their sectoral programmes. Some state specifically that mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes is to receive priority attention.

55. Few plans cover all critical areas of concern; instead, most focus on a selected number of areas or issues, sometimes choosing priorities among those. Areas most often covered are poverty, participation in decision-making, education, economy, health, violence and human rights. Few plans provide specific benchmarks or targets, or time-frames for implementation. Most commonly, benchmarks are given in the area of education and health, such as the reduction of female illiteracy by a certain percentage by a certain date. Several plans indicate that resources for follow-up to the Platform will be increased, or that such resources will be sought in future national budgets.

56. Most plans provide for a combination of legislative actions, including the reform of discriminatory legislation, with policy and programme measures, as well as targeted projects in specific sectors for particular groups of women or in particular geographic areas. Plans include the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the withdrawal of reservations to the Convention.

57. The importance of integrated follow-up to all United Nations conferences was mentioned. It was also stated that a particular emphasis would be placed on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. As most of the plans received had been prepared before the Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts held at Bucharest developed a model national action plan, the influence of that meeting remains somewhat limited to date.<sup>2</sup>

58. Accordingly, the Commission secretariat reiterates its invitation to all Governments to provide it with their completed national action plans. Similarly, the secretariat would welcome receiving brief progress reports on the status of plans, their implementation or any other additional information that might be available in conjunction with the national implementation process. Any completed national plans should be made available to the secretariat no later

than 30 May 1997 in order to serve as input for the preparation of the synthesized report for 1998.

59. The Commission secretariat also wishes to recall that the Directory of National Machinery for the Advancement of Women is being updated. To that end, a questionnaire has been sent to all Governments inviting them to return the completed questionnaires by 15 October 1996; the deadline was subsequently extended to 2 December 1996. To date, the secretariat has received more than 70 replies. In order to ensure that comprehensive information will be included in the Directory, all Governments are urged to return the completed questionnaires no later than 21 March 1997.

F. Reported follow-up by non-governmental organizations

60. Since the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/51/322), a number of events under the auspices of non-governmental organizations have occurred. For example, in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, an international conference on violence, abuse and women's citizenship was convened at Brighton by a consortium of non-governmental organizations from 10 to 15 November 1996. A national conference for young girls was organized at UNICEF headquarters, New York, by the United States National Young Girls Coalition on 3 and 4 January 1997. An international conference on eliminating poverty in old age was organized from 12 to 14 December 1996 in Malta by the International Institute on Ageing. An international conference on the Asia Pacific Economic Council was held on 15 and 16 November at Manila as a parallel forum during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit.

61. The Inter-Parliamentary Union will hold an international symposium at New Delhi from 14 to 18 February 1997 on the theme "Towards partnership between men and women in politics". In cooperation with Women's World Banking and the Grameen Bank, the World Bank, Citibank and UNDP will hold a microcredit summit at Washington, D.C., from 2 to 4 February 1997, with a major focus on credit for women. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, will hold an international seminar on promoting the empowerment of women through adult learning at Bangkok from 24 to 28 February 1997.

II. REPORTS PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SPECIFIC MANDATES

A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by the organizations of the United Nations system

62. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/5 on Palestinian women, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission, at its forty-first session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

63. The Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with paragraph 260 of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women,<sup>3</sup> has continued to monitor the situation of Palestinian women and children. The Fourth World Conference on Women added a new dimension to that reporting when it endorsed the importance of integrating a gender perspective in all policies and programmes of the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system. With regard to the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective would ensure that all actors involved in the monitoring of respect for human rights or in providing assistance to the Palestinian people will take a gender dimension into account when fulfilling their mandates or designing and implementing their programmes.

64. Recent social and economic developments that occurred in 1996 and that had a particular gender impact are described below. Emphasis is placed on selected new developments and trends that have not been reported previously (see E/CN.6/1995/8 and E/CN.6/1996/8).

#### 1. Situation of Palestinian women

65. When reviewing the economic and social situation of Palestinian women and respect for human rights throughout 1996, the conditions of Palestinian women living in the Palestinian self-rule areas and in the occupied territories remain of particular concern. Life in the self-rule areas has continued to be affected by measures undertaken by the Israeli authorities, including various military and economic measures, that have had an impact on social and economic development. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were entirely sealed on several occasions in the wake of suicide bomb attacks in Israel, thus preventing workers with valid permits from entering Israel and East Jerusalem. The economy remains dominated by the detrimental impact of the occupation, in particular the labour market imbalance (see UNCTAD/ECDC/SEV/12). As a result of the loss of employment in Israel and a decline in the trade flow caused by frequent and long-term closures, the real gross national product in the West Bank and Gaza Strip declined 22.7 per cent between 1992 and 1996. The unemployment rate increased and income levels dropped. By mid-1996, the average unemployment rate was 29.2 per cent in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, nearly 60 per cent higher than at the end of 1995. The unemployment rate has been magnified by the effect of high population growth rates and the large number of young people entering the labour market every year. Since 1995, real wages have fallen about 20 per cent.<sup>4</sup> The drop in household income was partly compensated by remittances from Palestinians abroad and by drawing on resources, such as savings.

66. The economic situation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has exacerbated the hardship of many families, in particular households with low incomes or those headed by females. It is accepted that economic distortions tend to affect the poorest groups in society most. Owing to their economic and legal status, women are affected more severely than men.<sup>5</sup> It was estimated that 40 to 42 per cent of the Arab residents of Jerusalem, for example, live below the poverty line (see A/51/99/Add.1). Women and children, especially female-headed households, are particularly exposed to poverty.

67. The economic pressure caused by the inability of the male income-earner to provide adequately for the household and the high unemployment rates among men have caused women and children to start looking for work to maintain family living levels. There is a reported increase of 8.5 per cent in the number of women in the paid labour force in 1996, whereas the male labour force grew by only 5.1 per cent over the same period. A survey also found a participation rate as high as 11.5 per cent for children, mainly boys, in the labour force, a rate that is even higher than that of women. The highest concentration of female labour is in the agriculture sector, in which 35 per cent of women work for low wages and with unfavourable working conditions. However, there is also a high concentration of female workers (32.5 per cent of all workers) in relatively well-paid professional, technical and clerical positions. It is possible that women's increased participation in the formal labour market will become a new trend in Palestinian economic and social development that therefore needs to be taken into account.<sup>6</sup>

68. During the period under review, fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of movement, education, religion and expression, have been affected by various measures linked to occupation. Forms of collective punishment, such as the demolition or sealing of houses and rooms, imposition of curfews and the sealing off or closing of areas have been frequently reported, mostly in retaliation for attacks by suicide bombers (see A/51/99 and Add.1, 2 and 3). All population groups are affected by such measures, but some target women in particular. For example, since many Palestinian women work in the agricultural sector they are particularly affected by the land seizure, loss of water utilization and other economic and social repercussions of Israeli settlement (see A/51/135).

69. Another punishment that affects women was the confiscation of the identity cards of wives of Jerusalem residents who live abroad, and who under Israeli law lose their identity card if they leave the city for more than seven years (see A/51/99/Add.1, para. 215). Civilians have been exposed to harassment and physical ill-treatment. Palestinians, including women in labour, have been reported to be denied access to medical treatment in specialized hospitals (see A/51/99/Add.1, para. 167). It has also been noted that Palestinian women have been humiliated and harassed during raids on their homes. There have been continuing problems regarding Palestinian women detainees in Israeli prisons who have not yet been released in accordance with Israeli-Palestinian agreements (see A/51/99/Add.1, paras. 322 and 327).

70. The field of education continues to represent a major challenge to the Palestinian Authority and the donor community. With population growth for 1996 expected to be close to 6 per cent, the continuing provision of quality education for all boys and girls is of concern. It has been projected that 858 elementary schools and the same number of secondary schools would need to be built by the year 2000 to cater for the school-age population (see UNCTAD/ECDC/SEV/12, table IV-4). Frequent closures of the self-rule areas in 1996 have again prevented students and teachers from reaching their schools. As a result of those and similar measures during the Intifadah, which have been aggravated by conditions of overcrowding and lack of teaching materials, the educational achievements of Palestinians are jeopardized. Women and girls are being particularly affected, which has contributed to the fact that the illiteracy rate of Palestinian women remains higher than that of Palestinian

men. In February 1996, the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics published the findings of a demographic survey conducted among 14,854 households in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem). According to the findings, 16 per cent of all residents aged over 15 were illiterate, with female illiteracy standing at 24 per cent (see A/51/99/Add.1, para. 224).

71. According to UNICEF, health conditions and provision of health services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remain poor. The impact on the reproductive health of Palestinian women is of particular concern. Total fertility rates remain very high. For example, the average estimated total fertility rate for the period 1990-1995 in the Gaza Strip was 8.8 children per woman.<sup>7</sup> Low age at marriage, short birth intervals and lack of education are factors responsible for the poor health of many Palestinian women, in particular refugee women, of whom many are anaemic.

72. It should be noted that Palestinian women maintain a high level of participation in non-governmental organizations and women's committees. Progress can be reported on the establishment of national machinery for the advancement of women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority has set up an intergovernmental committee under the Gender Development and Planning Directorate of the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation. A non-governmental organizations committee has been formed under the General Union of Palestinian Women.

## 2. United Nations assistance to Palestinian women

73. In Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/5, the Council urged organizations of the United Nations system, among others, to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women. During 1995-1996, a number of projects for Palestinian women were initiated and carried out by the United Nations system and bilateral donors, in close cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/58 H, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people", a coordinated, integrated and targeted programme was elaborated and is being implemented under the leadership of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (see A/51/171). Activities for women have focused mainly on health and family planning, relief and social services, education and training, collection of statistics disaggregated by sex, and support for the national machinery for the advancement of women, including training on legal literacy and the enhancement of women's role in public life.

74. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continued to emphasize the improvement of socio-economic conditions within the Palestine refugee community in its operations. Some 3.31 million Palestinian refugees were registered with UNRWA in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as of 30 June 1996, of whom women of reproductive age and children below the age of five comprised two thirds. UNRWA placed special emphasis on maternal and child-health care as an integral part of its regular programme. UNRWA increased its family-planning services in the Gaza Strip, offering services in 120 UNRWA health centres in 1996, up from 49 in 1992. A tripartite mission of UNRWA, UNFPA and the



Palestinian Authority developed in October 1995 a strategic plan and operational framework for a women's health programme, covering reproductive health and family planning (see A/51/13).

75. Education and vocational training remain a field of major activities for UNRWA. Some 49.5 per cent of the total school population and half of the 12,000 teaching staff are female, making UNRWA schools one of the first in the Middle East to achieve gender equality. Eight vocational and technical training centres offer a wide range of courses at the post-preparatory and post-secondary level, and have enrolled 1,273 women in the total of 4,624 training places. Vocational training for women has been provided in typical female jobs, such as clothing production, hairdressing and beauty care. UNRWA seeks to raise the proportion of women trainees by expanding courses more likely to attract women, such as nursing, computer science and business and office practice. Out of 943 scholarships granted to refugee pupils, 437 or 46.3 per cent were awarded to women.

76. The UNRWA programme for women in development seeks to involve Palestinian refugee women in remunerative economic activity. Some 11,000 women received training in the production of goods or management of services, together with basic business skills. Some 1,089 women supporting 8,200 dependants participated in a solidarity-group lending programme that provided credit ranging from US\$ 330 to US\$ 8,000 for refugee women in microenterprises or working as street vendors. In UNRWA's small-scale enterprise programme, offering loans for capital investment to new and expanding enterprises and working capital to established enterprises ranging in value from US\$ 1,000 to US\$ 75,000, 10 per cent of the credits were given to women. Through its special hardship programme, UNRWA provided material and financial aid to refugee families who met the UNRWA criteria of being without a male adult medically fit to earn an income and without other financial support sufficient to cover basic needs, which represented 5.4 per cent of the registered refugee population.

77. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) gives assistance to Palestinian women within the framework of a UNDP-assisted project on capacity-building in agricultural policy analysis and planning, which was formulated in 1995. Gender issues are mainstreamed into the major components of the projects: policy advice, including the preparation of a gender-sensitive agricultural development strategy; training in policy analysis and planning; institutional support; and agricultural statistics and establishing a database. Of particular significance is the establishment of the Rural Development/Advancement of Women Unit within the Department of Agricultural Policies and Planning of the Ministry of Agriculture.

78. The programme of technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority provided by the International Labour Organization (ILO) is the third largest in the United Nations system, following UNRWA and UNDP. The ILO activities for women have been carried out mainly as components of major ILO programmes. The Training Centre of the International Labour Organization at Turin has developed a three-year programme for the socio-economic promotion of Palestinian women, focusing on the training of women for entrepreneurship. The ILO also carried out a study on gender and critical analysis of Palestinian law and practice

regarding women workers, and organized a training course on the promotion of women worker's rights and equality in employment.

79. The World Health Organization (WHO) has conducted a situation analysis of women's health and development. It assisted the Ministry of Health and the coordination of various providers of women's health services within and outside the Ministry in preparing a strategic national plan on the role of women in health and development. Further areas of priority are primary health care, leadership training for nurses and nursing management, training on nutrition and provision of immunization.

80. UNICEF supports strategies that promote basic education for all, health promotion and empowerment of women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Priority was given to children in underprivileged communities, especially in the rural poor communities in the West Bank and in refugee camps, while building on the capacity of local institutions to address the needs of those children and focusing on the girl child. Gender issues were integrated into programming and training programmes. The Palestinian Authority received technical assistance in prioritizing issues in women's health. In cooperation with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF finalized a multiple indicator cluster survey to provide reliable data on the situation of Palestinian women and men. UNICEF provided support for capacity-building to institutions of the Palestinian Authority, and considered the formulation of a national programme of action as an immediate goal so as to ensure political and social mobilization as well as long-term planning for children, in particular the girl child.

81. The UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP) has implemented projects to foster and promote the full participation of Palestinian women in public life and in all aspects of Palestinian social and economic development. It has supported Palestinian women's initiatives through an extensive network of institutions, including the work of the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling on gender sensitive amendments to legislation, the Palestinian Center for Democracy and Elections awareness-raising campaign for rural women, and the work of the Palestinian Coalition for Women's Health. It has also encouraged activities that promote a positive representation of women in audio, visual and written media. Technical assistance and staff training was provided to several women's units within the ministries of the Palestinian Authority. In addition, UNDP/PAPP has enabled Palestinian women to participate in the Woman's Observer Mission to the Election in Nicaragua.

82. UNIFEM, through partnership with non-governmental and governmental organizations, works towards strengthening the role of Palestinian women in the economy, governance, conflict resolution and peace-building. In the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, a project entitled "Post-Beijing follow-up operation" has been launched in April 1996, also involving four other countries of the Western Asia region (Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen). UNIFEM's goal is to promote the implementation of the Platform for Action and to assist in defining national strategies for the advancement of women. It also intends to strengthen working relations between non-governmental organizations and Governments, and to consolidate coordination and networking among non-governmental organizations at the national, regional and international levels. UNIFEM also carries out a project for the economic empowerment of women

in Gaza, training women on how to start their own business and providing assistance for access to credit and business counselling services.

83. The World Food Programme (WFP) currently targets 6,600 households in the Gaza Strip registered by the Ministry of Social Affairs as hardship cases. The majority of those households are headed by women with a large number of dependants. WFP provides food assistance, pays special attention to primary health care, and supports two projects for pregnant women, nursing mothers and pre-school children. The programme distributes food aid as take-home family rations to encourage poor women to visit clinics and health centres operated by local non-governmental organizations.

84. UNFPA activities for Palestinian women have increased consistently since 1987, when small-scale maternal and child-health training and research was started. In 1995, UNFPA helped to establish a women's centre for reproductive health services, social assistance, legal counselling and community education in the Gaza Strip. As part of the reproductive health activities of the UNFPA Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (1996-1999) and in collaboration with WHO, support is provided to the establishment of the Women's Health and Development Department of the Ministry of Health. The projects involve, *inter alia*, training of the Department's staff on the management of reproductive health programmes, conducting research on policies, service delivery and socio-cultural aspects of reproductive health.

85. The World Bank, in its initial activities in the occupied territories, focused on emergency reconstruction and rehabilitation, and only incidentally on gender. In response to the deteriorating economic conditions, the World Bank's programme has concentrated primarily on short-term emergency assistance, with an emphasis on the rehabilitation of public works. As the Bank reports, future Bank-supported activities on strengthening civil society, education and health, will address gender issues. The Education and Health Rehabilitation Project (1995-1997) is of particular interest to women since it is rehabilitating and constructing schools for girls in Gaza. Women will also benefit from the rehabilitation of hospitals in Gaza. The Palestinian non-governmental organization project, proposed for early 1997, will seek to mobilize official and private donor funds to support the activities of non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and Gaza. Although many non-governmental organization subprojects will be demand-driven, it is expected that many projects will target women's income-generating projects and mother and child-health services.

86. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in its 1996-1997 work programme, initiated a multidisciplinary activity assessing the role of non-governmental organizations in the occupied territories and the Palestinian self-rule areas. The project focuses on income-generation, agriculture, industry and other areas, and considers prospects for networking among non-governmental organizations. The Division for Palestinian Rights within the Department of Political Affairs and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, in executing their programme of work, make efforts to highlight the situation of Palestinian women and children and to involve women in various aspects of their programmes, such as inviting Palestinian women to participate as panelists in non-governmental

organization symposia and seminars, and in new training activities. In a follow-up activity to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development facilitated the participation of a Palestinian expert to its workshop on global information through computer networking technology, organized in New York in June 1996.

### 3. Conclusions

87. As regards United Nations assistance to Palestinian women, it is recommended that the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system continue to incorporate a gender perspective in their activities. A gender perspective should also be integrated into the monitoring of possible violations of women's human rights, notably the monitoring carried out by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and the Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967. In the case of the Special Committee, for example, it would be desirable to achieve a better perspective on the violations of the human rights of women and their needs and concerns by inviting more women to give oral testimonials before the Committee.

88. Women's status and potential roles in socio-economic development, their needs and interests need to be systematically considered in the preparations of overall economic and social development plans for Palestine and the Occupied Territories. While the international donor community has made a commitment to empower Palestinian women and enhance their role in society, including in public life, in leadership positions and through income-generating projects and vocational training, when it comes to programmes for macroeconomic development and market economy, gender needs are not as fully addressed. Women's increasing role in the labour market must be taken into account on a more consistent basis.

#### B. Release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned

89. A report on the implementation of Commission resolution 40/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned was requested by the Commission for its forty-first session. Consequently, the Commission secretariat requested information from relevant United Nations entities on the implementation of that resolution.

90. From the four responses received by the secretariat, it was clear that there was no systematic collection of data and information on the release of women and children taken hostage in various situations of conflict around the world.

91. UNHCR pointed out that the question fell within the competence of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It also noted the difficulties in obtaining global figures since the circumstances of the detention and release of women and children hostages vary from situation to situation.

92. The Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat focused its response on the situation in Angola, Guatemala, Lebanon and Bosnia and Herzegovina. With regard to the situation in Angola, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission reported that women and children were still being taken hostage and that it was currently examining petitions relating to 11 such cases arising from the first extraordinary session of the Joint Commission devoted to Human Rights, held on 8 May 1996, and from resolution 40/1 of the Commission on the Status of Women. Information on several United Nations peacekeeping missions indicated either that there was no knowledge of such cases (as in the case of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala) or that such cases were not formally registered (as in the case of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina). In cases of kidnapping in Bosnia and Herzegovina, immediate investigations are carried out by the United Nations International Police Task Force. No figures were submitted, however. It was noted that the kidnapping of women and children in Guatemala was related to profit rather than to the political situation.

93. In its response, UNICEF referred to the report prepared by the expert of the Secretary-General, Ms. Graça Michel, on the impact of armed conflict on children, submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 48/157 (see A/51/306 and Add.1). Although the report gives extensive information on violations of the rights of women and children, it does not provide specific information pertinent to the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict and imprisoned.

94. With respect to the release of women and children taken hostage during armed conflicts and imprisoned, an important step for improving the situation would be for the Governments concerned to ratify without delay and to implement all relevant international instruments and Conventions, and for practical and cost-effective measures to be taken to collect information on women and children hostages on a systematic basis. Non-governmental organizations working in the field might also contribute to that effort.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1996, Supplement No. 6 (E/1996/26), chap. IC, resolution 40/10, annex, para. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Subregional Conference of Senior Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Central and Eastern Europe (Bucharest, 12-14 September 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

<sup>4</sup> See "Economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", Quarterly Report (Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories), Autumn 1996.

<sup>5</sup> See World Bank, Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy (Washington, D.C., 1995).

<sup>6</sup> See "Economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> See World Population Prospects, 1996 Revision, forthcoming United Nations publication.

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: review of mainstreaming in the organizations of the United Nations system**

## **Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **Addendum**

### **III. Reports prepared in accordance with specific mandates**

#### **Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system\*\***

1. The present report on the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1997/16, is based on information and data collected by United Nations bodies monitoring the situation in the occupied territories, such as the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Palestinian territories occupied since 1967. Information on assistance to Palestinian women was requested from the United Nations system and

\* E/CN.6/1998/1.

\*\* See also E/CN.6/1998/2, chap. III, sect. A.

replies from 12 entities have been included in this report.

#### **1. Situation of Palestinian women**

2. The situation of Palestinian women living in the Palestinian self-rule areas and in the occupied territories has not improved, according to the information provided. Daily life in the self-rule areas continued to be affected by the imposition of security-related measures by the Israeli authorities, which had a detrimental impact on the economic and social situation. As in the past, Palestinian women are experiencing the gender-specific impact of these measures, which is reinforced by existing inequalities in society between women and men.

3. In his report to the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Hannu Halinen (Finland), the Special Rapporteur on Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, noted that the issue of settlements, including the confiscation of Palestinian land, was emerging as the greatest preoccupation of the inhabitants of the occupied territories, especially in the West Bank. Settler violence and closures imposed by the Israeli authorities on the occupied territories in the wake of security

incidents were further issues of concern. The closures had a devastating impact on the fragile Palestinian economy and contributed to maintaining unemployment at an estimated 40 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 30 per cent in the West Bank (E/CN.4/1997/16). Palestinian incomes have dropped sharply since the Oslo Agreement in 1993, from \$1,800 to \$950 a year in the West Bank, and from \$1,200 to \$600 a year in the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup> With the established threshold for poverty at \$998.50 a year, the poverty rate is estimated to be 20 per cent in the West Bank and 40 per cent in the Gaza Strip. As a result of the closure of the occupied Palestinian territories, much of the \$1 billion assistance received since 1993 had to be spent on short-term job creation programmes and income support rather than the envisaged longer term investment in infrastructure and institution-building (see A/52/179-E/1997/76, annex).

4. The Special Committee reported that the deterioration of the economic situation has a negative impact on women, especially those who head households. Economic pressure is also contributing to the erosion of the social fabric, resulting in delayed marriage and the increase in the rate of divorce (see A/52/131/Add.2). The Special Rapporteur noted the deterioration of the situation of women in the occupied territories, which had been reported as one of the hidden effects of the closure (see E/CN.4/1997/16).

5. The closure affected the health conditions of the population in the occupied territories, especially in Gaza. Patients needing specialized treatment available only in Israeli hospitals frequently did not receive entry permits. According to figures collected, one third of the Palestinians referred by Palestinian health committees could not obtain permits to enter Israel (see A/52/131/Add.2). Women's reproductive health is of particular concern. The Special Rapporteur noted that at least 10 persons, including at least seven pregnant women, are believed to have died for want of ready access to better equipped medical facilities. The Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health issued a statement in Gaza claiming that 26 babies had been stillborn because of delays at security checkpoints during the lengthy closure imposed after the suicide bombings in 1996 (see A/51/131/Add.2). One woman had to give birth at a road block, having been prevented from travelling to a hospital (see A/52/131).

6. The closures had a negative impact on education, in particular for students from Gaza who could not attend their educational institutions in the West Bank. As the educational sector is already affected by overcrowding due to the population increase and deteriorating premises, any additional obstacle further jeopardizes the scholastic achievements of students and has a specific gender impact. Limited resources

to fund the employment of teachers and the construction of new schools and classrooms have curtailed the educational activities carried out by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for the refugee population. In the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people, (A/52/159-E/1997/69), it was noted that improvements in the educational sector and capacity development in the classroom were a high priority for the Palestinian Authority.

7. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported several incidents of harassment and physical ill-treatment of civilians. The information provided indicates that women and girls were victims of violence and sexual harassment when their family homes were searched for weapons by the Israeli police force. They were subject to full strip searches, sometimes in front of their children and male policemen (see A/52/131).

8. The Special Committee also reported that family reunion was hampered. Palestinian women married to Jordanian citizens were refused renewal of their residence permits and the visas of their husbands were invalidated.

9. Progress has been achieved regarding Palestinian women prisoners in Israeli prisons who had not been released as previously agreed. The remaining women prisoners were released by the Israeli authorities on 11 February 1997 in accordance with the 1995 Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (see A/52/131/Add.1).

10. The quality of services of UNRWA, the main provider of support for Palestinian refugees, has been eroding due to the steady increase in the refugee population and inflation on one side, and austerity measures and budgetary reduction that led to the reduction of a number of its programmes on the other side. The average expenditure per refugee has dropped by 29 per cent since 1992. Since Palestinian refugee women are direct beneficiaries of UNRWA programmes, they have been hit by the cut in services.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Follow-up activities to the Fourth World Conference on Women**

11. In the Palestinian self-rule areas and occupied territories, progress has been reported with regard to the elimination of some discriminatory laws and practices. The draft Palestinian constitution emphasizes the principle of equality between men and women. Palestinian women can now obtain a passport without written consent of so-called guardians, widows can obtain passports for their children without the permission of a brother or father. Women can take



driving lessons without a male chaperone and married students are no longer dismissed from school (see A/52/179).

12. The action plan to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, entitled "Strategies for a Post Beijing Palestinian Governmental Plan of Action Through the Year 2000", was prepared under the leadership of an Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee, which included representatives of the various ministries, the Directorate for Women's Development and a committee of non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), jointly with the European Union, launched a "Post-Beijing Follow-up Operation" in the occupied territories and Palestinian self-rule areas and four countries of the Western Asia region (Jordan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon and Yemen). The International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ILO) at Turin organized a seminar on the strengthening of the national machinery for members of the Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women in June 1997.

13. The "Strategies for a Post Beijing Palestinian Governmental Plan of Action Through the Year 2000" refer to the 12 critical areas of concern established in the Platform for Action. Measures to achieve the goals under the critical area of concern "women and armed conflict", include mobilization of Arab and international women's organizations in order to release all detainees, especially women; and to further cooperate with Israeli women to establish a peace culture.

### **3. United Nations assistance to Palestinian women**

14. Information provided by the United Nations system shows that an increasing number of programmes and agencies of the United Nations system paid attention to gender aspects in development and continue to provide support to Palestinian women, in particular in the field of conference follow-up, income generation, health, education and training.

15. UNIFEM is supporting the effective implementation of the Palestinian action plan, its translation into national projects, and the establishment of institutional and human capacities within women's committees and non-governmental organizations at the national and regional levels, including the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into national development processes. Furthermore, UNIFEM launched a women in development facilitation initiative to better coordinate and exchange information on initiatives for women in development as carried out by donors, the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations. It includes

the establishment of a database of institutions and workshops on the use of the Internet. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is providing support to established women's departments in the Ministries of Planning and International Cooperation, Youth and Sports, Social Affairs and Health, in order to enhance the capacity of the Palestinian Authority ministries to mainstream gender in development.

16. Many activities focus on women and the economy. ILO and its International Training Centre at Turin have implemented subprogrammes on the development of Palestinian women entrepreneurship and of Palestinian women's status. Four technical workshops have been organized in the Palestinian territories. The ILO programme of assistance places emphasis on income-generating opportunities for women. UNIFEM's Women's Economic Empowerment Programme in the Gaza Strip, undertaken jointly with the Ministry of Social Affairs, encourages enterprise development through the creation of entrepreneurial awareness, skills training and institutional capacity-building. Its goal is to decrease the burden of poverty and unemployment through a leadership and empowerment approach. The programme is carried out in close cooperation with the training department of UNRWA and the industrial development department of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

17. The International Trade Centre (ITC) reported that it was implementing a mainstream project for the development and promotion of high-value floricultural products from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in collaboration with the Palestinian Welfare Association. The project would create additional employment opportunities for Palestinian women in the export-oriented floricultural industry. ITC also prepared a project to provide trade development support to Palestinian women entrepreneurs, for which funding has not yet been secured.

18. The World Bank's activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip evolved from a programme designed to respond to emergency reconstruction needs to one focusing on longer-term development initiatives, which consequently pays greater attention to gender issues. No specific programmes directed towards women have been designed, but gender issues are addressed in projects of a social development nature. A Palestinian NGO Project was launched, which grants US\$ 14.5 million for finance service delivery and capacity-building activities to Palestinian non-governmental organizations. The project is aimed at assisting poor and disadvantaged Palestinians and grants would be provided for projects focused on women in the field of health, income generation and agricultural extension.

19. UNRWA continued to assist disadvantaged refugees, particularly women, to raise their economic status through skills training, production units, group savings and credit provision. Women were particularly interested in utilizing group savings and loan schemes for home improvement and income generation. In the Gaza Strip, 66 per cent of 4,452 loans valued at US\$ 5.4 million were awarded to women. A local investment journal noted that the Agency's credit activity had macroeconomic consequences and was beginning to influence Palestinian financial markets. UNRWA's plan to achieve managerial and financial sustainability for community centres progressed. As of June 1997, 52 of the 71 women's centres were managed by local committees.

20. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations carried out a consultancy mission on gender policies/institutions to the Palestinian territories. It identified four strategies to narrow down the gender gap in agriculture. Programmes of the International Fund for Agricultural Development addressed the needs of small farmers and fishermen, women and landless people in the rural areas of Jericho and the Gaza Strip.

21. The World Food Programme is providing assistance to the Palestinian non-refugee population, in particular in the Gaza Strip. Its poverty-alleviation scheme has targeted approximately 50,000 needy persons registered as special hardship cases, of which over 65 per cent are female heads of household.

22. In the field of education and training, UNDP has been carrying out a project on gender-sensitive education, implemented by four non-governmental organizations, which includes workshops for teachers on gender issues in teaching, subject curricula, counselling and discipline issues, the development of a gender-sensitive resource manual and community awareness campaigns. A rural girls development centre will train young rural women in various skills, including women's health and rights, agriculture and the arts. The Education and Health Project of the World Bank impacts positively on girls and women and will rehabilitate existing and construct new girls schools in Gaza. UNRWA is offering vocational and technical training for both women and men and, in addition, special courses for women. Sixty-nine per cent of the participants in a training course for teachers were women.

23. The programmes supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) promoted basic education and health, with a cross-sectoral strategy for the promotion of children's rights and the empowerment of women. The strategy focused on advocacy, capacity-building and community mobilization. Technical assistance was provided

to support projects related to gender equality in education and women's health.

24. UNFPA reported the establishment of a women's centre for health care, social assistance, legal counselling and community education in the Gaza Strip. In cooperation with the World Health Organization, UNFPA is providing assistance to the Women's Health and Development Department of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health.

25. With regard to women's and children's human rights, UNICEF has promoted the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women within the national programme of action, in cooperation with the newly established Gender Planning and Development General Directorate and the Secretariat for Children at the Palestinian Ministry of Planning. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is providing assistance to non-governmental organizations in the area of law reform and women's rights.

26. Within the United Nations Secretariat, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs organized a round table on promoting equality and the full participation of women in society as part of the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People (Amman, 20-22 May 1997). ESCWA conducted a field survey on the role of women's non-governmental organizations in the economy, education and health and on prospects for networking.

27. The United Nations Statistics Division gave technical assistance to the population and housing census conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in the Palestinian self-rule areas (December 1997). To improve the collection of timely and reliable statistics on gender issues, UNDP provided assistance to the Gender Statistics Unit in the Central Bureau of Statistics. UNFPA and the World Bank supported the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in carrying out the census, which will provide reliable and up-to-date population and housing data necessary for development planning, including data disaggregated by sex.

#### 4. Conclusions

28. Considerable efforts are being made by the Palestinian authorities and civil society to improve the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women, including legislative revisions. The 1997 population and housing census mentioned in paragraph 27 above will provide detailed information and data on the status of Palestinian women and become an important tool for policy planning and development aid. There is, however, little gender-specific

information and analysis on the situation of Palestinian women with regard to, for example, the economy, social and political life, human rights or violence.

29. In the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the international community, including the United Nations system, has provided assistance at various levels to implement the recommendations contained in the Platform for Action, to prepare a Palestinian strategy of action, to collect data disaggregated by sex, and to establish women-specific projects, particularly in the field of income generation. Further efforts and assistance are needed to implement the policies, in line with Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (see A/52/3, chap. IV, sect. A).

30. As reflected in previous reports, the status and living conditions of Palestinian women are closely linked with the progress of the peace process. The present report indicates that women in the occupied territories continue to be directly affected in injurious ways by security measures and the overall effects of occupation.

#### *Notes*

1 See "Promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development", paper presented at the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, Amman, 20-22 May 1997 (SAPP(97)/6).

2 See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/52/13)*.

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women****Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/120 of 9 December 1998, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similar mandates were also contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69 and 52/100. The present report emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and follow-up activities, including activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/CN.6/1998/2 and Add.1 and 2). It contains a joint work plan for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The present report has one addendum, which contains an analysis of additional national action plans and strategies submitted to the Secretariat during the reporting period.

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\* E/CN.6/1999/1.

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## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 1996/6 on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Economic and Social Council established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women and decided, *inter alia*, that under item 3 (a) of the Commission's agenda, a report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken and progress achieved in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. In its resolution 53/120, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69 and 52/100.

3. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, the information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body is provided. The report to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of gender mainstreaming, and follow-up activities by non-governmental organizations and others. The report to the Economic and Social Council focuses on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The report to the General Assembly contains information from all entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, and an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

4. The present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 53/120. Section III contains a joint work plan for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, as called for in Commission on the Status of Women resolution 39/5. Section IV has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/10 on Palestinian women and Commission on the Status of Women resolution 42/2 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned.

5. The addendum (E/CN.6/1999/2/Add.1) to the present report contains an analysis of an additional 20 national action plans and strategies submitted to the Secretariat in response to a note verbale dated 2 July 1998, which was sent to Member States. This updates the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women

at its forty-second session, in March 1998, entitled "Synthesized report on national action plans and strategies for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action" (E/CN.6/1998/6).

## II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

6. At its forty-third session, the Commission on the Status of Women will continue to conduct its assessment of progress achieved at different levels in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and in gender mainstreaming. In particular, it will conclude its review of the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action with an assessment of women and health, and institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women. It will also initiate the comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action and preparations for the special session of the General Assembly, to take place from 5 to 9 June 2000. The present report complements the reports submitted on those topics.

### A. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

#### 1. Fifty-third session of the General Assembly

7. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/53/308) focused on follow-up activities undertaken by entities of the United Nations system, including human and financial requirements for implementation. In its conclusions, the report drew attention to Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 and the follow-up resolution adopted by the Council (resolution 1998/43) on gender mainstreaming as a firm basis for concrete steps to achieve measurable progress in gender mainstreaming at all levels and in all areas. It further concluded that a broader assessment including indicators of and recommendations for further action with regard to capacity-building for gender mainstreaming at the national level remained to be made. The Commission's consideration of the critical area of concern IV.H (Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women) at its present session provides an opportunity to address this issue on a priority basis.

8. The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/120, emphasized the need for further steps by the Secretary-General and by intergovernmental bodies to implement Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 and resolutions 1998/43 and 1998/26 (concerning operational activities and the advancement of women). In this regard, the Secretariat was once again requested to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports so as to provide the intergovernmental machinery with an analytical basis for gender-responsive policy formulation. The Assembly requested that a gender perspective be integrated into all operational activities and stressed the role of resident coordinators in this regard. The Council was requested to ensure that gender mainstreaming was an integral part of all its activities concerning integrated follow-up to recent United Nations conferences. In its resolution 53/192 on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the Assembly identified gender as a cross-cutting theme and requested the Secretary-General and the United Nations development system to take all measures to ensure gender balance when making appointments. It also stressed the need for gender mainstreaming in operational activities of the United Nations system in all fields, in particular in support of poverty eradication.

9. The Assembly continued to provide guidance for the preparations of the special session in the year 2000 (resolution 53/120). It decided that the title of the special session would be "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". It invited the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session to propose the agenda (structure and themes) and documentation for the special session, taking into account Assembly resolution 52/231. It also invited the Commission to focus in particular on the report requested from the Secretary-General containing suggestions on further actions and initiatives that might be considered during the review in order to achieve gender equality, with attention to mainstreaming a gender perspective and to common trends and themes across the 12 critical areas of concern. This report is before the Commission in document E/CN.6/1999/PC/2.

10. The Assembly emphasized the role of non-governmental organizations in the implementation of the Platform for Action and the need for their active involvement in preparations for the special session, as well as the need to ensure appropriate arrangements for their contributions to the special session. Specifically, it recommended to the Council the extension of the application to the forty-third session of the Commission of the interim measures for the participation of non-

governmental organizations, contained in Council decision 1997/298. Furthermore, the Assembly invited the Commission on the Status of Women, meeting as the preparatory committee in March 1999, to recommend to the General Assembly appropriate arrangements for the involvement and participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session. Accordingly, the Commission meeting as the preparatory committee may wish to consider at its present session the question of NGO participation in the special session so that a decision may be taken by the Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

11. The Assembly also recommended to the Economic and Social Council to decide that non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council, as well as non-governmental organizations that participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women whose applications for consultative status with the Council were still under consideration, might participate in the sessions of the Commission meeting as the preparatory committee, in 1999 and 2000. The Secretariat will communicate to the NGO community Council decision 1998/301 concerning the participation of non-governmental organizations in the sessions of the Commission acting as the preparatory committee.

12. The Secretary-General was requested by the Assembly to provide by the end of 1999 a compilation of updated statistics and indicators, including by issuing a volume of *The World's Women*. As no provision for preparing this report had been made in the regular budget, extrabudgetary resources had to be sought. As of 18 December 1998, pledges had been received from the following Governments and United Nations entities: Denmark, Germany, Finland, Iceland, Malta, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the World Food Programme (WFP). The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has initiated work on this publication. It is expected to be launched in early 2000.

13. Also in resolution 53/120, the Assembly encouraged Governments to submit responses to the questionnaire prepared by the Secretariat on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The questionnaire was sent to all Governments in a communication of 28 October 1998 inviting replies no later than 30 April 1999 in order to enable the Secretariat to draw from the responses in preparing for the special session. The questionnaire is also available from the Web site

of the Division for the Advancement of Women ([www.un.org/womenwatch/daw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)). Further details on the questionnaire are contained in document E/CN.6/1999/PC/3.

14. Appropriate regional preparatory activities were encouraged, and results are expected to be provided as an input to the Commission at its forty-fourth session, in 2000. In addition to information provided in previous reports (A/52/789 and A/53/308), the following regional preparatory activities have recently taken place or are being planned.

15. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened the second follow-up conference to Beijing in collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNIFEM at Beirut from 12 to 15 December 1998. This conference served as the regional preparatory meeting for the special session of the General Assembly in 2000. ESCWA is also convening an Arab conference for the integrated follow-up to United Nations global conferences at Beirut, in December 1999. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) will hold a high-level intergovernmental meeting at Bangkok from 26 to 29 October 1999. The seventh session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean was held at Santiago from 19 to 21 November 1997 and adopted the "Santiago Consensus" (see A/53/87). The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean will convene the eighth session of the Regional Conference in 2000. On the occasion of its fortieth anniversary, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) held an international conference on the theme "African women and economic development: investing in our future" (April 1998). The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) is holding consultations at the intergovernmental level with a view to convening a meeting of experts which would review issues and policies in the ECE countries as they relate to gender equality and the situation of women in the field of economics. Furthermore, regional preparations for the review of the Beijing Platform for Action will be discussed at the annual regional coordinating meeting established in follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/3 on the review of the regional commissions. The meeting is chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General.

16. In its resolution 52/231, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to invite all entities of the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, to be involved actively in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session, including through presentations on best practices, obstacles encountered and a vision for the future to accelerate implementation of the Platform for Action and address new

and emerging trends. Accordingly, the Secretary-General, in a communication of 20 August 1998, invited heads of specialized agencies, funds and programmes and of regional commissions to participate in the preparations for the special session, and to cooperate with his Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, including in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, in this endeavour. As of December 1998, 10 heads of agencies have communicated their commitment to the implementation of the Platform for Action and to involvement in the preparations for the special session and in the session itself.

## **2. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 1999: high-level segment**

17. Action taken by intergovernmental bodies in 1998, in particular the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, has been reported to the Council (E/1998/53). In particular, the Commission's attention is drawn to the decision taken by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1998/33 with regard to economic, social and cultural rights. In that resolution, the Commission appointed a Special Rapporteur to focus on the right to education, taking into account gender considerations, in particular the situation and needs of the girl child, and promoting the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education. The Special Rapporteur is expected to report for the first time to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session (22 March–30 April 1999). Any reports that pertain to the situation of women in the field of the right to education will be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women. The report of the Special Rapporteur will also be made available to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its twenty-first session, in 1999.

18. Building upon the Platform for Action and General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69 and 52/100, the Council, in its decision 1998/298, decided that the theme for the high-level segment of its 1999 substantive session would be "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women".

19. The Council's consideration of the topic is expected to benefit from, and to have a substantial impact on, a number of ongoing activities. Most important, the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* will be available to support intergovernmental deliberations. The *Survey* will contain a gender analysis of the major global trends. It will also assess the situation of women in the world of work in the context of globalization. The *Survey* is being prepared in a collaborative effort involving many parts of the United Nations system, under the leadership of the Division for the



Advancement of Women. A preliminary executive summary highlighting the major trends and findings is before the Commission in a conference room paper (E/CN.6/1999/CRP.3).

20. Consideration of this topic provides an opportunity for the Council to underline the relevance and impact of gender considerations with regard to employment and poverty eradication, and thus to provide policy guidance, from a gender perspective, for ongoing processes such as the review of the World Summit for Social Development and the system-wide poverty eradication efforts. Building on its recent actions, including its agreed conclusions on poverty eradication of 1996, and on gender mainstreaming of 1997, the Council could further clarify how gender dimensions need to be taken into account in order to make poverty eradication efforts and employment creation policies sustainable and successful, particularly in the context of globalization and economic restructuring.

21. Attention is also drawn to Council decision 1998/290, in which the Council decided, *inter alia*, to hold an informal meeting with panels of experts immediately after its resumed organizational session for 1999. At that meeting, the Council will consider in a comprehensive manner the work being carried out by the United Nations system and other relevant international and national institutions on basic indicators to measure progress towards the implementation of the integrated and coordinated follow-up of all aspects of major United Nations conferences and summits. As the Council will focus, as a first step, on taking stock and identifying overlapping, duplication and gaps in the economic, social and related fields at all levels, the informal meeting provides an opportunity for a critical assessment of the gender responsiveness of such basic indicators. In this regard, the work of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), in particular efforts to mainstream gender considerations into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, could inform the discussions in the Council. The UNDG Sub-Group on Gender has provided extensive comments and input to the UNDG Working Group on Common Indicators.

## **B. Activities in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations system**

22. Since the adoption of the Council's agreed conclusions on gender mainstreaming (1997/2) and their subsequent communication by the Secretary-General to all heads of departments, funds, programmes and regional commissions,

and to the heads of specialized agencies and international trade and financial institutions (see E/1998/64 for a detailed account of the activities undertaken), the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued to follow up with senior officials throughout the system concerning their implementation. A summary of such activities is provided below.

23. The Special Adviser has continued to work with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the development of a project on mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peacekeeping operations. A draft project proposal was made available to interested delegations in mid-1998, and pledges of support were subsequently received from a number of Governments. The project has four major objectives: to analyse the extent to which a gender perspective is reflected in all stages of peacekeeping operations, with a view to strengthening this perspective; to increase the number of women in multidimensional operations at all levels; to assess the impact of peacekeepers on the local population, in particular women; and to review the contribution of local women to peacekeeping and peace support activities. It is anticipated that implementation of the project will commence in early 1999. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has also stepped up its efforts to improve gender balance at Headquarters and in the field.

24. Further follow-up took place with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The Special Adviser discussed with the Office opportunities for including gender considerations in two ongoing in-depth evaluations (i.e., of disarmament and of electoral assistance). The issuance of the two in-depth evaluations in 1999 for the Committee for Programme and Coordination might provide a good basis for assessing how gender considerations can further inform the work of the Office.

25. A gender advisory group consisting of representatives of all divisions and offices of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and chaired by the Special Adviser was established to support gender mainstreaming in all activities of the Department. Various conference review processes in which the Department has the lead or is a major participant (the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development) and the coordinated and integrated follow-up to United Nations conferences are receiving priority attention. Likewise, the gender advisory group is assessing how the Council's and the Assembly's request to present issues and approaches in a gender-sensitive manner when preparing reports can best be implemented in the preparation of the Department's flagship publications, including the *World Economic and Social Survey* and the *Report on the World Social Situation*.

26. In conjunction with her participation in the expert group meeting on national machineries organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women in cooperation with ECLAC (Santiago, 31 August–4 September), the Special Adviser met with the Executive Secretary and with senior staff to review the ongoing efforts of ECLAC to ensure the integration of a gender perspective into its programmes and policies. In particular, ECLAC's ongoing project in this field with the German Development Cooperation Agency (GTZ) and the possibility of replicating it in other regional commissions was discussed, and comparable experiences at United Nations Headquarters, such as the Department of Political Affairs's team building-cum-workshop on gender mainstreaming, were reviewed. The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss questions of gender balance and of the creation of a gender-sensitive working environment.

27. The Special Adviser's mission to Rome, in conjunction with the workshop on a rights-based approach to women's advancement and empowerment and gender equality (see paras. 39–41 below) allowed her to meet with the Executive Director of WFP, and with senior staff of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). In each case, participation in the preparations for the special session, strengthening of gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, and questions of gender balance and of a gender-sensitive working environment were discussed. The insights gained from the FAO evaluation of the impact and long-term effect of compulsory gender training conducted agency-wide in 1993 for some 700 technical staff were reviewed and their relevance for the system as a whole discussed.

28. The Special Adviser also seeks to meet with senior United Nations officials who are stationed away from New York whenever they are on mission at Headquarters to discuss follow-up to the Platform for Action, gender mainstreaming and questions of gender balance.

29. Since leading an inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan in November 1997, the Special Adviser has remained actively involved in the work of the Afghanistan Support Group. The report of the inter-agency mission was approved by the Support Group in December 1997. Some of its recommendations were reviewed by the third meeting of the Support Group, in London, in May 1998. The report was widely distributed and played a catalytic role in raising the awareness of the international community about the situation of women in Afghanistan. It has been taken into account in subsequent inter-agency planning documents concerning humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan and has also been considered by intergovernmental bodies. The Strategic

Framework for Afghanistan, defining the principles, goals and institutional arrangements for a more coherent, effective and integrated political strategy and assistance, pointed out that nowhere was the need for an approach based on principles more evident than in the context of gender discrimination in Afghanistan. Two out of five key objectives of the assistance strategy in the Strategic Framework deal with the protection and advancement of human rights, with particular emphasis on gender.

30. A further update of the Special Adviser was reviewed by the Afghanistan Support Group in December 1998. This report, and other recent United Nations reports,<sup>1</sup> insofar as they concern the condition of women, showed that in spite of efforts of United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, supported by the donor community, there is a further deterioration of economic conditions for women; widespread abuses and violations of women's human rights; continued enforcement of discriminatory measures against women; continued violence, including the rape and killing of women; and erosion of respect for women. The political situation on the ground, as well as the consequences of the earthquakes of February and May 1998 and the withdrawal of United Nations international staff from the country for security reasons, affected the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-agency gender mission. At the same time, positive developments include ongoing intergovernmental attention to the situation of women in Afghanistan; visits of high-level persons to Afghanistan, stressing the concern of the international community with regard to the situation of women (e.g. the Executive Director of UNICEF on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC)); the imminent appointment of a gender adviser and a human rights adviser within the Resident Coordinator's Office; the creation of a gender coordinating unit on the ground involving representatives from United Nations agencies working in Afghanistan. Furthermore, gender training for staff is being planned, and the gender coordinating unit is in the process of establishing minimum standards of best practices for gender programming.

31. Building on the experience of ACC in developing a strategic framework for Afghanistan with a strong gender component, the Special Adviser participates in the ongoing efforts of the United Nations system, under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General, to develop generic guidelines for a strategic framework approach for response to and recovery from crisis situations, with a view to ensuring that any such framework adequately accommodates gender considerations.

32. Another example of increased attention to gender issues is the appointment, by the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) of a focal point on gender issues in ITU. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (12 October–6 November 1998), unanimously adopted resolution PLEN/1 on the inclusion of a gender perspective in the work of ITU. In that resolution, the Plenipotentiary Conference recognized specifically that ITU action was required in the light of the decision taken by the General Assembly to convene a special session in 2000. The conference also noted the need for ITU to investigate, analyse and further understand the impact of telecommunication technologies on women and men, and for a gender perspective to be included in all ITU policies, work programmes, information dissemination activities, publications, study groups, seminars and conferences. The Secretary-General of ITU was instructed to facilitate the work of the ITU Focal Point on Gender Issues and to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated in the work programmes and leadership and human resources development activities of all sectors; and to report to the next Plenipotentiary Conference on the results and progress made. The ITU secretariat is developing a work plan to implement the resolution and the decision on the appointment of the focal point. This is expected to include a seminar or panel discussion in conjunction with the ITU Council meeting at Geneva in June 1999.

33. Ongoing attention is being paid to ensure that a gender perspective is adequately reflected in the work of UNDG, in particular in areas such as the UNDAF process, common country assessments, and the development of an indicator framework. The establishment by UNDG of a Gender Sub-Group, chaired by UNIFEM, provides a mechanism to monitor, and to provide input and guidance to UNDG. The Division for the Advancement of Women is a member of the Gender Sub-Group.

34. Cooperation continued between the Division for the Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) on the joint project WomenWatch, a United Nations Internet site on the advancement and empowerment of women. Following the endorsement of WomenWatch as an inter-agency project by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality at its third session, the World Bank, UNDP (Sustainable Development Networking Programme and Gender in Development Programme) and the Spanish National Machinery have joined the site as contributing partners and are thus members of the WomenWatch Web Committee, which sets policy for the site. Other United Nations entities, including the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have expressed interest in becoming contributing partners.

35. In September 1998, the Division for the Advancement of Women conducted the Women and Health On-line Dialogue. The purpose of the dialogue was to promote wider participation of women from different parts of the world in discussions about national health policies with a gender perspective. Conducted through e-mail and the Web, the dialogue included 217 participants from more than 20 countries, one third of whom were from developing countries. The discussion was summarized and presented to the Expert Group Meeting on Women and Health: Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into the Health Sector, held at Tunis from 28 September to 2 October 1998.

36. The dialogue focused on the following topics: (a) access to and quality of health services, (b) health education and promotion, (c) medical education and research, (d) nursing, and (e) reform of the health sector. Participants identified gender bias as a persistent factor that affects women as health care providers as well as their access to health services and information. They called for a new health paradigm that adopts a life-cycle approach and also urged better collaboration among health professionals, women's NGOs and Governments. Participants also made specific recommendations to the United Nations in the area of access, nursing, medical education and health reform.

37. In the course of 1998, the WomenWatch project has received financial contributions for outreach and for a series of on-line conferences on the critical areas of concern to be conducted during 1999 and 2000, in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly.

### **C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality**

38. Following the third session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) (25–27 February 1998), inter-sessional work on a number of topics has been conducted by task managers, for presentation to and action by the Committee at its fourth session (23–26 February 1999). A series of informal meetings were held in New York during the year. An oral report on the fourth session will be presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, who also chairs the Committee. The Committee is expected to focus on the following items: preparations for the special session of the

General Assembly in the year 2000, including issuance of an ACC statement as an input into that process; ongoing work on the compilation of good practices in the implementation of the Platform for Action and in gender mainstreaming; preparation of a review of the women-in-development/ gender focal point function; compilation of a database on gender training materials; methodologies for gender impact analysis; and gender sensitivity of budget codes and programme classifications. As part of its fourth session, the Committee is also convening a workshop with a number of resident coordinators and agency field staff to engage in a dialogue at the implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming.

39. Based on a decision of the Committee, which was endorsed by the Commission in its agreed conclusions on the human rights of women, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized a workshop on a rights-based approach to women's advancement and empowerment and gender equality. The workshop, which took place in Rome from 5 to 7 October 1998, was hosted by FAO. It brought together 74 participants from the United Nations system and from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Working Party on Gender Equality. The workshop sought to review and clarify the rights-based approach to gender equality and its implications for policy and operations by bilateral and multilateral entities. The workshop contributed to the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

40. The workshop adopted a final communiqué summarizing the major conclusions and findings that emerged from the discussions and putting forward a number of specific recommendations. While agreeing that further efforts were required to specify the full implications of the rights-based approach to gender equality for policy-making and programming, the workshop made the following recommendations:

- Promote knowledge of human rights and concomitant obligations, and the indivisibility of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights;
- Promote the principle of gender equality as central to the realization of human rights;
- Promote an enabling environment in which women and girls can exercise choice;
- Promote the availability of and access to gender-specific information and statistics;

- Provide support for participation and local activism through capacity-building and institutional development;
- Strengthen the rights-based approach by increasing contacts between development specialists and human rights specialists, including those of the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and of the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality;
- Increase the use of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other human rights instruments, the work of the human rights treaty bodies and of special procedures as guidance for operational activities;
- Strengthen national and international mechanisms for monitoring and accountability;
- Support the incorporation of international human rights standards into national legal systems;
- Share best practices and lessons learned in regard to tools, methodologies and monitoring mechanisms;
- Strengthen coordination among the United Nations system, bilateral entities and other partners, including at the national level.

41. The meeting was structured into two parts. Part I reviewed the conceptual and legal dimensions of a rights-based approach and its gender dimensions, and discussed the rights-based approach as understood in bilateral and multilateral policies. Part II assessed the practical implications of a rights-based approach to gender equality based on examples and case studies from bilateral and multilateral agencies. The workshop benefited from a background paper prepared by Professor Savitri Goonesekere (University of Colombo, Sri Lanka), in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, and from the guidance of Professor Cees Flinterman (University of Utrecht, Netherlands). In part II of the workshop, nine working groups dealt with the implications for programming of the rights-based approach for areas such as humanitarian assistance; women's right to food; and women's right to health. The impact of cultural particularities on rights-based programming for women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a tool for rights-based programming were also discussed. A report on the proceedings of the meeting was compiled and made available by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

42. Following up on guidance provided by ACC concerning increased coordination of its standing subsidiary bodies, and

on the discussions of the chairpersons of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), IACWGE and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) in the framework of the session of the Economic and Social Council on integrated conference follow-up in May 1998, the Special Adviser, in her capacity as Chairperson of IACWGE accepted an invitation by the Chairperson of CCPOQ and addressed the Consultative Committee at its thirteenth session, in September 1998. She called for a process of regular exchanges between the two committees so that issues of common concern, especially cross-sectoral issues, may be addressed in a more systematic and sustained way in the work of the two committees. Based on CCPOQ's mandate to promote complementarities between the normative/policy side and the operational side of the United Nations system for economic and social development, and on the mandate of IACWGE, she identified various areas for such increased cooperation, including reflection of gender in UNDAF and operational activities in general, gender in the work of the resident coordinator system, gender concerns in the strategic framework process and guidelines, including for crisis situations, gender considerations in poverty eradication; and indicators and data collection. It is expected that the Chairperson of CCPOQ will accept the invitation extended by the Chairperson of IACWGE and address IACWGE at its fourth session, in February 1999.

#### **D. Reported activities of non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society**

43. Since the issuance of the latest report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/53/308), a number of events have occurred at the international, regional and national levels under the auspices of non-governmental organizations. While these activities were not reported systematically to the Secretariat, some of them have been brought to the attention of the Division for the Advancement of Women and are noted here as examples of the widespread follow-up to the Conference by civil society.

44. Some of the reported follow-up efforts are local level activities, and others are national, regional or global level activities. An example of global efforts was a three-day seminar on the subject of post-Beijing follow-up hosted by the All China Women's Federation in June 1998. The seminar brought together representatives of women's groups from

more than 30 countries worldwide, who reported on progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action at the national level. The existing gap between the commitments made at the Beijing Conference and the reality of women, especially in poorer countries, was discussed.

45. A seminar entitled "Making democracy work: strategies for empowering women in political and public life", organized by the British Council, was held in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 30 August to 5 September 1998. With the aim of promoting the latest knowledge and advances made in social development and gender, the seminar was attended by representatives of women's rights groups and government agencies, academics, lawyers and journalists from 31 countries, with approximately half of them from African countries.

46. At the regional level, the Women's Programme of the Asian South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education and the Gender and Education Office of the International Council for Adult Education jointly convened a Regional Consultation on Women's Education on 26 and 27 September 1998 in Hua Hin, Thailand. The consultation was intended to strategize further coordination between the two organizations in building leadership capacity of women educators and in following up, *inter alia*, the outcome of the Beijing Conference. It was reported at the consultation that the existence of monitoring and lobbying mechanisms supported by women's groups at the national level helped Governments follow their commitments made at the Beijing Conference.

47. The Second International Women and Water Conference was held at Kathmandu, from 30 August to 5 September 1998, sponsored by Business and Professional Women of Nepal (BPWN), the International Institute for Human Rights, Environment and Development (INURID) and Women and Water, USA. The 20 women from rural Nepal people's organizations whose main daily duties include carrying water, were joined by 50 other women from urban Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Australia, Germany, Canada and the United States to discuss the future of clean water at both the local and global levels. Participants agreed to stage a Women's World Water Day on the eve of World Water Day, 21 March 1999.

48. Efforts to expand and promote the well-being and the rights of young women have been gaining worldwide support. Emphasis was placed on educating and training adolescent girls as future leaders and equal participants in decision-making at a regional summer camp organized by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Cyprus in August 1998. Participants were young women from Egypt,

Greece, Jordan and Lebanon, as well as young Palestinian women. The goal of this camp was to prepare young women for responsible participation at decision-making levels. The YWCA also conducted a workshop in Kenya from 9 to 13 March 1998, bringing together 30 young women from all over the country. The workshop was aimed at enhancing the awareness among young women of their human rights and the impact of violence against women.

49. The Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning, Inc. has produced three video films advocating for the need for adolescent sexual and reproductive health programmes in Asia. Based on actual stories of three girls from Nepal, Viet Nam and the Philippines, the films address the issues of early marriage, unwanted pregnancy and unwanted delivery from the viewpoint of the adolescents themselves. The video films were designed to help policy makers understand the situation and problems surrounding adolescent girls and to develop appropriate policies to respond to their needs.

50. The Internet has become a preferred means of communication and forum for the exchange of information among women and women's groups worldwide. Although the Internet is still not accessible to many of the women in the South, the number of Web sites in the developing world addressing women's issues is rapidly growing. Furthermore, these Web sites are expanding their capacities, including on-line conferences, and are providing assistance to users. For example, it was reported to the Division for the Advancement of Women in September 1998 that the Women'sNet, a networking Web site initiated in South Africa, had started a new e-mail list to keep people up to date on the latest happenings at Women'sNet.

51. A growing interest in the use of information and media as tools to advance the status of women and to eliminate gender stereotypes has been further explored at various international conferences. A conference entitled "Know How Conference on the World of Women's Information" was held in the Netherlands from 22 to 26 August 1998. The objective of the Conference was to improve the visibility and accessibility of women's information at the global and local levels and to develop a strategy whereby women involved in information could promote the empowerment of women at the global level. The Conference, which brought together about 300 women and men from 83 countries, including information specialists, librarians and women and gender specialists in the field of women's information, adopted a draft declaration to further the cause. The International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement, the organizer of the Conference, has started a new database called "Mapping the World of Women's Information", which is an inventory of

women's information services available throughout the world. It also provides gender-specific information and connects government policy agendas with those of civil society.

52. Taking their cue from the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, which, for the first time, included media as a separate area of concern, the World Association for Christian Communication has organized a series of regional consultations aiming to bring together media practitioners, policy makers, activists and specialists. The latest in the series of conferences on gender and communication policy was held in Kingston, Jamaica, from 19 to 21 November 1998, to analyse key issues in gender representation and participation in the media.

### **III. Joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**

53. In resolution 39/5 of the Commission on the Status of Women and resolution 1997/43 of the Commission on Human Rights, the Secretary-General was requested to prepare annually a joint work plan for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In resolution 1998/51, the Commission on Human Rights requested that the joint work plan reflect all aspects of the work under way, and identify existing obstacles/impediments and areas for further collaboration. In the conclusions on the human rights of women (Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/12, sect. III) prepared by the Commission on the Status of Women, the two offices were requested to continue to prepare the joint annual work plan and strengthen cooperation and coordination in human rights activities, in particular (a) by collaborating in the writing of reports for the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights; (b) through sharing information systematically on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, its sessions and documentation, in order to ensure that its work will be better integrated into the work of the other treaty bodies and United Nations human rights activities; and (c) through capacity-building to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, in particular training and gender sensitization especially of human rights monitors.

## A. Assessment of the implementation of the current work plan

54. In the implementation of the current joint work plan (see E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.1, paras. 13–23), the systematic exchange of information between the Office of the High Commissioner and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued and was expanded in the course of 1998. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women addressed the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session. In the course of the year, the Special Adviser met several times with the High Commissioner, and also met with the newly appointed Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights. She participated in a special discussion, chaired by the High Commissioner, of senior United Nations officials on the occasion of the consideration, by the Economic and Social Council in its coordination segment in July 1998, of the follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Staff of the Division participated in several meetings held at the United Nations Office at Geneva, including the ninth and tenth meetings of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. Division staff provided inputs to and contributed to the servicing of the Human Rights Committee during its New York session in March/April 1998. The Division facilitated the participation of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women in a panel discussion on women's human rights at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

55. The High Commissioner for Human Rights addressed the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women served on the panel on the critical area of concern "violence against women", held at that session. Staff of the Office of the High Commissioner participated in the 1998 session of the open-ended working group of the Commission on the Status of Women on the elaboration of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in the forty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The newly appointed Chief of the Programmes and Activities Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner met with Division staff during a mission to New York, and contributed to the workshop on a rights-based approach to the empowerment and advancement of women and gender equality.

56. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner jointly prepared a report on women's real enjoyment of their human rights, in particular those relating to the elimination of poverty, economic development and economic resources

(E/CN.4/1998/22–E/CN.6/1998/11), which was submitted to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-second session and the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fourth session. The Division contributed substantive input and participated in inter-agency activities (representing the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) for the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Division also provided routine contributions to a number of reports of the Office of the High Commissioner on an ad hoc or as requested basis. It also provided input to the work of the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions.

57. The Division continued to provide input into the joint project on the integration of a gender perspective into technical and advisory services of the Office of the High Commissioner and chaired the technical meeting to finalize the fourth phase of the project. Follow-up activities include the development, in July 1998, of detailed guidelines on gender and the human rights of women for use by Office staff and consultants in the preparation and execution of all seminars and training activities. The guidelines prepared are currently being field tested by the Office. Similar guidelines for evaluating technical cooperation projects will be developed in the first quarter of 1999. These guidelines will feed into ongoing efforts to improve the methodology of the technical cooperation programme, including the revision of training and support materials. The Division will remain involved in the follow-up to this project.

58. In response to a request of the meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies, endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 52/118, the Division for the Advancement of Women prepared a study on the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the human rights treaty bodies, and submitted it to the tenth meeting of the chairpersons (HRI/MC/1998/6). The chairpersons strongly endorsed the report and emphasized the usefulness of such a comprehensive study to the work of the treaty bodies, in particular in assessing current practices and in identifying and focusing on areas of improvement for the future (A/53/432, para. 53).

59. In commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a number of activities were implemented. Based on a decision of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, the Division for the Advancement of Women organized a workshop on a rights-based approach to the empowerment and advancement of women and gender equality for members of the Committee and of the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality. The workshop sought to review and clarify the rights-based approach to gender equality and its implications for policy and operations by bilateral and

multilateral entities. It contributed to the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The workshop adopted a final communiqué summarizing the major conclusions and findings that emerged from the discussions and putting forward a number of specific recommendations. A report on the workshop was compiled and edited by the Division and widely distributed (further details on the workshop are contained in paras. 39–41 of the present report).

60. A second information kit for the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights entitled “Women’s rights — the responsibility of all”, was produced by the Office of the High Commissioner, with a substantial contribution from the Division for the Advancement of Women. The feature article of the kit examines and analyses the role of the United Nations in promoting the human rights of women. It also contains information on the activities of the United Nations system relating to the rights of women that were carried out in 1998.

## **B. Joint work plan for 1999**

61. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will continue the targeted approach of the 1998 work plan. Major emphasis will be placed on the areas indicated below.

62. During 1999, the cooperation between the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner on the work of treaty bodies will continue. Work will also continue on the electronic database covering all six treaty bodies with a view to eliminating technical difficulties and making the database fully operational and accessible for both offices. The Division will continue to update its Web site ([www.un.org/womenwatch/daw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)) to make information related to the human rights of women and to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women easily accessible. It will continue to provide the Committee’s concluding comments and general recommendations to the Office of the High Commissioner so that they can be made available promptly to the treaty bodies. The Division will ensure that its biannual briefing notes on the Committee’s work will be supplied to the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies. The Office of the High Commissioner will provide the Division with the core documents of States parties and with the concluding comments and general recommendations of the treaty bodies for the information of Committee members. The Office will also continue to update its Web site ([www.unhchr.ch](http://www.unhchr.ch)) to make information on human rights, in particular the human rights of women, accessible. It will continue to provide information to the Commission on

the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and will inform human rights mechanisms of activities relating to the human rights of women.

63. In follow-up to the positive reception by the tenth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies of the Division study on the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the treaty bodies, the study has been posted on the Division’s Web site, and will be widely distributed to the members of the treaty bodies, delegations and other interested actors. The Division will continue to monitor progress in the work of treaty bodies in integrating a gender perspective and provide gender-specific input into their work. In this regard, support will be provided in the elaboration of general comments, and in the revision of reporting guidelines to reflect gender concerns.

64. The Division will provide targeted input into the work of non-conventional human rights mechanisms. During 1999, particular emphasis will be placed on supporting the work of the Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and on education.

65. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will support and facilitate the improved cooperation between the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, building on the first dialogue held in 1998 between the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights, and the participation of the High Commissioner, in 1998, in the Commission on the Status of Women, and of the Special Adviser, also in 1998, in the Commission on Human Rights.

66. The information exchange between the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner on planned and ongoing research and study projects will be improved. Cooperation will also be improved in the area of report preparation. With regard to the comprehensive report on violence against women migrant workers requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/97 for submission to it at its fifty-fourth session, in 1999, and the comprehensive report, also on violence against women migrant workers, requested by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1998/17 for submission to it at its fifty-sixth session, in 2000, these reports will be prepared by the Division and the Office together. The Division will contribute, on an ad hoc basis and as appropriate, information for reports on general human rights issues and for reports on the human rights of women prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner. The Office of the High Commissioner will contribute, on an ad hoc basis and as appropriate, to the preparation by the Division of



reports or studies on gender and women's rights issues. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will continue to cooperate in exchanging information on communications in connection with the communications procedure of the Commission on the Status of Women.

67. The issue of traffic in women and girls will receive particular attention in 1999. The High Commissioner has identified trafficking in women and children for purposes of sexual exploitation as a priority issue. The Office of the High Commissioner has set up a project aimed at raising awareness on the issue at the highest political level. Efforts will be made better to support implementation of relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights. Cooperation will be sought with the Centre for International Crime Prevention at the United Nations Office at Vienna to cover action to combat international trafficking in women and children. Both the Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will contribute to the study on the criminal aspects of trafficking in human beings, which is being prepared by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute on behalf of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

68. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will hold a workshop to follow up the expert group meeting on the development of guidelines for the integration of gender perspectives into United Nations human rights activities and programmes, which was held in 1995 (see E/CN.4/1996/105). The workshop, which had already been foreseen in the 1998 workplan, is tentatively scheduled to take place in April 1999. The workshop, for which extrabudgetary resources will be sought, will assess the impact of the first meeting and consider further strategies required to integrate a gender perspective into United Nations human rights activities. The study on the integration of a gender perspective in the work of the human rights treaty bodies (HRI/MC/1998/6) will serve as a background paper for the workshop.

69. In follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations emanating from the joint project on the integration of a gender perspective in technical and advisory services of the Office of the High Commissioner, that Office will organize a strategy meeting with outside experts to discuss the current situation with regard to gender and to elaborate a gender strategy for the Office. The Division for the Advancement of Women will contribute to the conceptualization and implementation of this strategy meeting. It is foreseen that it will be organized back-to-back with the gender integration workshop discussed in paragraph 68 above.

70. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will discuss opportunities for cooperation in the area of national machineries for the advancement of women and national human rights institutions, in particular in technical and advisory services aimed at the establishment and/or strengthening of national institutions. A technical meeting between staff of both the Division and the Office will review the current status of activities in the Division and the Office with regard to national institutions and develop a project proposal for joint activities in this field.

71. The Division and the Office of the High Commissioner will develop a training module/framework on the human rights of women and on gender mainstreaming in human rights activities and programmes. Such a training module/framework would be used in conjunction with any human rights-related training activity for United Nations staff and mission training for peacekeepers and human rights field monitors, and also serve as specialized training in human rights of women for human rights experts such as special rapporteurs. The training would be intended to cover both human rights of women and gender mainstreaming in human rights.

72. The Office of the High Commissioner will continue to seek the Division's comments on all training materials under production, with a view to ensuring adequate inclusion of issues related to the human rights of women and gender mainstreaming. The Division has so far provided input for the draft Training Manual on Human Rights Monitoring prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner, and on the joint Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Module on Gender in Peacekeeping, which are currently being produced.

73. The Office of the High Commissioner, in organizing training courses on reporting under human rights treaties, as well as other ad hoc activities, will continue to invite the Division for the Advancement of Women to participate. The Office of the High Commissioner will contribute to the work of the open-ended working group on an optional protocol at its next session (March 1999) and to its follow-up. The Office will also continue to participate actively in selected meetings organized by the Division. The Division will contribute to, and participate in, selected meetings of human rights bodies, in particular the meeting of persons chairing treaty bodies, and meetings organized by the Office of the High Commissioner. Both the Division and the Office will contribute to the follow-up to the Rome workshop, in the framework of the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

## IV. Information supplied in accordance with specific mandates

### A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system

74. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1998/10, requested a report on the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system. The present report covers the period from September 1997 to September 1998<sup>2</sup> and is based on information from United Nations bodies monitoring the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories as well as in refugee camps. Such bodies include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967. Information on assistance to Palestinian women was requested from the United Nations system and replies from 15 entities have been included in the present report.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1. Situation of Palestinian women

75. According to the 1997 Palestinian Population, Housing and Establishment Census,<sup>4</sup> women constitute 49.2 per cent of the total Palestinian population of 2,895,683. The census classifies 64 per cent of the labour force as being economically inactive and women, as housewives, constitute 43.7 per cent of the economically inactive. This means that women constitute 28 per cent of the total labour force which is engaged in unpaid work. This might explain why women constitute only 16.3 per cent of the total number of people engaged in the private sector. The census also shows that 20.1 per cent of women are illiterate, compared with 7.7 per cent of men, and that the fertility rate is 6.1 per cent.

76. In his report on economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO) stated that in comparison with 1996, there was an overall improvement in economic performance in the West Bank and Gaza during 1997. This was due, in part, to the fact that 1997 had fewer closure days than 1996, which was reflected in enhanced labour and trade flow between the West Bank and Gaza and Israel. However, this relative improvement must be seen in the context of the continuation of the general, comprehensive and internal closure policies which have caused a decline in

incomes in the past several years. Lost income as a result of closures has been estimated at about US\$ 4 million per effective closure day, amounting to about US\$ 228 million in 1997 which is about half the value of donor disbursements for the year.<sup>5</sup>

77. The daily life of women continues to be adversely affected by the Israeli occupation, particularly by the imposition of security-related measures such as closures, which have a detrimental impact on their socio-economic condition. As in the past, Palestinian women are experiencing the gender-specific impact of these measures, which is reinforced by existing inequalities in society between women and men. Frequent Israeli closures have been a major factor behind the 18 per cent drop in the gross national product (GNP) of the West Bank and Gaza and the 35 per cent drop in per capita GNP between 1992 and 1996. The gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated by the Palestinian Authority and the International Monetary Fund to have grown by 1.2 per cent in 1997, down from 5.5 per cent in 1996.<sup>6</sup>

78. This socio-economic situation is reflected in household expenditures. There was an overall real decline of 2.3 per cent in average household consumption expenditures between the first and fourth quarters of 1997.<sup>7</sup> Given existing gender inequality, resulting in women's weaker negotiating capacity, any cut in household expenditure tends to hurt women and girls disproportionately. Furthermore, women's average labour force participation rate declined from 13 per cent in 1996 to 12.3 per cent in 1997, which is a relative decline of 5.8 per cent for women compared with a relative decline of 1.5 per cent for men. Further, women's full employment rates and the total number of fully employed women also fell in 1997, while those for men rose considerably. Also in 1997, women's average unemployment rate increased from 20.6 to 21.4 per cent.<sup>8</sup>

79. In his report to the Commission on Human Rights, Mr. Hannu Halinen (Finland), the Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, stated that the lack of income and inability to buy food during closures of the occupied territories have reportedly led many families to eat only one meal a day and to significantly reduce their intake of protein.<sup>9</sup> An increase in malnutrition has been registered among pregnant women and pre-school age children who are suffering from iron and iodine deficiencies.<sup>10</sup> The phenomenon of malnourishment among children in the Gaza Strip was also reported by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.<sup>11</sup>

80. The Special Rapporteur also noted that approximately 3,500 Palestinian prisoners, seven of whom were women, were held in Israeli prisons and detention centres in violation of articles 49 and 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. This remains a persistent source of concern and tension in the occupied territories.<sup>12</sup>

81. In Gaza, the Special Rapporteur met with some former detainees and with the mothers and relatives of Palestinian prisoners. He was informed about the economic and social hardships suffered by the prisoners' families, particularly if the prisoners were the main breadwinners. The families also complained of the frequent transfer of prisoners in Israel, which made family visits difficult. Family visits to prisoners were also hindered by difficulties in obtaining security clearance by relatives and the humiliating searches they undergo merely to spend 45 minutes with the prisoners in groups of 10.<sup>13</sup>

82. The Special Rapporteur also mentioned the situation of former prisoners who have undergone torture while in detention. They suffer from psychological consequences, such as chronic post-traumatic stress and depression. Many, as a result, behave violently towards their wives and children.<sup>14</sup> The wives and children of workers who are unable to go to Israel or find employment locally also tend to be victims of domestic violence. This phenomenon of domestic violence, due to the above factors, was also reported by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.<sup>15</sup>

83. In its report, the Special Committee noted reports on "arbitrariness" in obtaining travel permits to enter Israel. There are no written rules issued by the Israeli authorities that govern the granting to Palestinians of permits and authorizations to enter Israel. Moreover, travel by Palestinians is accompanied by humiliation, especially of women, at checkpoints and border crossings, physical violence and the likelihood of being stranded in another part of the occupied territories in case of closure.<sup>16</sup>

84. The Special Committee also reported that a newborn baby died on 26 August 1998 because of delays at an Israeli Army roadblock near Hebron, in the West Bank. The mother gave birth in her car after soldiers at an Israeli military checkpoint forced her to take a longer route to a Hebron hospital.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. United Nations assistance to Palestinian women**

85. Information provided by the United Nations system shows continuing support for Palestinian women by the United Nations, as well as increasing efforts of gender

mainstreaming by the programmes and funds. However, the information available is not fully differentiated in terms of the extent of support to the different groups of Palestinian women, namely, women in Palestinian self-rule areas, women in occupied areas, and women in refugee camps.

86. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued its four-year, \$7.2 million Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People which commenced in 1996. The programme focused on three areas of assistance: reproductive health including family planning, population and development strategies, and advocacy. As part of this programme in the West Bank town of Jenin, UNFPA trained a team of 20 female and 10 male educators, to reach out to rural women and men in order to inform them about reproductive health issues, distribute oral contraceptives among them and refer them to clinics to obtain services. This was part of a project serving some 18,000 married women and their husbands and helped to upgrade the capacity of 20 clinics to provide quality reproductive health services and counselling.

87. UNFPA is currently supporting the establishment of a multidisciplinary women's centre at the Jabalia refugee camp, which is due to become operational in December 1998. The centre will provide a comprehensive package of reproductive health information and services covering the life cycle of women, as well as social assistance, legal counselling and community education on various issues such as domestic violence and women's rights, including reproductive rights. A similar UNFPA-funded centre at the Al Burej refugee camp was visited by 13,000 clients during 1997.

88. The World Health Organization (WHO) is assisting with the consolidation of the Women's Health Development Department at the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority as well as with the implementation of two reproductive health projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These projects, funded by UNFPA, aim at reducing maternal mortality by 50 per cent, introducing family planning counselling and screening in 50 per cent of all health facilities, increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate to 25 per cent, and providing post-natal care to all women by the year 2000.

89. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) provided assistance to Palestinian women through the following three programme areas: advocacy and capacity-building; health and nutrition; and basic education. During 1997, the UNICEF office for Gaza and the West Bank conducted a Gender Audit of four projects with a view to assessing the extent to which UNICEF's global commitment to addressing gender concerns was reflected in local level

project activities. Following the audit, two workshops were held to share the findings with 100 key policy makers and professionals in order to raise awareness of gender mainstreaming in programming. The report of the audit as well as the workshops was issued by UNICEF's Gender and Partnership Section.

90. The UNICEF Women's Health Project involves the development of policies and procedures on key women's health issues and upgrading of services and human resources at the Ministry of Health of the Palestinian Authority. During the period 1997/98, 60 health professionals at the Ministry of Health were trained in the management of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS prevention, as well as in cervical cancer and breast cancer screening. During April 1998, a one-day campaign on Safe Motherhood, as part of the Safe Motherhood Day celebrations, was carried out involving all health providers in the West Bank and Gaza.

91. As part of the Basic Education programme, UNICEF is at present conducting operational research on early marriage and school drop-outs. The results will be discussed with top policy makers in the education sector. In addition, there is an ongoing project — the Better Parenting Initiative — on parenting skills, covering such issues as early marriage, gender equality and child labour. This project now targets both mothers and fathers through male and female social workers.

92. The United Nations Volunteers are implementing the Community-based Youth Participation and Development Project, which aims at promoting the human development of young people, in particular young women, to be full participants in and contributors to the development of the Palestinian society. So far 21 United Nations Volunteers (2 international and 19 national volunteers) have worked directly or indirectly towards improving the situation of Palestinian women as women's health specialists, community health workers, coordinators of community activity centres.

93. As part of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) International Programme for More and Better Jobs for Women, a draft Action Plan for the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been formulated on the basis of a series of consultations between ILO, representatives of various ministries of the Palestinian Authority and employers and workers organizations, as well as other social partners. The draft Action Plan will include the development of a gender-sensitive labour market information system, which will improve gender disaggregated data collection, analysis and dissemination.

94. The draft Action Plan includes vocational training of about 100 women in the tourist sector and of about 200

women engaged in the informal handicrafts sector in the Bethlehem district. In the Gaza Strip, the programme targets about 300 women in poor rural areas to ensure their remunerative and viable employment. This involves the organization of the women in local support facilities and networks, training and the setting up of a viable savings and credit scheme.

95. Other ILO activities include the promotion of the socio-economic status of Palestinian women and the promotion and development of Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. For example, a two-week course was organized at the ILO Training Centre in Turin for 14 Palestinian women representing non-governmental organizations and women's associations active in the promotion of human and women's rights during the period of 24 November to 5 December 1997. From 15 June to 3 July 1998 another training course was implemented at the centre for 13 women and men representing the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions. At the end of the course, participants formulated a national strategy for the promotion of women workers' rights. In addition, two training activities on costing and pricing were implemented for 20 women entrepreneurs in the territories under the Palestinian Authority, from 25 August to 5 September 1998.

96. The International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO conducted a project on export development and the promotion of high-value floricultural products from the Gaza and West Bank, which included a survey on the role of Palestinian women in the floriculture industry. The survey, which was completed in June 1998, assessed the extent to which certain gender-specific factors determine how Palestinian women perceive and articulate their development needs and how they participate in contemporary development activities (particularly those related to the floriculture industry).

97. As part of its ongoing development assistance to the occupied Palestinian territories, the World Bank invited the Director of the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, which represents a number of Palestinian women's organizations in the occupied territories, to a Gender Training Workshop for Bank staff. The discussion revolved around how the Bank and women's organizations active on the ground can learn from each other and work together to promote the socio-economic, political and legal status of Palestinian women.

98. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in conjunction with the United Nations Development Programme, is implementing a project designed to give policy and institutional support to the recently established General Directorate for Policies, Planning and Development of the Ministry of Agriculture. This directorate has a newly

established Gender in Development Unit. This unit will assist rural women through awareness campaigns and gender-oriented training.

99. As part of its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNDP supported the establishment of a Gender Statistics Unit within the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Training for staff within the unit and the Bureau itself focused on assisting staff in selecting gender-significant indicators, formulating gender-sensitive surveys and questionnaires and evaluating statistics for accuracy in reflecting the actual situation of women within society.

100. Furthermore, UNDP in conjunction with the Inter-Ministerial Committee of the Palestinian Authority, created a Rural Girls Development Centre. The Centre provides general education and comprehensive training in the areas of health and agriculture. During 1997, training was offered for 27 young rural women. A second phase of this project aims at creating a mechanism by which the Rural Girls Development Centre will be able to sustain itself, further develop the curriculum and initiate small projects for the graduates to create long-term income-generating activities.

101. In addition, UNDP has engaged a local Palestinian non-governmental organization to carry out a comprehensive study on the status of women in the occupied Palestinian territories in relation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

102. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has supported the establishment of a Women and Group Rights Unit within the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza to work with the local community in support of the development of a favourable women's rights policy environment. The Women and Group Rights Unit's legal aid programme has provided direct legal counselling to individuals and intervened on behalf of women in the *Sharia* courts in Gaza in cases of separation, divorce, child visitation and *nafaqa* (alimony). It has also provided legal advice to women prisoners and other women's organizations and their constituents. In addition, the Unit has produced a series of guides on such issues as marriage law, divorce and inheritance.

103. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights also supports non-governmental contributions to the legal reform process through a grant to a Gaza-based organization, Mashraqiyyat, to enable it to contribute to the development of an equitable Personal Status Law. The focus is on the discourse and interpretations that deal with *Sharia*-based concerns.

104. The United Nations Development Fund for Women implements its empowerment agenda for women through three programme areas: strengthening women's economic capacity, engendering governance and leadership, and promoting women's human rights. As part of the celebrations marking both the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, UNIFEM is launching a Global Campaign for the Eradication of Violence Against Women. For Palestinian women, this will involve a public march in the West Bank, film shows and plays, radio campaigns, high school lectures, and round-table discussions with the Palestinian Working Women's Centre, the Women's Studies Centre, the Women's Legal and Social Counselling Centre as well as the Women's Affairs Technical Committee.

105. As part of its activities to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNIFEM has assisted the Inter-Ministerial Committee of the Palestinian Authority and the General Union of Palestinian Women in preparing a national strategy for the advancement of women. UNIFEM is now assisting these two Palestinian entities in the implementation of the strategy.

106. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has invited Palestinian women to participate in the World Conference on Education. However, the UNESCO strategy is geared towards integrating Palestinian women's concerns in its assistance work, which includes granting scholarships through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

107. The Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in conjunction with UNFPA, executed the first population and housing census project of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and provided technical support during all the preparatory activities and the field operations. Data from the census will, as far as possible, be disaggregated by gender.

108. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia seeks to mainstream a gender perspective in its activities focused on supporting the economic and social situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and to provide advisory services and technical assistance services. ESCWA organized an Expert Group meeting on the role of women's non-governmental organizations in the economy of the occupied territories in December 1997 at Bir Zeit University.

109. UNRWA continues to provide assistance to Palestinian refugees in keeping with its mandate. That assistance includes the programme areas of education, health, relief and social services, income generation, peace implementation, and the

Lebanon Appeal (which targets the refugees in Lebanon who are hardest hit). Women refugees are direct or indirect beneficiaries of these programmes. For example, in the education programme, which accounted for 50 per cent of the total budget of UNRWA in 1998, women accounted for 62 per cent of all trainees enrolled in technical/semi-professional courses in 1997/98. Of the 1,055 scholarships granted during 1997/98 by UNRWA to refugee students, 46 per cent went to women students. UNRWA, as part of its income-generation programme, granted loans valued at \$2.7 million to 3,296 women who supported some 16,310 dependants. Those women were organized into 525 solidarity groups, which were part of the solidarity group lending programme, serving as a guarantee mechanism. This programme has a repayment rate of 98 per cent.

### 3. Conclusions

110. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action confirmed the human rights of women and of the girl child to be an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. Furthermore it obligates Governments and the international community to seek and ensure the full and equal participation of women in all spheres of life, as well as the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the basis of sex. The eradication of discrimination against women is fully elaborated in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which 163 Member States have ratified. The principle of equality is inherent in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The principles enshrined in these documents are relevant to Palestinian women and intensified work is needed to fully implement them.

111. The Palestinian Authority and civil society, with the assistance of the international community, have taken considerable steps to advance the situation of Palestinian women. However, further efforts and assistance are needed, particularly within the context of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes as mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its agreed conclusions 1997/2. A sound information basis is essential for gender mainstreaming, therefore the efforts of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to acquire and disseminate gender-disaggregated statistics wherever possible should be augmented by efforts on the part of United Nations bodies to keep gender disaggregated data on their operations. This will aid the reporting process considerably and enhance the effectiveness of support to Palestinian women.

112. A significant proportion of Palestinian women are refugees with acute basic needs. Yet there is insufficient information on their status and the kind of assistance they are

receiving. The efforts of UNRWA, in keeping with its mandate in this area, are commendable, but they are also constrained by the debilitating financial crisis which the agency is facing. As reflected in previous reports, the status and situation of Palestinian women are inextricably linked to developments on the peace front. Progress in the peace process should be translated in tangible benefits for the people of the occupied territories and the refugee camps.

### B. Release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned

113. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-second session, adopted resolution 42/2 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to prepare, taking into account the information provided by Member States and relevant international organizations, a report on the implementation of resolution 42/2 for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session. A note verbale was sent to all Member States on 29 September 1998. As of 7 December 1998, the Secretariat had received five replies.

114. The Governments of Barbados and El Salvador reported that the situation described in Commission resolution 42/2 did not exist in their respective countries. The Government of Colombia confirmed its commitment to the resolution. However, it indicated that in the ongoing civil war, the armed groups opposed to the Government routinely detained civilians, including women, as part of their struggle. On 15 July 1998, one of the armed groups, the Army of National Liberation, signed an agreement with the National Committee for Peace and members of civil society, committing itself to stopping the practice of detaining civilians.

115. The Government of Croatia reported that the Governmental Commission for Imprisoned and Missing Persons has been conducting a search for 367 women who constitute 20.12 per cent of the total population of missing persons and persons forcibly taken away in the area of the Republic of Croatia during the war of 1991–1995.

116. The Government of Lebanon reported that three Lebanese women have been arrested by Israeli Intelligence and are currently in detention. One of the women is being held in Nablus prison in the occupied Palestinian territories. She has reportedly been tortured and suffers from severe head pains. The Government of Lebanon also reported that there are eight child prisoners in Israeli detention.

117. The Secretariat also requested information from relevant entities of the United Nations system. As of 7 December 1998, it had received five replies. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided information from three of its field missions. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon indicated that, in accordance with publicly available reports, there were three women prisoners in the Khiyam prison. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been dealing with the issue. The United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone reported that the rebels hold several thousands of civilian captives, women, men and children, who were used as porters, human shields and for forced sexual activity. The United Nations Liaison Office in Belgrade reported that, according to ICRC, nine women and four children under the age of 18 were missing in Kosovo. However it is not clear whether they were prisoners, abductees or just missing. ICRC was still seeking clarification of their fate. Furthermore, an estimated 521 Serbian women and 12 children have been missing since the 1991–1995 war in Croatia. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations stated, however, that the accuracy of these estimates could not be ascertained.

118. In their replies, the Department of Public Information and three regional commissions (ESCWA, ESCAP and ECA) did not provide any specific information on women and children taken hostage.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (A/53/455–S/1998/913); interim report on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, prepared by Mr. Choong-Hyun Paik, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights (A/53/539); and report of the Secretary-General on emergency assistance for peace, normalcy and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, Afghanistan (A/53/346).

<sup>2</sup> That is, the period since the preparation of the previous report (E/CN.6/1998/2/Add.2).

<sup>3</sup> The 15 entities that replied are: the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the World Bank, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the International Trade Centre UNCTAD/WTO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Volunteers programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific

and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Demographic Survey in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Final Report (August, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> UNSCO, "Report on economic and social conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" (Spring, 1998), p. ii.

<sup>6</sup> Note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/53/163–E/1998/79), para. 43.

<sup>7</sup> UNSCO, "Report on the economic and social conditions in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip" (Spring, 1998), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, submitted by Mr. Hannu Halinen, Special Rapporteur pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/2 A (E/CN.4/1998/17), para. 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/53/661), para. 128.

<sup>12</sup> Report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 ..., para. 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 27.

<sup>15</sup> Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report to the Special Committee ..., para. 108.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 70 and 83.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 90.

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**Commission on the Status of Women****Forty-fourth session**

28 February-17 March 2000

Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women****Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration  
and Platform for Action****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The General Assembly, in its resolution 53/120 of 9 December 1998, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similar mandates were also contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69 and 52/100. The present report emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and follow-up activities, including activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/CN.6/1999/2 and Add.1). It contains a response to resolution 43/2 of the Commission on the Status of Women on women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

The present report has one addendum, which contains a joint work plan for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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\* E/CN.6/2000/1.



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## I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6, on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the items to be included on the agenda of the Commission. As regards documentation for the sessions of the Commission, the Council decided, *inter alia*, that under item 3 (a) of the Commission's agenda, a review by the Secretary-General of mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. In its resolution 53/120 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69, and 52/100.

3. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, the information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body is provided. The report to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and follow-up activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations. The report to the Economic and Social Council focuses on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The report to the General Assembly contains information from all entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, and an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

4. Section II of the present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 53/120. Section III responds to resolution 1999/15 of the Economic and Social Council on Palestinian women and to resolution 43/1 of the Commission on the Status of Women on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict and imprisoned.

5. Section IV responds to resolution 43/2 of the Commission on the Status of Women on women, the

girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

6. In addition, the present report includes an addendum, section V (E/CN.6/2000/2/Add.1), which responds to the request made by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1999/41 and by the Commission on the Status of Women in its resolution 39/5 that a joint work plan be made available to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session and to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fourth session.

## II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

7. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission on the Status of Women will continue to conduct its assessment of progress achieved at different levels since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>1</sup> and in gender mainstreaming. In particular, it will undertake a comprehensive review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action and preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to be held from 5 to 9 June 2000. An assessment of activities of the United Nations system in follow-up to the Platform for Action in accordance with the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001 is contained in E/CN.6/2000/3. The present report complements those reports.

### A. General Assembly and Economic and Social Council

#### 1. Fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly

8. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/54/264) focused on follow-up activities undertaken by entities of the United Nations system, including human and financial means of implementation. The General Assembly adopted a resolution on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (resolution 54/141 of 17 December 1999).

9. The Assembly also adopted a resolution on preparations for the special session, which had been recommended for adoption by the Commission on the Status of Women acting as preparatory committee for the special session at its second session in March 1999, through the Economic and Social Council (resolution 54/142). In that resolution, the Assembly took decisions on the format and agenda of the special session and on the documentation to be submitted to the preparatory committee at its third session in 2000. The preparatory committee will have before it a comprehensive report containing a review and appraisal of the implementation of the Platform for Action (E/CN.6/2000/PC/2), addressing achievements as well as obstacles encountered in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern. Emerging trends and issues and further actions and initiatives are highlighted in another report (E/CN.6/2000/PC/4). Discussions with relevant actors of civil society on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action have continued, as called for by the Assembly, and the results of the on-line working groups on the areas of concern will also be available to the preparatory committee (E/CN.6/2000/PC/CRP.1).

10. Encouraged by the General Assembly, the regional commissions have carried out, or are planning to hold, regional preparatory events that will provide input into the preparations for the special session. The results of the regional meetings will be available to the preparatory committee. Within given time constraints for finalization of documentation, the results are also taken into account in documentation prepared by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

11. In the same resolution, the General Assembly encouraged all entities of the United Nations system to be involved in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session. An assessment of activities undertaken by the United Nations system in support of implementation of the Platform is contained in a report that is before the Commission on the Status of Women (E/CN.6/2000/3). United Nations-system participation in preparatory activities is currently a focus of inter-agency cooperation and coordination. The Chairperson of the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality has encouraged the active involvement of all United Nations entities in that process. This could include support for preparations at the national level, such as awareness-raising, support for activities of

national machineries and of non-governmental organizations, and the provision of feedback to the Secretariat on emerging trends and issues; provision of substantive input to the global preparatory process, such as studies or reports on particular issues falling within an entity's area of responsibility; and/or the organization of side events, such as panels, workshops and film-screenings, during the preparatory sessions and at the special session. Emphasis is also placed on ensuring that heads of agencies give due attention to, and personally participate in, the special session.

12. The Assembly decided that non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and non-governmental organizations that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women may participate in the special session without creating a precedent for future sessions of the Assembly. It decided to defer consideration of all the modalities for participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session until the next session of the preparatory committee. The preparatory committee is thus invited to consider this matter at its third session in March 2000.

13. In accordance with the same resolution, the Bureau of the preparatory committee convened a series of open-ended informal consultations to consider preparations for the special session. It submitted a draft of a political declaration, to be adopted by the special session, for consideration by States, and convened several informal meetings to discuss the draft. It also held informal consultations on a possible second document that might result from the special session. Based on these informal consultations, agreement was reached on the structure of a second outcome document. The Chairperson of the Bureau of the preparatory committee was entrusted with the preparation of a draft for consideration by delegations, in consultation with the Secretariat and the Bureau, and taking into account suggestions made by delegations during the consultations. Informal consultations on the modalities of participation of non-governmental organizations in the special session also took place in November and December.

14. The Assembly, at the recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (resolution 54/4). The

Assembly thus fulfilled one of the commitments made by Governments at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995). The Optional Protocol was opened for signature in a ceremony on 10 December 1999, Human Rights Day, and 23 States signed that day (Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Senegal, Slovenia, and Sweden). The Optional Protocol will enter into force three months after the tenth instrument of ratification has been deposited with the Secretary-General. The Optional Protocol and its significance for women were the theme of a panel discussion to mark Human Rights Day at United Nations Headquarters. The Secretary-General made an opening statement. Ms. Aída González Martínez, Chairperson of CEDAW, Ms. Aloisia Wörgetter, Chairperson of the working group of the Commission on the Status of Women that drafted the optional protocol, Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye, Director of the New York Office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Honourable Sujata Manohar, retired judge of the Supreme Court of India, and Ms. Fauzija Kassindja, of Equality Now, served on the panel, which was moderated by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women. The Special Adviser and the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a joint statement on the Optional Protocol and its significance for women worldwide.

## **2. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 2000**

15. Action taken by intergovernmental bodies in 1999, in particular the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, has been reported to the Council (E/1999/54). The Commission's attention is drawn to the decision of the Commission on Human Rights to appoint a Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, requesting the Special Rapporteur to take into account a gender perspective when requesting and analysing information and to give special attention to the occurrence of multiple discrimination and violence against migrant women. The Special Rapporteur has met with the Division for the Advancement of Women to discuss the work done by the Division with regard to violence against migrant

women workers, to exchange relevant information, and to discuss opportunities for cooperation. At its most recent session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/138 on this issue. (See also the report of the Secretary-General in document A/54/342.)

16. Information on the outcome of the Council's high-level segment of 1999 on the theme "The role of work and employment in poverty eradication: the advancement and empowerment of women" was provided to the Assembly (A/54/264).

17. The Council decided that the theme of its coordination segment in the year 2000 would be "Assessment of the progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations Conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields" (Council decision 1999/281). The Council's review of progress made in conference follow-up provides an opportunity to assess, and provide further guidance also on cross-cutting issues, especially on gender mainstreaming. In this regard, it will be recalled that the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming have been instrumental in promoting progress in gender mainstreaming at the intergovernmental level, including the Council's functional commissions, and throughout the United Nations system with regard to normative and policy work, as well as in operational activities. The coordination segment of 2000 also provides an opportunity for an in-depth assessment of the follow-up given to gender-specific recommendations of other global conferences. This assessment should enable the Council to provide further guidance on how to achieve an optimal balance in intergovernmental and UN system work between women-specific activities in the framework of follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and other conferences and summits, and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, independent of their specificity with regard to women. The Commission's attention is drawn to a note by the Secretariat on the Commission's follow-up to the Council's resolutions and decisions (E/CN.6/2000/5).

18. In accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and resolutions of the General Assembly, the Council has considered follow-up to the Platform for Action at each of its three main segments. Since the

adoption of the Platform for Action, a fourth main segment, on humanitarian affairs, has been added to the Council's agenda. At its substantive session in 1999, in its agreed conclusions on the segment, the Council stressed the need to integrate a gender perspective into the planning and implementation of activities concerning humanitarian emergencies. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has adopted a policy statement on the integration of a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance. The Commission may wish to consider recommending to the Council that the gender dimensions in humanitarian affairs should be addressed at one of the future segments.

### **B. Activities in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective into the work of the United Nations system**

19. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued to work with senior officials in departments and offices of the United Nations and in the entities of the United Nations system to increase attention to gender issues in all sectoral areas, especially through improved use of the gender mainstreaming strategy. The capacity of the Special Adviser in this regard has been strengthened by the recruitment of a Principal Officer on Gender Mainstreaming in her office in September 1999, funded through extrabudgetary contributions, to work in a catalytic and advisory manner to support the implementation of mainstreaming in entities of the United Nations system. The Special Adviser has also given particular attention to preparations for the special session of the General Assembly, including regional preparations. A summary of such activities is given below.

20. In a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 52/100 and to Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming, in which all bodies that deal with programme and budgetary matters are requested to ensure that all programmes, medium-term plans and programme budgets visibly mainstream a gender perspective, the Committee on Programme and Coordination expressed the view that the Secretariat should make every effort to address the issue of gender sensitivity in the budgetary process.<sup>2</sup> In response to these mandates, the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 discusses the implications of gender mainstreaming as one of the

factors underlying the budget proposals.<sup>3</sup> In response to the budget preparation instructions for the proposed programme budget, specific attention has been paid by a number of departments to gender mainstreaming. The document notes that although the concept may not be directly identified at the aggregate level of outputs and activities in the budget document, it will continue to be addressed at the policy and programme development stage, as well as during implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the outcome of the Organization's programmes and activities, in order to determine the extent to which the concerns and needs of the beneficiaries of the Organization's work – women as well as men – are adequately met. Such information would provide useful feedback for the preparation of future programme budgets and the determination of resource allocation.

21. Further insights into possible modalities, and benefits, of gender mainstreaming in budgets in the United Nations system are expected to be gained also from one of the ongoing projects of the ACC Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. Phase I, an inventory of work on institutional budgets outside the United Nations system, started in December 1999. Phase II will look at the United Nations system itself, identifying what has been done and the potential that exists for reflecting gender equality in budgets. An interim report is expected to be ready at the time of the forty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and will be presented in a workshop. Phase III will look in depth at a selected number of United Nations entities, making proposals for further steps.

22. In conjunction with her participation in the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on the role of work and employment in poverty eradication: the advancement and empowerment of women, in July 1999 in Geneva, the Special Adviser met with the heads of the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization and the International Trade Centre, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as with officials of the Economic Commission for Europe, UNHCR, the International Telecommunication Union, and the World Intellectual Property Organization. The meetings allowed for exchanges of information on preparations under way in the agencies for the special session, on progress and specific steps taken to increase gender mainstreaming, and on issues of achieving the goals of gender balance and a gender-

sensitive work environment. The Special Adviser invited agencies to make specific contributions to the preparations, in the form, for example, of studies on particular issues or on how the operational activities of the agencies benefit women and contribute to the achievement of gender equality at the national level. During a meeting with senior women staff at Geneva, issues with regard to the achievement of the Organization's gender balance goals and other work-related matters were discussed.

23. The Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women continue to support the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Lessons Learned Unit in the implementation of the project on mainstreaming a gender perspective in multidimensional peacekeeping operations.<sup>4</sup> After the launching of the project in June 1999, a consultant will join the Lessons Learned Unit in January 2000 to prepare a systematic gender analysis of selected peacekeeping operations. It is expected that the findings will be available in time for the special session.

24. The Special Adviser remains actively involved in the work of the Afghanistan Support Group and continues to support the work of the Gender Adviser to the United Nations system in Afghanistan. Information and reports prepared by the Gender Adviser on the current situation and its implications for United Nations system activities in that country are regularly shared with the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The Special Adviser has also endeavoured to ensure that the Gender Adviser participates in the meetings of the Afghanistan Support Group.

25. The Special Adviser continues to support preparations for the special session. She participated in two regional preparatory meetings – namely, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) sixth African Regional Conference on Women (22-27 November 1999, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) and the Arab Conference on Integrated Follow-up to Global Conferences, held by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (29 November to 1 December, Beirut, Lebanon). A representative of the Office of the Special Adviser participated in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) high-level meeting to review the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Platform for Action (26-29 October 1999, Bangkok, Thailand).

26. Participation in these regional meetings provided the opportunity for many informal meetings and discussions of the Special Adviser with governmental representatives to assess the status of national and regional preparations and to identify regional challenges, emerging issues and trends, and strategies for further action. During these missions, the Special Adviser also met with senior officials of regional commissions and held informal inter-agency meetings with gender focal points and field-based United Nations system representatives. It became apparent during these meetings that further efforts are needed to strengthen the flow of information between New York-based and field-based offices, including national machinery for the advancement of women, on the status of the global preparations for the special session. The Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women will participate in the remaining two regional preparatory meetings of ECE and of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

27. The Special Adviser attended FAO's High-level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, on behalf of the Secretary-General. The event was attended by over 360 participants from 118 countries, together with representatives from the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The Consultation reviewed a draft strategy for action on rural women as a follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Food Summit (1996). The Special Adviser moderated a panel on methodologies and approaches to bringing information to rural areas, both through traditional forms of communication and through new technologies. During the meeting, the Special Adviser had opportunities to discuss follow-up to Beijing and preparations for the special session with ministers from a number of countries. She also participated in the UNESCO-sponsored Pan-African Women's Conference for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence, held in Zanzibar, United Republic of Tanzania, from 17 to 20 May 1999.

28. The Special Adviser opened and chaired the first day of the Judicial Colloquium on the Application of International Human Rights Law at the Domestic Level. The Colloquium, which was organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women, in close consultation with UNICEF, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women and the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, took place from 27 to 29 October at the United Nations Office in Vienna. During the three-day event, almost 100 judges and magistrates from 65 countries discussed opportunities for wider and more routine use at the national level of the international human rights law contained in the two Conventions as a way to advance the rights of women and children, particularly girls. In plenary and working group sessions, participants focused on three themes: nationality, and marriage and family relations; violence against women; and women's and girls' work-related rights. At the end of the three-day session, participants adopted a communiqué. A comprehensive report containing keynote presentations and working group papers will be issued by the Division in time for the special session.

### **C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality**

29. Following the fourth session of the ACC Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (23-26 February 1999), inter-sessional work on a number of topics was conducted by the Committee's task managers. The Committee's fifth session will take place from 23 to 25 February 2000. A series of informal meetings were held in New York during the year. Based on a recommendation of the Inter-Agency Committee at its fourth session, in February 1999, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) adopted a statement as input to the preparatory process. The statement will be made available to the preparatory committee. The results of several of the Committee's ongoing activities will also be provided as input to the preparatory process. The Special Adviser, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Committee, will provide an oral report to the Commission/preparatory committee on the inputs.

30. In response to a decision of the Committee, the Division for the Advancement of Women, as the Committee's task manager, organized a workshop on women's empowerment in the context of human security. The workshop, which took place from 7 to 8 December 1999 in Bangkok, was hosted by ESCAP. The meeting brought together participants from a broad range of entities of the United Nations system and from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and

Development/Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Working Party on Gender Equality. Building on two previous workshops (on gender mainstreaming in 1997, and on a rights-based approach to gender equality in 1998) and in the context of the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, the discussions focused on concrete actions to promote the interlinked issues of women's empowerment, gender equality, and human security.

31. The workshop adopted a communiqué summarizing its major findings. It noted that missing in discussions on human security has been an understanding of the fundamental differences and inequalities between women's security and men's security. The workshop identified five specific and interrelated issues that need to be incorporated into the discussion of human security – namely, violence against women and girls; gender inequalities in control over resources; gender inequalities in power and decision-making; women's human rights; and women (and men) as actors, not victims. Noting gaps in gender awareness of both policy and practice, the workshop proposed a number of recommendations for action to promote women's empowerment in the context of human security. At the policy level, they are:

(a) Incorporate gender-sensitive legislation and adherence to CEDAW in policy discussions and actions;

(b) Build on experience in facilitating policy dialogue that benefits from the interaction of non-governmental organizations and other actors in civil society with Governments to promote women's leadership;

(c) Establish effective accountability mechanisms for gender equality through more consistent documentation and dissemination of experiences and collection of data, disaggregated by sex, to influence policy formulation and operational activities;

(d) Recognize the leadership and innovative role that women are taking in conflict resolution and peace-building and support and incorporate those efforts in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction.

32. At the level of practice, they are:

(a) Create an enabling environment that supports women's empowerment and provides

resources to organizations, including non-governmental organizations, that are actively involved in this process;

(b) Facilitate capacity development and improve legal literacy to ensure more effective use of the CEDAW mechanism and its Optional Protocol;

(c) Ensure women's participation and full gender mainstreaming in mandates and missions related to peace promotion and post-conflict reconstruction;

(d) Ensure that all reporting to intergovernmental bodies on peace-building, peacekeeping and reconstruction gives consistent attention to gender equality;

(e) Work to create a common database of materials relevant to gender equality and human security, including lessons learned, good practice, guidelines, terms of reference, training materials, research results, and codes of conduct.

33. A report on the proceedings of the workshop is being compiled by the Division for the Advancement of Women.

#### **D. Update on national action plans**

34. In the course of 1999, 11 Member States (Belgium, Burundi, Cape Verde, Eritrea, Greece, Malawi, Namibia, Netherlands, Qatar, Republic of Moldova, Yemen) and one observer (Switzerland) submitted their national action plans to the Division for the Advancement of Women. A total of 116 plans by Member States, two by observers and five by regional and subregional groups had been received as of 1 December 1999. The national action plans constituted the basis for the review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action. Many Member States built their replies to the questionnaire on a review and appraisal of the national action plan.

#### **E. Reported activities of non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society**

35. Since the issuance of the latest report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World

Conference on Women (A/54/264), a number of events have occurred at the international, regional and national levels under the auspices of non-governmental organizations. Several initiatives have also been taken by non-governmental organizations worldwide as part of their preparations for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly. While these activities were not reported systematically to the Secretariat, some of them have been brought to the attention of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

36. Various non-governmental organizations have been preparing their own reports on the progress of implementation as their contribution to the special session. Soroptomists International sent a questionnaire to its members worldwide to gather information. The International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU) Equality Committee will compile information collected from women trade unionists. Zonta International also sent out a survey questionnaire to its clubs to gather information about progress for women in each Zonta country and to establish the skills necessary for effective advocacy through the process of obtaining the information, and plans to feed the findings of the survey into its preparation for the special session. The NGO Working Groups on Girls (New York and Geneva) are in the process of completing an alternative report to that of Governments, evaluating recent progress for girls, to be presented to Governments and non-governmental organizations at the special session. The purpose of the report is to document the gaps between commitments and action, obstacles, and successful efforts by Governments and civil society organizations.

37. Non-governmental organizations have been active in compiling and disseminating information in order effectively to participate in the review process as well as at the special session. A scorecard/checklist for monitoring implementation of critical areas of concern on women and the media has been completed by Global WENT 99 as a possible template for other critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. It will be disseminated to media networks, non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations worldwide. The International Women's Tribune Centre has published three issues in a series entitled *Preview 2000* that cover plans and preparations for the five-year review of the Platform for Action. Isis International-Manila has prepared the primer on the review process which contains basic information on



activities, schedules, contact organizations and individuals involved in the preparations and the actual conduct of the special session. The primer is designed to inform and encourage the involvement of women's groups and organizations in the Asia and the Pacific region in assessing an international policy document that seeks to advance and promote women's empowerment and development.

38. Supported and sponsored by WomenWatch, WomenAction 2000 held a five-day workshop from 27 September to 2 October 1999 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, to train regional information facilitators and regional web site construction and maintenance people to develop a global web site that would serve as a central site for the collection, sharing and linking of information on the review process. The global web site was launched on 26 November 1999 (<http://www.womenaction2000.org>).

39. The community of non-governmental organizations has decided to hold an NGO working session from 3 to 4 June 2000, prior to the special session. The Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO) facilitated the first meeting of the international planning committee on 11 August 1999. The second meeting was held on 23 November 1999, facilitated by the Centre for Women's Global Leadership.

40. As part of their campaign for the special session, Equality Now issued *Women's Action*, to cite discriminatory laws that remain in force despite repeated legal affirmations of the commitment to equality that are often incorporated into national constitutions as well as international law. Flora Tristan, in cooperation with UNICEF and UNIFEM, has published case studies, entitled "Roads to Beijing", which reflect on the Beijing process in Latin America and the Caribbean. Network Women in Development Europe held a conference in Eede, the Netherlands, from 28 to 30 May 1999, jointly with Society for International Development and Vrouwenberaad Ontwikkelingssamenwerking, to discuss how non-governmental organizations could effectively follow up on the United Nations global conferences. The report of the conference was published in October 1999, entitled "Linking up – Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing +5 reviews towards the 21st century".

41. The National Council for Research on Women, in collaboration with the Division for the Advancement of Women and UNDP, held its 1999 annual conference from 9 to 11 December 1999, focusing on the visions and values of women's and girls' leadership and the five-year review of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. A one-day conference to review accomplishments since the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Chicago on 6 December 1999. Entitled "Women's rights are human rights: exploring the local global linkages", the conference was sponsored and organized by a number of non-governmental organizations and women's groups working in the region.

### **III. Information supplied in accordance with specific mandates**

#### **A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations in the United Nations system**

42. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1999/15, requested a report on the situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations of the United Nations system. The paragraphs below cover the period from September 1998 to September 1999 and are based on information from United Nations bodies monitoring the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories as well as in refugee camps. Such bodies include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO) and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission for Human Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967. Information on assistance to Palestinian women was requested from the United Nations system, and replies from six entities have been included in the present report.

##### **1. Situation of Palestinian women**

43. In his report on economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories stated that the overall economic performance in the West Bank and Gaza had improved since 1997. The positive economic

growth rate had led to an increase in employment and higher household incomes in the occupied territories. Women's unemployment rate in 1998 declined by 21.3 per cent, to 16.9 per cent; for men it fell to 15.5 per cent. The overall proportion of women active in the labour force declined in 1998, falling to 11.7 per cent from 12.3 per cent in 1997.<sup>5</sup> In 1998, over 92 per cent of all new job opportunities in the West Bank and Gaza were filled by men. This could be due to the fact that most of the jobs were in Israeli-controlled Areas<sup>6</sup> and in the construction sector where women's participation is negligible for both cultural and structural reasons. Labour-force surveys continue to show that women's wages have remained consistently below those of men and that wages in the economic sectors where women were disproportionately represented are below-average.<sup>7</sup>

44. An increase in household income in 1998 was due to a real increase in average wages. In 1998, wages could cover an average of 70.5 per cent of basic household needs and 52.2 per cent of total household expenditures, compared to 63.79 per cent and 46.4 per cent, respectively, in 1997. However, with the exception of a 4.5-per-cent increase in education expenditures, due perhaps to the increased enrolments in more expensive private schools, there was an overall decline of 2.1 per cent in real household expenditures in 1998.<sup>7</sup> It seems that uncertainty about the future continues to constrain consumer confidence, resulting in higher levels of forgone consumption. Also, household income that fails to cover all households needs has negative gender-related impacts, such as increasing the burden of unpaid work on women.

45. There were considerably fewer comprehensive and internal closure days imposed by the Israeli authorities on the West Bank and Gaza during 1998 — a loss of 5.2 per cent of total potential work days, as compared to a 20.5 per cent loss in 1997 — greatly enhancing income and productivity.<sup>7</sup> However, the severity of the closure policies continues to manifest itself in both the social and economic spheres.

46. The Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, Mr. Hannu Halinen (Finland) noted in his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-fifth session, on 20 January 1999, that the number of Palestinian prisoners being detained in Israeli prisons and detention centres has gone down to 2,200, of whom seven were women. The issue of Palestinian prisoners who remained in detention, in

violation of articles 49 and 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, was a cause of concern and tension in the occupied territories.<sup>8</sup> In Gaza, the Special Rapporteur met with former detainees and prisoners and was informed that their wives and children had experienced economic difficulties because the prisoners were often the sole breadwinners of their families. Family visits had been few, owing to both frequent transfer of prisoners in Israel and the difficulty of obtaining a permit to enter Israel.<sup>9</sup>

47. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur, some former prisoners suffered from psychological traumas which affected their families.<sup>10</sup> He suggested that the disturbing phenomenon of domestic violence in the occupied territories could partly be a consequence of psychological trauma experienced by former prisoners.

48. The Special Rapporteur reported that there had been fewer deaths at checkpoints as a result of ambulances being delayed by permit checks. Two deaths were reported in 1998. One was that of a mother who did not have a permit to enter Israel who died after childbirth while waiting at the checkpoint in Hebron. The Rapporteur noted that the Israeli army admitted that that was a mistake and brought the soldiers before a military court.<sup>11</sup>

49. According to the Special Rapporteur, the expansion of existing Israeli settlements and the building of new ones, as well as the construction of bypass roads, continued to be a source of great concern in the occupied territories and to have an effect on the socio-economic life of Palestinians. For example, the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported that on 23 November a Palestinian woman from Hebron was found dead near the settlement of El-Azar, south of Bethlehem. Palestinian police accused settlers of her murder.<sup>12</sup> The Special Committee also reported an incident in which a Palestinian woman was attacked by settlers while re-entering her neighbourhood which had been under closure.<sup>13</sup>

50. The Special Committee reported that five Palestinian girls were injured in an incident which took place on 26 November 1998, involving Palestinian teachers and schoolgirls, Israeli policemen and some female settlers from Bet-Hadassa. The head teacher stated that female settlers began shouting at them as

they walked by the Jewish settlement. The confrontation then escalated into a major scuffle. Israeli police were called in and reported that the students were asked to end their protest and go back to school. After refusing, a few were detained.<sup>14</sup>

51. It was also reported by the Special Committee that a violent confrontation occurred between angry Palestinian stone throwers and Israeli soldiers on 28 December 1998, following the eviction of two families at Kifl Harith.<sup>15</sup> During the confrontation seven Palestinians and two soldiers were injured, and 20 women refused to evacuate one family's house. They were forced out by tear gas fired into the house.

## **2. Follow-up activities to the Fourth World Conference on Women**

52. Palestine responded to the Secretariat's questionnaire on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

53. Following the adoption of the Platform for Action and in light of regional, Arab and national Palestinian instruments approved in the preparatory stages of the Conference and the outcome of the Arab ministerial conference held in Amman in September 1996, work was carried out at official and grass-roots levels to formulate a national strategy for Palestinian women, taking into account Palestinian resources and the priority needs of Palestinian women. As a result of these efforts, a national strategy for Palestinian women was formulated and announced at a conference held in June 1997.

54. Organizational mechanisms have been created to fulfil this goal. At the governmental level, a coordination framework (the Interministerial Coordination Committee) was formed of representatives from the women's affairs departments in ministries and State institutions with a view to promoting the national status of Palestinian women. The Committee pursues its work in accordance with the Beijing Platform and the needs and priorities of Palestinian women with a view to translating those into various activities and programmes.

55. The response of the Palestinian National Authority to the questionnaire provided comprehensive information on the situation of women. Based on the priorities of Palestinian women, activities were undertaken in accordance with the Platform with particular emphasis on the eight priority areas.

56. According to the report, traditions notwithstanding, the gender concept is now accepted in Palestinian society and the stereotypical image of women has begun to change. More education and employment are now available for women, and their capacity to work and participate in production and to use modern technologies will grow, thus strengthening their role and their equality with men in the fundamental areas of concern discussed in Beijing.

## **3. Assistance to Palestinian women**

57. Information provided by the United Nations system shows that gender concerns are being increasingly integrated into the continuing assistance of organizations of the United Nations system to Palestinian women. This assistance ranges across various areas such as education, income-generation activities, capacity-building and institution-building. However, no information was provided in the critical area of reproductive health.

58. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supported the establishment of a Women's Human Rights Unit in a local non-governmental organization which focuses on legal research and education to improve the status of women in Palestinian society and the provision of legal aid to both individual women and women's groups. The Office is also assisting legislators and civil society organizations in a review of personal status legislation. In addition, it is participating in the United Nations Gender Task Force, which has recently been focusing its efforts on the organization of a campaign on the prevention of violence against women.

59. During the period under review, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) carried out the following activities in support of the Palestinian National Authority:

(a) Provision of technical assistance and advisory services to the National Committee for Palestinian Women for Follow-up to Beijing in preparation of the Palestinian national report on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action;

(b) Preparation of a research paper on gender and citizenship and the role of non-governmental organizations in the West Bank and Gaza Strip before and after the peace accords.

60. Since 1994, the World Food Programme (WFP) has been concentrating its activities in Gaza and the West Bank on poverty alleviation and social relief, aimed at reaching the most severely affected populations.

61. In May 1998, the WFP office began a two-year project which supports the social safety net programme of the Ministry of Social Affairs, addressing the urgent food security needs of poor households. About 16,000 very poor households in Gaza and 12,000 in the West Bank are benefiting from WFP food assistance. Of those, over 65 per cent are headed by women.

62. This strategy is based on the WFP commitments to women's advancement (1996-2001) following the Beijing Conference, which are aimed at reducing gender inequalities. In addition to the social safety net schemes, WFP has been providing food for the following gender-related activities in 1998-1999: training of 23 women in social work; literacy programmes for 754 women in Gaza; training in kitchen gardening and water recycling for 150 women; training in health care for 85 women; food-for-work for 50 women from low-income households.

63. In addition, to combat the conservative values limiting opportunities for Palestinian women, the WFP office is organizing gender-awareness sessions with WFP staff, governmental counterparts, and non-governmental organization implementing partners.

64. A recent assessment of activities (April 1999) noted that particular efforts had been made to involve women in all project activities at the decision-making level and as active beneficiaries.

65. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides essential education, health and relief and social services to some 3.6 million registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations, comprising Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Assistance to Palestinian women was delivered within the context of the Agency's regular programmes for Palestinian refugees.

66. In the 1998/99 scholastic year, 458,716 pupils were enrolled in Agency preparatory, elementary, and secondary schools, of whom 228,935, or 49.9 per cent, were female. Women accounted for 62 per cent of trainees in UNRWA's technical/semi-professional

courses. Of the 866 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 1998/99, 46 per cent were held by women.

67. UNRWA provided expanded maternal and child health care and family planning services to Palestine refugees as an integral part of its primary health care services, in recognition of the fact that the burden of child and reproductive ill-health falls overwhelmingly on women in terms of complications in pregnancy and childbirth, infant and maternal mortality, congenital malformations and disability. With women of reproductive age and children comprising two thirds of the 3.6 million registered Palestinian refugees, that investment in maternal and child health was key for socio-economic development.

68. Difficult socio-economic conditions in refugee communities during the reporting period continued to create greater reliance on income earned by women. More than 50 per cent of UNRWA's special hardship case families, who received direct food and material assistance from the Agency, were headed by women. UNRWA's women-in-development programme provided a wide range of social, cultural, and educational services at the community level. Seventy women's programme centres served as focal points within the refugee community for UNRWA's work with women. During the period from June 1998 to July 1999, a total of 20,534 participants benefited from various programme centre activities such as lectures on health and civil society, legal assistance, childcare, computer and language skills training, and physical fitness courses. The programme centres continued to work towards administrative and financial self-sustainability.

69. During 1998/99, UNRWA's Income Generation Programme granted loans valued at \$1.67 million to 2,612 women who supported 13,060 dependants. Since 1994 the programme has provided loans worth \$8.18 million to 11,736 women organized in 1,773 solidarity groups. These women were granted loans at the end of each successful repayment cycle. The programme was self-sufficient, with all operational costs and loan loss provision covered from revenues generated by lending and banking activities. The programme maintained an annual repayment rate of 99.64 per cent.

70. During the reporting period, a total of 1,526 women benefited from the UNRWA Poverty

Alleviation Programme, which provided small amounts of credit for income-generation projects.

71. In 1996 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiated a project to support women's departments within various ministries to promote gender equality. The project aimed to enhance the capacity of the ministries to mainstream gender and development and to create gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programmes. The project was completed in 1998.

72. The sharing of information, coordination of planning and exchange of experience within the framework of the project have improved the capacity of the women's departments to impart a gender perspective into all ministries of the Palestinian National Authority. Due to UNDP's capacity-building, organizational strengthening and institutional development efforts, different ministries were subsequently able to create, formulate and begin to implement their own projects to meet the needs of their target groups.

73. In order to strengthen the newly established women's department at the Ministry for Culture, UNDP, in 1998, funded a women's creative writing and illustrative arts competition. Almost 200 women participated in the competition, and the winners were honoured in an official ceremony. The five winning pieces in each category will be published in 1999 in the form of booklets.

74. In 1999, in an attempt to move away from the welfare system currently utilized by the Ministry of Social Affairs towards a more development-oriented approach, UNDP, in cooperation with the women's department in the Ministry, initiated a poverty alleviation project within the Ministry to support deprived families and groups, through income-generating projects and the creation of new job opportunities, with a special focus on women-headed households. Phase I of the project will entail the creation of a poverty alleviation centre. During phase II, the centre will study project proposals from the target groups based on pre-established criteria which will enable the individuals or groups to work their way out of poverty.

75. During 1997-1998 UNDP, in cooperation with the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Advancement of Women, initiated and succeeded in establishing a one-year pilot project, the Rural Girls Development Project,

in Silt El-Dhaheer, Jenin. In 1999, the Project was implemented in three centres in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

76. On the non-governmental level, UNDP supports the formulation of a gap analysis report on the status of women in the occupied territories within the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This initiative is being implemented in cooperation with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling and involves a training symposium for mid-level and upper-level decision makers from non-governmental as well as governmental organizations to disseminate information on CEDAW and create working groups that will be following economic rights, education and training, family rights, health rights, political participation and representation, and the eradication of violence against women. The gap analysis report is expected to be published in March 2000.

77. In an attempt to promote a gender sensitive educational system, UNDP in 1997 developed a project to assist four educational non-governmental organizations in elaborating gender-sensitive curricula addressing the special needs of boys and girls. Teachers have been trained to develop modules that incorporate gender concerns into the learning process. During these training sessions a training manual on gender issues was prepared. Distributed to schools, it is to be used as an aid in the practical application of a gender perspective in the classrooms. The project covered public, private and UNRWA schools and included a community awareness campaign with a variety of reach-out activities such as a weekly radio programmes for youth addressing gender issues. It was successfully completed at the end of 1998.

78. UNDP participates actively in the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Task Force, which aims to move towards joint Women in Development/Gender and Development (WID/GAD) programming among United Nations agencies and to advocate for and support Palestinian partner institutions to mainstream gender into their policy-making process. In November 1999, within the framework of the Women's Rights Campaign, UNDP funded three TV spots on violence against women and a study day "Poverty and violence".

79. UNIFEM has established the second phase of its post-Beijing follow-up project with the following objectives: to support and strengthen permanent institutional women's machinery; to ensure the integration of gender concerns into the national planning process; and to consolidate the women's machinery network on the national, regional and international levels. The project which was initiated in October 1998 endeavours to focus on the three main thematic areas. In each project country, critical areas of concern have been identified as national priorities. For the Palestinian territories, they are: legislation, policies, economics, social dimension, education, health, environment, media and women under occupation.

80. UNIFEM has also initiated a Women in Development Facilitation Project which aims to strengthen the capacity of governmental and non-governmental organizations to follow up on the Platform of Action by documenting WID/GAD programmes and projects that are being undertaken in the Palestinian territories by various international and national governmental and non-governmental organizations. The compiled information will be widely disseminated to facilitate information exchange on WID/GAD issues among donors, United Nations agencies, and the Palestinian Authority, in addition to local and international civil society organizations, in order to ensure complementation of initiatives and prevent duplication.

#### 4. Concluding remarks

81. In spite of considerable efforts on the part of the Palestinian Authority and civil society and by the organizations of the United Nations system to improve the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women, their situation still requires special attention. They still experience unequal access to the labour market and to income-generating activities. They are also victims of de facto occupational segregation accompanied by lower wages in the employment sectors in which they are concentrated.

82. As reflected in previous reports, the status and living conditions of Palestinian women are closely linked with the progress of the peace process. The present report shows that women in the occupied territories continue to be affected in an adverse manner by a variety of measures, such as closures and settlement activities.

83. The mainstreaming of a gender perspective into nation-building programmes and the full and equal participation of Palestinian women are critical to the sustainable outcome of the peace. With those objectives in mind, organizations of the United Nations system will continue to assist Palestinian women to increase their capabilities to participate fully and equally in the peace process and to build and develop Palestinian society.

### **B. Release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts and imprisoned**

84. The Commission on the Status of Women, at its forty-third session, adopted resolution 43/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflicts, including those subsequently imprisoned. The Commission requested the Secretary-General to prepare, taking into account the information provided by Member States and relevant international organizations, a report on the implementation of resolution 43/1 for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fourth session. In pursuit of that mandate, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all Member States on 17 September 1999. As of 20 November 1999, the Secretariat had received 12 replies, six from Governments and six from the United Nations system.

85. The Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Brunei Darussalam and the United Republic of Tanzania reported that the issue described in resolution 43/1 was not relevant to them since they were not involved in any armed conflicts.

86. The Government of Thailand reported that, although the issue of women and children taken hostage was not relevant to its context, Thailand had been providing shelter, education and health services to refugees, displaced persons and asylum seekers from the armed conflict in neighbouring countries, most of whom were women and children.

87. The Governments of Australia and Norway reported that they sought to follow-up on the resolution through their involvement in international activities related to humanitarian issues, preventive action, peacekeeping and peace-building.

88. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided information from three of its field missions. The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) reported that four women and three boys under 18 years old and 11 other boys who were under 18 years old at the time of their arrest continued to be imprisoned in El Khiam prison, operated by the South Lebanese Army. In a signed affidavit submitted to the High Court of Justice on 27 September 1999 in response to a petition on behalf of four of the El Khiam prisoners, Major General Dan Halutz, Head of Israeli Army Operations, admitted that its General Security Service (Shin Bet) instructed and paid the interrogators and jailers at El Khiam prison. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is the only organization that has access to El Khiam prison, but it has yet to make a statement regarding the conditions in the prison.

89. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) reported that the terms of resolution 43/1, specifically the reference to hostage-taking, did not appear to have direct application to cases in the Western Sahara. However, the parties to the conflict, the Government of Morocco and the Frente Polisario, have each charged that the other is holding women and/or children hostage.

90. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) reported that the war in Sierra Leone had been characterized by widespread abduction of civilians, including women and children, by the forces opposed to the State. In the period prior to the adoption of the Lomé Peace Accord in July 1999, thousands of civilians were abducted. Estimates of the number of people in captivity at that time ranged from 12,000 to 20,000. According to UNAMSIL, one indicator of the scale of the problem was that some 3,000 children were abducted from just one location, Freetown, the capital city, during a rebel incursion in January 1999. UNAMSIL also reported that up to 30 per cent of the estimated 15,000 rebel combatants were children, most of whom had initially been abducted. Abductees had been used as porters, human shields and for forced sexual activity.

91. The Lomé Peace Accord stipulates that all abductees should be released immediately. Within its framework, a committee was established to facilitate the release programme. The committee is chaired by the UNAMSIL Chief Military Observer and includes United Nations human rights officers, representatives

of non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, representatives of the parties to the Peace Accord, and, as an observer, ICRC. UNAMSIL reported that by September 1999, there had been a disappointing number of less than 500 people released formally. It also reported that a considerable number of captives had been released quietly and had slipped back to their homes. However, a large number of abductees remained in captivity, and the United Nations, through the committee, had recognized the need for sustained and effective advocacy and intervention on the matter. UNAMSIL also reported that released abductees frequently displayed signs of significant physical ill treatment. Almost all released females reported rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Many women, when released, were found to be pregnant. In close cooperation with relevant non-governmental organizations, programmes are being put in place to assist these persons. Upon release, all children benefit from care and family-tracing resources made available under the guidance of UNICEF.

92. In their replies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the World Food Programme and three regional commissions (ECA, ECLAC, and ESCWA) did not provide any specific information on women and children taken hostage.

### **C. Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**

93. In its resolution 43/2, "Women, the girl child and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome", the Commission on the Status of Women noted the growing proportion of women becoming infected with HIV in every region, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and among the younger age groups. The Commission asked Governments, relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, individually and collectively, to make every effort to place combating HIV/AIDS as a priority on the development agenda and to implement effective prevention strategies and programmes. It called upon the international community to intensify its support of national efforts against HIV/AIDS, particularly in favour of women and young girls, in the worst hit regions of Africa and invited the Secretary-General to report to the

Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fourth session. The Commission urged Governments, with the assistance of relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to adopt a long-term, timely, coherent and integrated AIDS prevention policy, with public information and education programmes specifically tailored to the needs of women and girls within their socio-cultural contexts and sensitivities and specific needs in their life cycle.

94. The present report complements information contained in other reports before the Commission.<sup>16</sup> In its section on health the report on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, based on replies by Governments, highlights the fact that many countries have taken action on HIV/AIDS. It also highlights specific activities of the international community in line with the resolution. Information on women and HIV/AIDS was requested from the United Nations system, and replies from the nine entities who had responded as of 15 December 1999 have been included in the present report.

## **1. Women and HIV/AIDS**

### **Trends in HIV/AIDS infection of women**

95. HIV/AIDS infection rates among women have been rising steadily, with new information suggesting that there are significantly more women than men living with HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa. Studies conducted in nine different African countries suggest that between 12 and 13 women are infected for every 10 men. It is estimated that 12.2 million women and 10.1 million men aged 15-49 were living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa at the end of 1999. Women tend to be infected at a younger age than men for biological and cultural reasons. Girls in Africa aged 15-19 years are five or six times more likely to be HIV positive than boys of the same age. The strongest increase worldwide in infection rates have occurred in the newly independent States of the former Soviet Union. As the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections had also increased considerably, the risk of further spread of HIV infection among the larger population and, in particular, among women was very high.<sup>17</sup>

96. Physiological differences in the genital tract contribute to the higher risk for women of acquiring HIV infection and sexually transmitted diseases. Gender norms limit women's ability to determine their

level of risk due to ignorance about sex and sexuality, lower status in society and relationships and economic and social dependency on male partners. Gender is a decisive factor for people living with HIV/AIDS, since the burden of care generally falls on female members of the household. The stigma of living with HIV/AIDS is more painful for women than men, and the women affected are often victims of violence and discrimination. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding is of particular concern. Nine out of 10 of all HIV-infected babies were born in Africa as a consequence of high fertility rates combined with high infection rates.

### **Mainstreaming a gender perspective**

97. The urgent need for a more coherent and intensified United Nations-system response to the pandemic was the rationale for the creation of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in 1996 by its co-sponsoring organizations, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. The Programme had increasingly addressed the gender dimension of the pandemic. Gender-based differences were taken into account in risks and vulnerability-reduction approaches. UNAIDS was cooperating with women's networks that undertake advocacy, prevention and offer care and support to women affected by HIV/AIDS. To focus more specifically on gender issues, the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender and AIDS was established in 1996. It brought together technical experts on gender to act as a policy advisory body on issues relating to gender and HIV/AIDS. Its role encompassed joint planning of substantive programmes that address gender concerns in HIV and development and finding ways in which gender can be incorporated into all the United Nations programmes and departments dealing with HIV/AIDS.

98. All of the United Nations entities have provided support to national efforts against HIV/AIDS, with a focus on gender issues, including advocacy efforts and policy advice to include the issue on the national and international agenda. At the regional level, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) addressed HIV/AIDS in the programme of the 1999 Conference of Ministers of Finance and Ministers of Planning and



Economic Development and at the meeting of the Committee on Women and Development. It was noted that the sense of urgency in addressing the HIV/AIDS issue seemed to vary from one African subregion to another.

99. HIV/AIDS was a key issue during the preparatory process leading up to the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (1999). A number of priority areas for further action were adopted relating to the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

100. The World Bank has highlighted the need for top-level political commitment in terms of protection of women's rights, an expansion of health and educational facilities that are both physically accessible and socially acceptable to women, and a wide range of other multisectoral reforms that would bring about a sustained reduction in the risk of HIV transmission to women. In close collaboration with other international organizations, the World Bank has helped to place issues relating to HIV/AIDS and women on the agenda in a variety of international forums. The Bank's Economic Development Institute (EDI) and UNAIDS jointly conducted nine policy seminars for policy makers from 28 African and Asian countries, focusing on potential intervention strategies in specific vulnerable sectors.

101. United Nations entities are aware that action at the national level was crucial and that all means for reaching out to various groups should be employed. At the country level, HIV/AIDS prevention activities have been coordinated by the UNAIDS theme groups on HIV/AIDS. The United Nations system currently has 132 theme groups in over 150 countries, and partnerships are being expanded. Many groups include representatives from host country Governments, non-governmental and bilateral organizations and associations of people living with HIV/AIDS. This has increased understanding of factors influencing risk and vulnerability and of effective ways to address them.

102. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in close collaboration with UNFPA and UNAIDS, supported a pilot initiative entitled "Gender-focused responses to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS". Orientation workshops on gender

concerns in HIV and development were organized for UNIFEM and its partners in six pilot countries. In the Bahamas, India, Mexico, Senegal, Viet Nam, and Zimbabwe, partnerships between organizations working on gender and organizations working on HIV have been formed. Activities have included community-based data collection on the gender impact of the epidemic; capacity-building of media personnel in gender, HIV and human rights concerns; documentation of the abuses of human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS; and the development of resource materials on how to empower women to negotiate safe sex. A set of training materials has been developed which facilitates effective advocacy of gender and AIDS concerns. Causes and consequences of the epidemic are explored from a gender perspective which has enabled policy makers and planners to allocate and plan resources for the prevention of the epidemic in a gender-responsive manner.

103. With UNESCO's assistance, a comprehensive and Africa-wide project entitled "Guidance, counselling and youth development for Africa" was set up to train trainers and youth workers in guidance and counselling techniques to meet the needs of young people, particularly girls, as they enter adolescence. UNESCO/UNAIDS organized a regional workshop on preventive education against HIV/AIDS for grass-roots women's organizations in Africa (Abidjan, 1998). UNESCO stated that only a small percentage of the organizations working in the area asserted that they took gender into account in the preparation and dissemination of educational messages. To raise their level of risk awareness, men needed to be encouraged to show greater respect and protection towards women.

104. The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched its Preventive AIDS programme in Africa, in collaboration with UNAIDS, and intends to incorporate more AIDS awareness in private-sector initiatives. ILO uses existing international instruments like Convention 156, which emphasizes family responsibilities for promoting gender concerns in HIV/AIDS issues, especially those relating to male responsibility. It has undertaken studies on the commercial sex sector and child labour, since those groups are particularly exposed to the vulnerabilities that promote the spread of the HIV virus and have to cope with its effects.

## 2. Specific issues of concern

### **Promotion of female-controlled methods of prevention and vaccine development**

105. The male condom represents the primary prevention technology available to protect against HIV infection during sexual intercourse. Increasing demands to find alternative prevention methods for women have led to the development of the female condom and research on vaginal microbicides that offer women more control for the protection of their reproductive and sexual health. The introduction of combination and anti-retroviral treatment has become a standard of care in developed countries and is the most effective treatment available for suppressing the replication of HIV. It has produced ethical challenges in both developed and developing countries, where the vast majority of the world's infected people live without access to new treatments. The development of vaccines that are inexpensive and easy to administer remains a priority for developing countries.

106. UNFPA and UNAIDS have been cooperating on condom distribution requirements through the Global Initiative on Global Health Commodities. WHO and UNAIDS have been working to ensure that methods capable of providing dual protection (against pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases) were given high priority. An informal consultation, "Launching and promoting the female condom in Eastern and Southern Africa" was organized in April 1999 in Pretoria, South Africa. Participants recommended possible ways forward for the effective, extensive and timely introduction and promotion of female condoms. Reducing the price of female condoms by re-using them was seen as a potentially important strategy; the impact on the safety and efficacy of the method was being investigated. WHO has been working with UNAIDS in assisting countries to make female condoms available in the most appropriate and inexpensive way, working with social marketing organizations, the manufacturer and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Involving and targeting men was seen as crucial in order for the product to be useful and acceptable, as social marketing experiences in Zambia and Zimbabwe showed. The two agencies have been developing a planning and programming guide for the female condom, which would be available early in 2000. UNAIDS and WHO were also involved in promoting

the development of a microbicide, which could be an empowering tool, reducing women's social susceptibilities to the epidemic. The results have not been very encouraging, since pharmaceutical companies have not assisted in making the drug available to large parts of the developing countries.

107. The World Bank has been implementing a number of projects to increase the prevalence of modern methods of contraception and to slow the spread of HIV infection by both promoting behavioural and social change and increasing the facilities designed to treat sexually transmitted diseases among women and men in Burkina Faso, Chad and Kenya. Programme activities are designed to encourage women to recognize and seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases.

### **Mother-to-child transmission and care of children orphaned by AIDS**

108. Mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding is of particular concern. Nine out of 10 of all HIV-infected babies in Africa are born as a consequence of high infection rates. Mother-to-child transmission of HIV is eroding improvements in child survival in several of the most affected countries in Africa south of the Sahara. The care of and support for children orphaned by AIDS has increasingly come to the centre of attention and was the topic of the International World AIDS Day, 1999.

109. The immediate challenge is to reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child, while at the same time reducing the overall number of infected women of reproductive age. HIV is acquired by the infant from the mother around the time of birth or through breastfeeding. Interventions such as anti-retroviral drugs, caesarian sections and alternative feeding options can significantly reduce the rate of transmission. Where the financial resources and technical infrastructure exist and where HIV testing can determine a pregnant woman's seropositive status, these interventions have brought mother-to-child transmission of HIV under reasonable levels of control. The use of different short-course anti-retroviral regimens given during labour and for one week postpartum have been demonstrated to reduce significantly mother-to-child transmission.

110. The mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) Inter-Agency Task Team, a joint UNICEF/WHO/UNAIDS/UNFPA initiative on prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS, was established in 1998. Projects were being carried out on a pilot basis in nine countries (Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe). Measures for an integrated approach to significantly reduce mother-to-child transmission would include increased access to voluntary counselling and HIV testing, greater knowledge of men and women about their seropositive status, strong reinforcement of prevention messages by allowing people to act on the basis of their test results, expansion and strengthening of family planning information and services, early access to quality antenatal care with trained health and social workers, voluntary counselling, and HIV testing for women and their partners. Furthermore, it would include provision of anti-retroviral medication to prevent HIV transmission from seropositive women to their babies, improved care during labour, delivery and the postpartum period, counselling for HIV positive women on infant feeding choices, making replacement feeding available when needed and supporting women in their choice of feeding. The opportunity for promoting behavioural change through services related to pregnancy and delivery, the only entry point for service provision for many women in developing countries, should not be lost.

111. Specific activities on orphans has been carried out by several United Nations entities. FAO produced a report on rural children living in farm systems affected by HIV/AIDS. Farm households and extended families readily take in orphan children, but assistance provided by households and communities collapses when the increase in demand and numbers becomes unmanageable. UNICEF undertook various activities to care for orphans and provide skills that would help them avoid being legally or sexually exploited. The current decline in official development assistance (ODA) is threatening assistance to the children victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. At the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 15 October 1999, UNESCO launched an appeal to individuals, the business sector, non-governmental organizations, foundations, agencies and others to contribute to the welfare of children orphaned by AIDS so that they could receive food and shelter, good health care and education.

### **Violence against women affecting the health of women and girls**

112. Steps have been taken to change harmful traditions and practices affecting the health of women and girls and to eliminate all forms of violence against women, which was identified as one of the root causes of HIV infection (A/54/341). Gender-based violence threatens sexual and reproductive health and greatly increases women's and girls' vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. The interplay between victimization and HIV infection is becoming increasingly evident and needs to be addressed through programmes that provide women with access to resources, capacity-building and empowerment and health services, in particular in the area of reproductive and sexual health care.

113. WHO is supporting a multicountry study on the prevalence, risk and protective factors and health consequences of violence against women. The study, currently under way in Bangladesh, Brazil, Namibia, Peru, the Philippines, United Republic of Tanzania and Thailand, is collecting data with a core protocol and using research teams that include at least one organization working with women experiencing violence. The results of the study, to be available in 2001, will provide comparative data for the first time on which to base intervention and prevention strategies.

114. The World Food Programme (WFP) has cooperated with organizations that provide women and girls with a safety net when they are vulnerable to risk of violence and HIV/AIDS infection. WFP has provided food to two institutions in Cambodia which rescue girls at risk of HIV/AIDS and offers skills and empowerment training so that they can have a source of income other than prostitution. UNESCO reported that funding had been approved to launch a two-year inter-agency project (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA and WHO) on the eradication of female genital mutilation in Kenya.

### **Sexual and reproductive health education for young people, particularly girls**

115. Given the high infection rate among young women, particularly among girls, special efforts were made by the United Nations entities to improve prevention and raise awareness. The overall objective was to provide women and girls with the required

awareness and skills to tackle HIV and reduce the current rate of HIV transmission and sexually transmitted diseases.

116. UNESCO developed a programme for preventive education and communication which had been especially designed for societies in which men traditionally have the dominant role and women have little control over their own sexual behaviour and reproductive capacities. A series of regional seminars were organized for decision makers from the education sector. Specialists and teachers in China and Thailand participated in a regional workshop on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse by improving the quality of curricula and teachers, organized by UNESCO and UNDCP (Beijing, 1997). UNESCO/UNAIDS held a regional workshop on preventive education against HIV/AIDS for grass-roots women's organizations in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, for 17 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. UNAIDS has been funding the UNESCO project on HIV/AIDS preventive education and health education for adolescents, particularly girls at high risk, in Chile.

117. The UNAIDS interregional project on the integration of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV prevention activities into reproductive health programmes at the primary health-care level comprises activities such as HIV/AIDS prevention training and gender-sensitive counselling skills for health information and service providers, including medical doctors, midwives, nurses, community health workers, psychologists, social workers, peer educators, counsellors and other groups that serve as multiplier agents for dissemination of information regarding HIV/AIDS prevention.

118. UNICEF is carrying out a project on integrating gender awareness into adolescent sexual health programmes, implemented by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The project has two phases: the development of an outline and a review with young people; and the pretesting of the educational materials and preparation of a guidebook.

119. Although it had no mandate to intervene directly on HIV/AIDS, the World Food Programme (WFP) has taken an active role in empowering women and educating girls so that they will be more aware of their rights and better informed about the dangers of HIV/AIDS. Activities include a vulnerable group development programme in Bangladesh and a pilot

programme of take-home rations for girls in primary school in Benin, where enrolment increased — in one case by 280 per cent — after WFP gave food as an incentive to girls.

### **Support for women living with HIV/AIDS**

120. Women and girls living with HIV/AIDS are often stigmatized and victims of violence and discrimination. The Commission on the Status of Women urged the creation of an environment that promotes compassion and support for those infected with HIV and the provision of a legal framework that would protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS. Various forms of support have been provided. The ECA African Centre for Women offers economic activities empowering women so that they can cope with the causes and consequences of the epidemic.

121. WHO and UNAIDS supported a project to explore the impact of HIV/AIDS on HIV-positive women's reproductive health and rights, focusing on women's experiences of the health service. Coordinated by the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW), the participatory research project, carried out by HIV-positive women who are also the subject of the study, was being conducted in Thailand and Zimbabwe over 18 months. The results will be available in 2001. The project hopes to provide policy recommendations on measures to be taken to protect HIV-positive women from gender discrimination and to promote improvements in programmes and policies.

## **3. Conclusions**

### **Good practices**

122. The United Nations entities recognize that, for expanding the quality and scope of engendered HIV/AIDS strategies and interventions and thus for programme replicability, it is crucial to identify, promote and apply "best practices" in reducing both the risk and vulnerability of women and girls. One "best practice" is the innovative pilot project co-sponsored by UNIFEM, UNAIDS, and UNFPA on gender-focused responses to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS. The project was launched to address the challenge of HIV/AIDS in six countries (Bahamas, India, Mexico, Senegal, Thailand, and Zimbabwe). It aims at strengthening the capacity of women's organizations to recognize HIV/AIDS as a critical

gender issue and to address it through a variety of initiatives. UNESCO is striving to reinforce the capacity of local facilitators in raising awareness, identifying examples of “best practice” concerning HIV/AIDS preventive education and proposing the compilation of strategies and research on the transfer of gender-sensitive health messages to illiterate and semi-illiterate people.

123. In its meeting held in June 1999, the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender changed its modality of supporting individual initiatives through its members and instead evolved a unified work plan whereby it will develop a generic advocacy document/technical guide that will assist member agencies in the implementation of a programme/project in a particular country.

#### Further suggested activities

124. A gender-based response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires continued efforts, coordination and commitment over the long term at the country, regional and global levels within the framework of the United Nations system strategic plan for HIV/AIDS for 2001-2005 and within the work of the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Working Group on Gender. The new International Partnership Against AIDS in Africa, launched in January 1999 by the UNAIDS co-sponsors and secretariat must be given the highest priority, since more than half of current HIV/AIDS global infections are found in that continent.

125. Strategies should focus on improving women’s control over their reproductive health, because there is clinical evidence that infections of the reproductive tract and sexually transmitted diseases substantially increase the risk of HIV transmission.

126. Access to voluntary testing and counselling for men and women should be promoted.

127. The development of advocacy activities, including advocacy kits targeted at governmental officials and policy makers; senior health managers; religious, community, women and youth leaders; journalists and others is necessary in order to advance legal and policy reform concerning HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Special emphasis should be put on the impact of the epidemic on girls and women.

128. Vaccine development, promotion of female controlled methods of prevention and measures to

decrease mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS infection need to be reinforced.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution I, annexes I and II.
- <sup>2</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-third Session, Supplement No. 16 (A/53/16)*, part two, chap. II, para. 20.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, *Fifty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/54/6/Rev.1)*, vol. I, paras. 44-49.
- <sup>4</sup> See E/CN.6/1999/2 and A/54/264.
- <sup>5</sup> *UNSCO Report on Economic and Social Conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip* (spring 1999), issued by the Office of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (Gaza, 30 April 1999).
- <sup>6</sup> According to the 1999 UNSCO report, Israeli-controlled areas included Israel, Israeli settlements and industrial zones in the occupied territories.
- <sup>7</sup> According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, and cited in the 1999 UNSCO report.
- <sup>8</sup> “Report on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, submitted by Mr. Hannu Halinen, Special Rapporteur, pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/2 A” (E/CN.4/1999/24), para. 28.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 29.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 36.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 46.
- <sup>12</sup> Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/54/73), para. 148.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 173.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 150.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 171.
- <sup>16</sup> “Review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action” (E/CN.6/2000/PC.2); “Final assessment of the system-wide medium-term plan for the Advancement of Women” (E/CN.6/2000/3).
- <sup>17</sup> UNAIDS/WHO, *Global AIDS Epidemic Up-date: December 1999* (Geneva).

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**Commission on the Status of Women****Forty-fifth session**

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women****Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration  
and Platform for Action****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, through the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, on follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Similar mandates were also contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69, 52/100 and 53/120. The present report emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of gender mainstreaming and follow-up activities, including activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/CN.6/2000/2).

The report on the joint work plan for the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is being submitted as a separate report.

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\* E/CN.6/2001/1.



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## I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/6, on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, established the work programme of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular the items to be included in the agenda of the Commission. With regard to documentation for the sessions of the Commission, the Council decided, inter alia, that under item 3 (a) of the agenda of the Commission, a review by the Secretary-General of mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system should be prepared on an annual basis.

2. In its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to it, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. Similar mandates were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203, 51/69, 52/100 and 53/120.

3. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, the information that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body is provided. The report to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasizes efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of gender mainstreaming and follow-up activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The report to the Economic and Social Council focuses on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The report to the General Assembly contains information from all entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, and an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level and by NGOs and other actors of civil society.

4. Section II of the present report has been prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 55/71. Section III responds to resolution 2000/23 of the Economic and Social Council on Palestinian women and to resolution 43/1 of the Commission on the Status of Women on the release of women and children taken hostage in armed conflict and imprisoned. The report of the Secretary-General on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/9 is before the Commission as an addendum to the present report (E/CN.6/2001/2/Add.1).

## II. Progress in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system

### A. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council

#### 1. Fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly

5. The report of the Secretary-General (A/55/341) on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", also known as Beijing+5, provided an overview of the provisions and recommendations for action contained in the "Political declaration" and "Further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" (resolutions S-23/2 and 3, respectively). Those instruments focus on areas where the Platform for Action has been strengthened and reinforced, on implementation measures at the national and international levels by Governments, the United Nations, NGOs and other actors. They also focus on recommendations that have immediate implications for action at the international level, including those for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session.

6. In its resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000, the General Assembly, welcoming the outcome of its twenty-third special session (*ibid.*) and stressing the importance of strong, sustained political will and commitment at the national, regional and international levels in order to achieve full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and outcome of that special session, reaffirmed that the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective, including through the work of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and through the maintenance of gender units and focal points in order to ensure the effective implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the Assembly.



7. In the same resolution, the Assembly reaffirmed the primary role of the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women in the overall policy-making, follow-up and coordination of the implementation and monitoring of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Council was invited to continue to promote a coordinated and integrated follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits and their reviews, and requested the Council further to intensify its efforts to ensure that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of all its activities concerning the follow-up.

8. The Council was also invited to continue to further policy coordination and inter-agency cooperation towards the achievement of the objectives of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

9. The Assembly reaffirmed the central role of the Commission on the Status of Women in assisting the Economic and Social Council in monitoring, assessing progress made and accelerating the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly within the United Nations system, and in advising the Council thereon. In this respect, the Assembly noted that at its forty-fifth session in 2001, the Commission on the Status of Women would develop a new multi-year programme of work, and in this respect requested the Secretary-General to report to the Commission with recommendations for the effective implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, including through enhancing the effectiveness of its work and its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities.

10. The Assembly recognized the importance attached to the regional and subregional monitoring of the global and regional platforms for action and the implementation of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by regional commissions. In this respect, the Assembly called for the promotion of further cooperation among Governments and, where appropriate, national machineries of the same region. The Assembly also reaffirmed the need for mobilization of adequate resources at all levels, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in

order to implement the Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

## **2. Economic and Social Council, substantive session of 2000**

11. In its decision 1999/281 of 30 July 1999, the Economic and Social Council decided that the theme for the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000 would be "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy". Consideration of this topic provided the Council with an opportunity to show that information communication technologies were central to the creation of a knowledge-based economy and society and that they could play an important role in accelerating growth, eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, particularly in facilitating their beneficial integration into the global economy.

12. For the first time, during its substantive session of 2000, the Council undertook a comprehensive assessment of conference review processes. At its coordination segment, the Council assessed progress made within the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. Based on an examination of lessons learned from the five-year reviews of conferences conducted to date, the report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/57) on the issue makes a number of proposals to assist the Economic and Social Council in its guidance to its subsidiary bodies with respect to the upcoming 10-year reviews of the conferences of the 1990s as well as in further enhancing its work on conference follow-up. The report also discusses the progress in implementing the conferences in a more integrated and coordinated manner at the national and international levels and makes a number of suggestions to ensure that the United Nations system provides enhanced support in this regard.

13. The report draws attention to overlapping consideration of cross-cutting issues and conference goals and points out that gender perspectives have not been consistently mainstreamed in the five-year

reviews despite guidance on the topic in agreed conclusions 1997/2. However, the Council's efforts to support a more integrated and coordinated follow-up could reinforce the cross-cutting nature of the recent five-year reviews, including the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, and ensure the full incorporation of that outcome in follow-up activities of all organizations of the United Nations system (A/55/341, para. 35).

14. During the substantive session of 2000, the Council adopted a number of resolutions, agreed conclusions and decisions. The Council specifically addressed its subsidiary bodies, including functional commissions, in the agreed conclusions and resolutions and called on them to take necessary measures to implement the policy recommendations in their work and, where appropriate, communicate to the Council any specific follow-up actions.

15. In its agreed conclusions 2000/2 of 27 July 2000, on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences, the Council invited its relevant functional commissions to consider a number of options listed in paragraph 33 of the report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/57) for enhancing the reviews of the major United Nations conferences and summits and to inform the Council for its consideration at its substantive session in 2001 of the outcome of their discussion. The Council suggested that particular attention should be given to the periodicity of the conference reviews. The Council also recommended that functional commissions, in reviewing their options, should consider ways and means of ensuring their capacity to conduct follow-up of conference implementation.

16. The Council also adopted, on 28 July 2000, resolution 2000/26, entitled "The role of employment and work in poverty eradication: empowerment and advancement of women". The Council noted with concern the persistent problems in addressing the challenges of poverty eradication, gender inequalities, empowerment and advancement of women and employment, as reflected in the outcome documents of the recent five-year reviews of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development.

17. The Council therefore strongly encouraged Governments to pursue and strengthen their efforts to

work towards achieving the goals of poverty eradication and reiterated the call for the relevant organizations of the United Nations system and the international community to take consistent, coherent, coordinated and joint action in support of national efforts to eradicate poverty, with particular attention to employment creation and work and the empowerment and advancement of women. The Council urged all States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to do so, and also to consider signing and ratifying or acceding to the Optional Protocol.

18. A draft decision on the participation of NGOs not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission for Social Development was submitted to the Council for adoption during its substantive session. The Council decided, on an exceptional basis and as an interim measure, to invite those NGOs accredited to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and/or the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to attend the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Social Development, provided that they had started the process of applying for consultative status in accordance with Council decision 1996/315 of 14 November 1996. The decision was adopted by consensus under the new title "Participation of NGOs in the forty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women and the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on Social Development".

## **B. Activities in support of mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of the United Nations system**

19. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women has continued systematically to promote, facilitate and monitor the integration of gender perspectives into all areas of the work of the United Nations system, in accordance with the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on gender mainstreaming and their subsequent communication by the Secretary-General to heads of all departments, agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions, as well as the renewed mandate

on gender mainstreaming contained in the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly to follow up implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (resolution 55/71 of 4 December 2000). With the additional resource of a Principal Officer on Gender Mainstreaming, it has been possible to strengthen the catalytic and advisory work of the Office of the Special Adviser through initiating more in-depth processes of consultation with senior managers and competence development inputs. The Special Adviser also gave particular attention to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000, including inter-agency collaboration. A summary of such activities is given below.

20. The Special Adviser continued to meet with senior United Nations officials stationed away from New York during their missions to Headquarters, to discuss implementation of the Platform for Action, particularly the mainstreaming strategy, as well as equal opportunities for women and men in the United Nations, including gender balance. During 2000, for example, meetings were held with the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Deputy Executive Secretaries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and ESCAP, the Executive Directors of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the United Nations Coordinator for Afghanistan and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan.

21. The Special Adviser also met with senior officials in United Nations entities and held inter-agency meetings with gender focal points and field-based United Nations representatives during visits to Geneva in March and June 2000 and Egypt in October 2000. These meetings allowed for exchange of information on specific steps taken to increase gender mainstreaming, gender balance and a gender-sensitive work environment, as well as on the preparations for or follow-up to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. For example, in conjunction with attendance at the twenty-fourth special session to follow up the World Social Summit at Geneva, a meeting was held with OHCHR on the Convention on

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, follow-up to the special session and the efforts of OHCHR to promote gender mainstreaming. An informal meeting was held with the Geneva-based members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. Other meetings were held with the United Nations Information Service at Geneva, United Nations Office at Geneva, and the Board of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW). In conjunction with the Special Adviser's attendance at the First Summit of Arab First Ladies on Current Challenges and Future Prospects, held in Cairo from 18 to 20 November 2000, meetings were held with representatives of the United Nations Egypt Country Team.<sup>1</sup>

22. The Special Adviser continued to meet with the heads of departments and agencies to discuss gender mainstreaming, for example, UNDP, UNICEF, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Visits were made by the Principal Officer for Gender Mainstreaming in the Office of the Special Adviser to ESCWA in April 2000 and ECE in November 2000. Through a process of consultation with senior managers, concrete recommendations for increasing the incorporation of gender perspectives into work programmes were developed.

23. In its resolution 2000/9, the Economic and Social Council urged the Secretary-General to ensure that a gender perspective is fully incorporated into the work of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan and to continue to review the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan and report to the Commission on the Status of Women. The Office of the Special Adviser has remained actively involved in the work of the Afghanistan Support Group and continues to support the work of the Gender Adviser to the United Nations system in Afghanistan.

24. Information and reports prepared by the Gender Adviser on the current situation and its implications for United Nations system activities have been regularly shared with the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. The relevant report of the Secretary-General is before the Commission at the current session (E/CN.6/2001/2/Add.1).

25. Collaboration between the Office of the Special Adviser and the Office of Human Resources Management was established for the development of a

framework for competence development in gender mainstreaming and a resource base of facilitators. The competence development programme for all divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was initiated in October 2000.

26. To promote greater understanding of how gender perspectives could be incorporated into different sectors, briefing notes were prepared by the Office of the Special Adviser in collaboration with various United Nations entities. The briefing notes outline the linkages between gender perspectives and the sector issues, indicate ways and means of bringing attention to gender perspectives and provide resource listings on where to go for more support — publications, guidelines, manuals and web sites. A series of briefing notes has been completed on gender and disarmament within the Department for Disarmament Affairs that are used internally in the department to foster greater awareness, commitment and capacity on gender mainstreaming. Similar series were prepared on macroeconomics, trade, statistics, environment and a number of other individual sectors/issues in the work programmes of the regional commissions.

27. A framework has been developed for assessing progress towards gender mainstreaming, utilizing the concrete guidelines included in the Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, the letter of the Secretary-General of October 1997 and the outcome of the special session of the Assembly in June 2000. The framework will facilitate more systematic and effective reporting on gender mainstreaming and provide a monitoring tool for the Special Adviser in her efforts to promote and support gender mainstreaming throughout the system.

28. An Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Special Session, chaired by the Special Adviser, met regularly to ensure coordination and collaboration in preparations for the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. Members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality were encouraged to make specific contributions to the preparations through producing studies and organizing side-events in conjunction with the special session. The Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women participated in the regional preparatory meeting of ECE, and was represented at the regional preparatory meeting of ECLAC. The Special Adviser attended the ILO Symposium on Beijing+5 entitled “Decent work for women: ILO’s Contribution to

Women 2000”, which was held at Geneva in March 2000.

29. The Office of the Special Adviser and the Division for the Advancement of Women continued to collaborate with the Lessons Learned Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the implementation of the project on gender perspectives in multidimensional peacekeeping operations. The overall findings were published in October 2000 and case studies from a number of individual missions are under preparation. In conjunction with the project, a workshop was held in Namibia in May 2000. The resulting Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action provide greater clarity on gender mainstreaming in the area of peacekeeping. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations established gender units in both Kosovo, in 1999, and East Timor, in 2000, to promote incorporation of gender perspectives in all aspects of the work of the missions. The Office of the Special Adviser has supported the efforts of the Department by providing advice and support to the Gender Units on request. Efforts were made to influence the implementation plans developed on the basis of the Brahimi report from a gender perspective, including through the recommendation for a Gender Unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

30. The Special Adviser and the Executive Director of UNIFEM were invited to address the special session of the Security Council on women, peace and security. The resulting Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) provides a strengthened mandate for gender mainstreaming in peace support operations. To ensure collaboration and coordination of the efforts of the relevant parts of the United Nations system in promoting, facilitating and supporting the incorporation of gender perspectives into peace support operations, an inter-agency task force was established as part of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

31. As part of follow-up to General Assembly resolution 52/100 of 12 December 1997 and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 of 18 July 1997, in which the General Assembly and the Council, respectively, requested all bodies dealing with programme and budgetary matters to ensure that programmes, medium-term plans and programme budgets visibly mainstream gender perspectives, as well as the strong emphasis in the outcome of the Beijing+5 special session on budgetary processes and

resource allocations, many departments and regional commissions increased their attention to gender perspectives in the medium-term plans for 2002-2005. Many programmes, e.g., the programmes on peacekeeping, human settlements, human rights, protection of and assistance to refugees, trade and development and the programmes of all the regional commissions, have moved beyond a general mention of gender mainstreaming in the introductory section to more specific attention to gender perspectives in subprogrammes.

32. The Programme Planning and Budget Division in the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts, prepared clear instructions for the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. Programme managers were requested to ensure that in all subprogrammes at least one accomplishment with an appropriate indicator reflects the gender dimensions of the work. All entities in the United Nations have made efforts to identify and incorporate gender perspectives in their submissions. The work on planning and budgetary processes is supported by the work carried out in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality task force on gender mainstreaming in budget processes.

33. The Department of Political Affairs participated in an Inter-Agency Committee project on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets, which included a workshop for managers within the department to discuss how gender perspectives could be more effectively incorporated in programme budgets.

34. The Department for Disarmament Affairs moved beyond encouraging the nomination of female candidates to its fellowship programme, to including a briefing for the fellows on gender perspectives in all areas of disarmament — small arms, weapons of mass destruction, landmines, disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programmes and disarmament for development initiatives.

35. The Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNDP, organized a seminar on gender mainstreaming in the governance and poverty programmes of the Africa Branch of UNDP.<sup>2</sup>

36. OHCHR's policy statement on gender mainstreaming and the human rights of women is now included as part of OHCHR's web site. A series of two-day workshops was organized for all staff at Geneva

and gender perspectives have been included in the human rights training manuals for judges, prison guards and police officers. A draft checklist for integrating gender perspectives into all aspects of OHCHR's work has also been developed.

37. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has documented three success stories on gender and environment. A framework for a global network of gender and environment focal points from both Governments and NGOs is being finalized. The focal point system would provide an opportunity for information exchange and data collection as well as capacity-building at the national, regional and global levels.

38. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held an expert workshop prior to UNCTAD X, which was held in Bangkok, from 12 to 19 February 2000, to discuss gender perspectives in trade and development. The workshop recognized that the process of globalization brings a number of new challenges to the promotion of gender equality. Concrete recommendations were made to UNCTAD X concerning the integration of gender concerns into regular sessions of the Trade and Development Board; incorporation of gender perspectives into analytical work, policy development and flagship publications of UNCTAD; identification of good practices; promotion of full and equal participation of women in trade-related activities at all levels; and development of a strategy for making gender perspectives a core part of UNCTAD activities.

### **C. ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality**

39. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE), chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, has continued to provide an excellent forum for fostering and facilitating greater attention to gender perspectives in substantive work of the United Nations and supporting increased collaboration and coordination throughout the system. The Committee continues to carry out its work programme through task forces with clearly defined and time-limited mandates. The task forces report to the Committee as a whole and the Committee adopts their annual work programmes.

40. Following the fifth session of the IACWGE, from 23 to 25 February 2000, inter-sessional work was conducted on a number of topics by the Committee's task forces. Task forces have continued to be active in the following areas under the guidance of the designated task managers: gender focal points — UNFPA; compilation of good practices in implementing the Platform for Action — UNIFEM; database on gender training materials — UNICEF and UNDP; tools and indicators for gender impact analysis, monitoring and evaluation — ECLAC in collaboration with the other regional commissions; and gender mainstreaming in programme budgets — Office of the Special Adviser. Several of these were expected to be concluded at the Committee's next session in February 2001. Two new task forces established at the fifth session of the Committee began to initiate activities: gender mainstreaming in the Common Country Assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (CCA/UNDAF) process — UNIFEM; and gender and information and communication technologies — International Telecommunication Union (ITU). A series of informal meetings was held in New York during 2000, particularly on the preparations and follow-up to the Beijing+5 special session, and the Geneva-based members of the Committee continued to meet regularly.

41. Based on the recommendation of the Inter-Agency Committee at its fourth session in February 1999, the ACC submitted a statement to the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session (A/S-23/8, annex). In their statement, members of the ACC commit themselves to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action and to promote gender mainstreaming within their organizations.

42. An Inter-Agency Steering Committee for the Beijing+5 special session, chaired by the Special Adviser, met regularly to ensure coordination of preparations, and the Deputy Secretary-General met with senior United Nations officials on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". During the special session members of the Inter-Agency Committee prepared panels, presentations and exhibitions. The task forces on good practices in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and on gender training materials launched their databases during the special session. In conjunction with the Beijing+5 special

session, the task force on gender mainstreaming in programme budgets organized a workshop to present the findings of their work.

43. In response to recent developments, the Inter-Agency Committee established two new task forces. A task force on financing for development (ILO) would work to influence the preparations for the "high-level intergovernmental event" which will consider issues relating to financing for development, scheduled to take place in March 2002. The task force on women, peace and security, chaired by the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, provided input to the discussion of the Security Council on women, peace and security on 24 October 2000, and was preparing an action plan for the collaborative and coordinated implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) in the United Nations system.

44. The Committee continued its active collaboration with the OECD/DAC Working Party on Gender Equality. The annual joint workshop on governance, poverty reduction and gender equality was, however, postponed from October 2000 to early 2001. The sixth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality will take place in New York from 26 February to 2 March 2001.

#### **D. Expert group meetings and other activities organized by the Division for the Advancement of Women**

##### **1. Expert group meeting on the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications**

45. International experts gathered in Windhoek from 13 to 17 November 2000 in a meeting on "The HIV/AIDS pandemic and its gender implications", organized by the United Nations Secretariat Division for the Advancement of Women in collaboration with WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Namibian Government hosted the meeting, which brought together experts and observers from different regions working on HIV/AIDS as well as observers from Governments, the United Nations system and NGOs. The meeting addressed the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, especially in Africa, and its gender dimensions.

46. Experts concluded that the HIV/AIDS pandemic must be regarded as a disaster that required gender-

sensitive short-term relief measures to alleviate immediate emergencies and long-term interventions that transformed relations between women and men to eliminate gender inequality and reduce the risk of infection. It urged Governments and the international community to distribute immediately emergency food aid, including nutrient supplements and home-based care packs to women and men living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in the most severely affected countries and regions of the world.

47. The role of men and changes in gender relations were considered key elements in fighting the pandemic. Experts appealed to Governments, international organizations and NGOs to upscale significantly their work with men to challenge gender inequalities in relation to HIV and AIDS, and to encourage men's fuller participation in prevention, impact alleviation and care.

48. The experts' recommendations have been forwarded to the Commission on the Status of Women at the current session, at which it would consider "Women, the girl-child and HIV/AIDS" as a priority theme.

## **2. Expert group meeting on gender and racial discrimination**

49. The Division for the Advancement of Women, in collaboration with OHCHR and UNIFEM, organized an expert group meeting on the theme of "Gender and racial discrimination". The meeting was hosted by the Government of Croatia in Zagreb, and took place from 21 to 24 November 2000.

50. The meeting was convened to consider the intersection of gender and racial discrimination and its consequences, as well as new and emerging manifestations of racism, xenophobia and related intolerance and the difficulties that women encountered in that respect.

51. The meeting considered three main topics: the intersection of gender and racial discrimination directed towards women and girls, such as ethnic/gender-based violence and trafficking; the disadvantages, obstacles and difficulties women face in the enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, political and civil rights as a result of the intersection of racial and sex discrimination both in public and private domain; and measures to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and

their specific effects on women and girls and provision of remedies and redress.

52. The expert group meeting made recommendations directed to Governments, the United Nations system, intergovernmental and regional bodies and civil society. The recommendations aimed to refine and expand the "actions to be taken" at both international and national levels outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action, as well as the further actions identified by the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing+5.

53. The results of the meeting have been made available to the Commission on the Status of Women at its current session, at which it would take up, inter alia, the thematic issue of gender and all forms of discrimination, in particular racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has indicated that the meeting's results would be included in the preparations for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as well as the World Conference itself, which will take place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001.

## **3. Meeting on the draft rules of procedure of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

54. Members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women met in Berlin at the invitation of the Government of Germany, from 27 to 30 November 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to review and finalize the draft rules of procedure for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Two members of the Human Rights Committee served as resource persons, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was also represented.

55. The draft rules of procedure, which were finalized at the meeting, were subsequently adopted by the Committee at its twenty-fourth session in January 2001. The Optional Protocol to the Convention entered into force on 22 December 2000.

## **4. Advisory services provided by the Division for the Advancement of Women**

56. The Gender Advisory Services Unit of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the

Department for Economic and Social Affairs implements technical cooperation programmes for the advancement of women and gender equality. This technical cooperation depends on Member States' requirements for technical support. Most Member States have begun to indicate a shift in government policy in terms of recognition of a gender equality approach to policy design, formulation and implementation.

57. In this context, the setting up and/or strengthening of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women became an essential tool to move the gender equality agenda forward. However, national machineries were often marginalized and lack the capacity and resources to play a more effective role. The Division currently collaborates with the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration to address these issues. They have established a task force to provide technical support for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a project aimed at building the capacity of national machineries to promote gender equality in Africa. The project would promote mainstreaming of a gender perspective in national planning through a needs assessment and subregional workshops on gender sensitive national planning. It would also strengthen the data collection and analysis capacity to produce sex-disaggregated data related to the Convention as well as management information systems. To launch the project, a consultation meeting was organized on 12 June 2000 that brought together participants from Africa to implement the Secretary-General's directive to give priority to Africa's urgent development challenges, and the Arab, Caribbean, European, and Asia Pacific regions for an interregional perspective. Representatives from ECA and ESCWA and United Nations agencies such as UNFPA, UNDP and UNIFEM also participated.

58. The Division for the Advancement of Women carried out a study in collaboration with UNDP/Africa to assess gender mainstreaming activities in UNDP's governance and poverty eradication programme. The assessment was conducted in 22 sub-Saharan countries and completed in January 2000. A technical review meeting was held on 20 and 21 March to discuss the findings of the study. Participants included representatives from country offices, other divisions in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as United Nations agencies, including UNFPA and

UNIFEM. A report summarizing the discussions and recommendations includes a work plan prioritizing these recommendations as immediate, short-term and medium-term action. The results of the study will be launched on International Women's Day on 8 March 2001.

### **E. Reported activities of non-governmental organizations and other institutions of civil society**

59. Since the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session on follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/55/293), a number of events have occurred at the international, regional and national levels under the auspices of NGOs. While these activities were not reported systematically to the Secretariat, some were brought to the attention of the Division for the Advancement of Women and were noted as examples of the widespread follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly by civil society.

60. Initiated by the Fédération des Femmes du Québec, a Canadian NGO, the World March of Women 2000, a global initiative that involved approximately 5,000 NGOs from 159 countries, culminated in New York in October 2000. Participants in each country conducted grass-roots activities to bring attention to, and develop proposals for addressing, the issues of poverty and violence against women. The march and the signed petitions highlighted and drew attention to the need for concrete measures to eliminate poverty, to ensure an equitable distribution of the world's wealth, to eradicate violence against women, and to ensure equality between women and men. A panel discussion was held on 17 October 2000 at the United Nations to mark the culmination of the World March of Women 2000, and the commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. An international delegation, made up of 250 participants of the March, attended the panel discussion, which was addressed by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

61. The International Criminal Court Women's Caucus for Gender Justice coordinated a one-day public hearing on crimes against women in recent wars



and conflict situations as a part of the Tokyo Tribunal 2000. The one-day public hearing, coordinated by the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice and co-sponsored by VAWW-Net Japan and ASCENT, included testimonies of victims and survivors of wars and conflicts in different regions of the globe.

62. The International Women's Tribune Center launched its web site, providing another link for women on the Internet. The site was designed to provide web addresses for a number of organizations for women and girls, thereby enabling networking.

63. African NGOs met in Accra, Ghana, in October 2000 to review the "case stories" they had drafted for the second meeting on the "African Best Practices for Gender Integration" publication. The meeting brought together nine NGO representatives from seven African countries, and was co-sponsored by the Gender Development Institute of Ghana and the Commission on the Advancement of Women. The Commission on the Advancement of Women aims to launch this publication at the annual Forum.

64. The NGO Women and Armed Conflict Caucus began to work towards bringing gender perspectives on armed conflict to the attention of the Security Council following the Security Council press release on women and peace issued for International Women's Day (8 March 2000). The Caucus facilitated the presentation of the views of women from armed conflict zones to Security Council delegations and relevant United Nations departments at events and private meetings during the forty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in March 2000, and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, in June 2000. The Coalition on Women and International Peace and Security was formed by members of the caucus based in New York and London specifically to coordinate preparation of the Arria Formula Meeting, held on 23 October 2000, and the meeting of the Security Council on women and peace and security. The Coalition was coordinated by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and included Amnesty International, the International Peace Research Association, The Hague Appeal for Peace, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children and International Alert. The Coalition worked closely with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, UNIFEM and the Namibian delegation to the United Nations, in identifying appropriate experts from the

field for the Arria Formula briefing by NGOs to Security Council members. It also assisted in widely publicizing the meeting held on 24 October 2000 and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) adopted on 31 October 2000. The Coalition intends to continue to monitor implementation of the resolution.

65. The NGO Community on the Status of Women launched a LISTSERV to connect women worldwide with timely information coming out of the United Nations in New York. It initially targeted women who indicated an interest at the Beijing+5 meetings, and gave subscribers email information about the Commission on the Status of Women meetings and NGO events, and was designed to assist the NGO community in follow-up to Beijing+5.

66. NGOs have advanced gender issues for interaction at the special session of the General Assembly on children to be held from 19 to 21 September 2001. Organizations like the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, the International Federation of University Women, ESCAP and others interested in gender issues affecting children, hosted workshops on various subjects, including HIV/AIDS, emerging health issues affecting girls, education of refugee girls, tolerance and reconciliation, sexual exploitation of girls, and violence against girls. They were presented as part of an NGO programme to provide Governments and NGOs with information for drafting the outcome document of the Beijing+5 special session. The workshops were held in conjunction with the second session of the Preparatory Committee in January 2000.

67. Women'sNet, which aims to empower women to use information and communication technologies more effectively in their struggle towards advancing women's equality, received an "Innovative users of Internet" award at the Highway Africa Conference 2000. The spirit of the award was to inspire greater use of the Internet on the African continent. It is the only web site of its kind in South Africa. In an attempt to make this kind of information accessible to a wider community, Women'sNet forges partnerships with gender organizations and networks across South Africa and Africa. It has also started a community radio project.

68. In July 2000, 35 representatives of water management, water users and information

organizations from Asia, Africa, South America and Europe met in Paris for three days to define the tasks of the newly formed Gender and Water Alliance. Initiated at the Second World Water Forum, in March 2000, the Gender and Water Alliance is an informal network of individuals, NGOs, resource centres, research institutions, grass-roots organizations, and regional, national and local institutions. Its goal was to achieve equality among women and men, regarding participation and decision-making in the water resources management.

69. The International Women's Democracy Centre, in partnership with the Ulster People's College in Belfast, Northern Ireland, brought together women leaders from Northern Ireland for a two-week programme to learn the process of lobbying. Designed to develop and strengthen their public policy, advocacy and lobbying skills, the hands-on, innovative training programme combined theoretical learning and practical experience focusing on the interaction of the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government with the public and private sectors to create public policy. The diverse group came from both rural and urban areas and different regional backgrounds.

70. Latin American countries and a growing number of other countries around the world have recognized 25 November as the International Day Against Violence Against Women. It was first celebrated by the first Feminist Encuentro for Latin America and the Caribbean held in Bogota, Colombia, from 18 to 21 July 1981, when women systematically denounced gender violence from domestic battery to rape and sexual harassment, to state violence, including torture and abuse of women political prisoners. On 17 December 1999, the United Nations adopted resolution 54/134, designating 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The first observance of the Day in the United Nations was held on 25 November 2000.

71. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts launched an initiative to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in November 2000. Ten million girl guides and girl scouts in 150 countries earned a badge through specific activities that would help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS or for projects that help persons infected with HIV/AIDS. The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Council of AIDS Service Organizations and UNAIDS developed resource

materials, which were distributed in December 2000 to all national organizations of WAGGGS.

### **III. Information supplied in accordance with specific mandates**

#### **A. Situation of Palestinian women and assistance provided by organizations in the United Nations system**

72. In its resolution 2000/23 of 28 July 2000, the Economic and Social Council requested a report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. The present report, which covers the period from September 1999 to September 2000, is based on information from United Nations bodies that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugee camps. Such bodies include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories<sup>3</sup> and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967. The report is also based on information submitted by entities of the United Nations system providing assistance to Palestinian people, i.e., ESCWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), ILO, the World Bank and UNICEF.

##### **1. Situation of Palestinian women**

73. In his report on the Palestinian economy, the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories stated that, according to estimates from the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Palestinian economy improved in 1998: real gross domestic product (GDP) grew by about 7 per cent; Palestinian labour flows to Israel by 15 per cent; Israeli-Palestinian trade by 9 per cent. Donors' assistance increased by 12 per cent. In addition, the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and IMF revised their growth forecasts for 1999 upward to 6 per cent. In 1999, employment and labour force participation both increased so that the combined effect on the unemployment rate was a decline to 12.7 per cent from 15.6 per cent in 1998.<sup>4</sup>

74. Women's employment and participation in the labour force grew faster than for men. This could be explained by the rapid expansion in the agriculture and services sectors, including public services, where women were present in high numbers.<sup>5</sup> However, women were still found mainly in part-time jobs. In 1999, the proportion of women working less than 35 hours per week increased by 34.76 per cent while the same figure for men fell by 11.66 per cent. This tendency might have resulted from two factors. First, in the expanding agricultural sector women perform unpaid work, which is therefore not accounted for; secondly, married women tend to seek part-time jobs to increase the household income. Unemployment figures in 1999 suggest that the gap between women and men widened. In fact, while the number of unemployed men fell significantly — by 14.45 per cent — the number of unemployed women was nearly unchanged, falling only by 1.80 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

75. In 1999 there was no reduction in the severity of the closure policy applied by Israel to the occupied territories. Personal mobility remained severely restricted as Palestinians could not travel freely between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, or enter Jerusalem without permits from the Israeli authorities. Palestinian public agencies, businesses, NGOs and international agencies continued to experience higher transaction costs, time delays, and loss of productivity as a result of restrictions in the movement of personnel and goods at border crossings.<sup>5</sup>

76. The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/55/373) stated that closures and restrictions at checkpoints continued to remain a cause of concern to Palestinians. For instance, on 9 February 2000, Israeli soldiers raided a Palestinian house and held family members, including women and children, at gunpoint. One woman suffered a heart attack. As the car transporting her to the hospital was delayed at an Israeli checkpoint (ibid., para. 84) she died.

77. The Special Rapporteur on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli (Italy), in his report to the Commission on Human Rights stated that the Israeli policy of closures and permits also affected the right to education as it had serious repercussions for students in the Gaza Strip. In fact, more than 1,300 students from Gaza were prevented

from studying at universities and Palestinian institutions of higher education in the West Bank because Israel considered them to be a security risk (E/CN.4/2000/25, para. 47). In the same report, the Special Rapporteur noted that the issue of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli prisons remained a source of great concern. Although there had been releases of Palestinian (political) prisoners, within the framework of the peace agreements, the number remained high at 1,500. The conditions of detention were below international standards and difficulties of access to prisoners were faced by their lawyers as well as by their families.

78. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, reported that, in Ramallah, at various times, the General Security Service had banned parents, wives and siblings of 200 prisoners from visiting them (A/55/373, para. 114). The Special Committee also reported that the prison service had withheld permission for a British physician to examine the condition of a 16-year-old Palestinian girl detained in Ramle (ibid., para. 110).

79. As noted by the Special Rapporteur, harsh prison sentences often had the effect of taking fathers away from children and, upon their release from prison, led to an incidence of violence in the family. As a consequence, in many cases, men lost their protective and breadwinner's role within the household while women were forced to take additional burdens and acquire roles other than the ones traditionally performed by them (see E/CN.4/2000/25, para. 43) in order to provide for all the economic and social needs of the family. It is important to note two aspects related to women taking on new roles: on the one hand, it might lead to conflicts within the family due to the difficulty in adapting to and accepting change; on the other, it might provide opportunities for women's empowerment as women gain new decision-making power within the household.

80. The expansion of Israeli settlements, the demolishing of Palestinian homes and the building of bypass roads in the occupied territories continued to create difficulties for the Palestinians. In particular, the demolishing of houses in Jerusalem often forced families to consider moving to the West Bank, where it would have been cheaper to buy or rent another house, but where they would have lost their residency rights.

An incident of this kind was reported by the Special Committee (see A/55/373, para. 57).

81. The report of the Special Committee also stated that, according to the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Health, the toxic gas pollution of the West Bank's water sources controlled by Israel, caused numerous miscarriages among Palestinian women (*ibid.*, para. 60) living in the West Bank.

82. As the present report covers the period September 1999 to September 2000, it does not contain information related to the effects of the violent confrontation between Palestinian civilians and Israeli security forces that erupted at the end of September 2000. Clashes spread provoking numerous deaths, particularly among Palestinian civilians, including youth. Such violence had negative economic and social effects in the occupied territories as well as serious repercussions on the peace process and on the ability of the organizations of the United Nations system to operate effectively in the occupied territories.

## **2. Assistance to Palestinian women**

83. The organizations of the United Nations system continued to provide assistance to Palestinian people, in particular women.

84. During the period under review, ESCWA prepared a study on gender and citizenship and the role of NGOs in the occupied territories, aimed at proposing action-oriented policy recommendations to inculcate a gender-sensitive citizenship in post-conflict countries. ESCWA organized a workshop for producers and users of sex-disaggregated data in the occupied territories and started ongoing projects such as a database on Palestinian refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon; a regional household survey in the occupied territories; and the development of national gender statistics in the Arab countries, including the occupied territories.

85. UNRWA provides essential education, health, relief and social services to some 3.7 million registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's area of operations comprising Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Assistance to Palestinian women is a priority, delivered within the context of the Agency's regular programmes for Palestine refugees.

86. During the period under review, UNRWA began a review of its gender policies with external technical expertise and funding from the Government of Denmark. The review sought to align the Agency's gender policy and practice more closely with the framework and targets agreed at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and subsequently reviewed at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century".

87. In the 1999/2000 scholastic year, 468,651 pupils were enrolled in the Agency's elementary, preparatory and secondary schools, of whom 234,500, or 50 per cent, were female. Women accounted for 69 per cent of participants in UNRWA's pre- and in-service teacher training courses, and for 63 per cent of trainees in UNRWA's technical/semi-professional courses. Of the 673 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 1999/2000, 45.3 per cent were held by women. In addition, 14 Palestinian women in Lebanon would benefit from a scholarship project during 1999/2000 addressed to women only and managed by UNRWA on behalf of the Canadian International Development Research Centre.

88. UNRWA provided maternal and child health care and family planning services and sustained full immunization coverage to women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supported by school health services as well as by health educational programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

89. Difficult socio-economic conditions in refugee communities during the reporting period continued to create greater reliance on income earned by women. More than 50 per cent of UNRWA's special hardship case families, who received direct food and material assistance from the Agency, were headed by women. UNRWA's women-in-development programme provided a wide range of social, cultural and educational services at the community level. Seventy Women's Programme Centres served as focal points within the refugee community for UNRWA's work with women. From the beginning of 2000 until 30 July 2000, a total of 27,634 participants benefited from the various activities of the Centres, such as computer training, photography, English language courses, child care services for working women, group-guaranteed lending, awareness-raising campaigns on health, disability diagnosis and awareness and legal

counselling. The Agency is currently reviewing the quality of training at the Centres, with the aim of facilitating employment of women upon graduation.

90. During 1999/2000, UNRWA's income generation programme granted loans valued at \$3.12 million to 3,716 women, who supported 20,050 dependants. Since 1994, the Solidarity Group Lending Programme has provided loans worth \$11.39 million to 15,183 women organized in 2,271 solidarity groups. These women were granted loans at the end of each successful repayment cycle. The programme was self-sufficient with all operational costs and loan loss provision covered from revenues generated by lending and banking activities. The programme maintained an annual repayment rate of 98.65 per cent.

91. During the period under review, the ILO Arab regional office undertook a series of activities in support and assistance to Palestinian women:

- *Gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Labour (Gaza and Ramallah)*

The inter-ministerial coordinating committee for the advancement of women mainstreamed gender concerns in certain ministries. In August 2000, the ILO supported a workshop, held in Ramallah, to develop an action plan for the Ministry of Labour.

- *Strategy formulation on the promotion and development of women's entrepreneurship*

Several activities were executed in the framework of a 1996-1999 training programme implemented by the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy, to promote and develop Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. In particular, four courses to train trainers to develop technical capacities and nine technical workshops to enhance the knowledge and skills of women entrepreneurs were undertaken. In May 2000, a seminar comprising national governmental, non-governmental and private sector stakeholders was organized to design a national strategy for women's entrepreneurship development.

- *ILO multidisciplinary mission to the West Bank and Gaza*

From 31 January to 11 February 2000, the ILO developed two project proposals for the

advancement of women. The first project aimed to strengthen the inter-ministerial committee for the advancement of women and the second to promote and develop female entrepreneurship.

- *Capacity-building programme on gender, poverty and employment*

In December 1999, a subregional planning seminar for the Arab States was organized in Beirut on an ILO capacity-building programme on gender, poverty and employment that resulted in national action plans. The action plan for West Bank and Gaza was developed into a draft project proposal early in 2000 and is expected to be developed further into a full-fledged project document.

92. In January 1999, the World Bank formally established a Consultative Council on Gender in the Middle East and North Africa Region in order to formulate solutions to the most pertinent gender concerns in the area. In the period under review, the World Bank undertook various assistance programmes and projects, including:

- *Comprehensive development framework*

A programme to address the increasing need for a holistic integrated approach to development balancing macroeconomic stability with human, social and structural elements.

- *The Second Committee development project*

A project designed and implemented with the full participation of women and included targeted interventions such as promoting women's centres and kindergartens.

- *The Palestinian NGO project*

A project which financially and technically supported NGOs that targeted the poor and marginalized Palestinian population, 70 per cent of whom were women.

- *The education and health rehabilitation project*

This project was completed in December 1999. It provided for appropriate and adequate sanitary facilities at school sites, promoted the development of teaching material free of gender

bias, and aimed at increasing girls' access to schools.

- *The pilot training centre for disadvantaged youth*

Funded through the World Bank Development Market Place 2000 Competition, the centre would be created as part of a pilot project that targets poor rural young women and men who currently have no training skills useful in today's job market.

93. Based on its programme of cooperation with the Palestinian Authority for the years 1998-2000, UNICEF addresses gender issues through its programmes for Palestinian children and women.

94. UNICEF promotes advocacy for women's rights by increasing society's awareness of the scope and meaning of women's rights, non-discrimination and gender equality, using information from all its projects and education strategies, including better parenting, gender equity in education and life skills. The UNICEF strategy also supports an enabling environment that influences legislation and mobilizes resources for Palestinian women, in order to monitor and promote women's rights. Different types of media are used in pursuing that strategy, including television, radio, print media and theatre.

95. Within the women's health project, UNICEF supported the following activities aimed at improving the quality of life of Palestinian women:

- Eight-day training for 75 midwives from primary and secondary health care settings in the governmental sector as well as UNRWA and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society;
- Four-day workshop for 125 maternal care health professionals on the promotion of woman and child health and nutrition and the quality of services;
- Ten-day training for physicians and nurses within the obstetric and neonatal departments in four major hospitals;
- The maternal mortality survey being implemented in the West Bank, which would seek, inter alia, to identify the most common causes of maternal death, to strengthen the surveillance system in the country and to monitor the fate of orphans after the death of their mothers.

96. During the period under review, UNICEF supported a five-day training programme on first aid, health promotion, communication and leadership skills for 300 nursery teachers in 12 districts, undertaken within the better parenting initiative implemented with the Ministry of Social Affairs. UNICEF is currently supporting the following activities:

- A study on early marriage and dropouts in the Bethlehem district being conducted to understand the perception, attitude and practice related to early marriage, and to examine the relationship between early marriage and dropping out of school among females who marry early;
- An awareness-raising campaign on gender and development issues among students, grades 7 through 10, attending eight schools in the Bethlehem district;
- A review of new textbooks to assess whether they are gender sensitive. The results of the review would be shared with the Ministry of Education;
- Sixteen gender-training workshops targeting 400 education professionals in 8 districts (5 in the West Bank and 3 in Gaza). The training focuses on gender awareness and sensitization as well as on some basic skills to enable the education professionals to integrate gender into the teaching process.

97. Gender is mainstreamed in both projects of the advocacy and capacity-building programme: the planning, policy formulation and monitoring project and the children and women in need of special protection project. During the period under review, UNICEF worked on the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey II (still to be completed) aimed at providing sex-disaggregated data on Palestinian children and women. Furthermore, UNICEF provided:

- Technical and financial support to the Palestinian Authority in drafting the Palestinian Child Rights Charter and ensuring that it was gender sensitive;
- Support to the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs in carrying out a study of orphanages providing long-term residential care with emphasis on the under-served girl child;
- Support to efforts aimed at increasing media coverage of Palestinian children and women, jointly with the Ministry of Information;

- Support to the creation of a network of NGOs working to combat violence against women.

### 3. Conclusions

98. In the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority, civil society groups and organizations of the United Nations system made considerable efforts to improve the economic and social conditions of Palestinian women. Yet, despite these efforts and in spite of the positive trends of the domestic Palestinian economy in the period under review, women still experienced unequal access to the labour market and income-generating activities and continued to have higher unemployment rates than men. Thus, the situation of women still requires special attention.

99. The status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to the achievement of progress in the peace process. Women living in the occupied territories continued to be directly affected by Israeli policies, especially the closure hindering the efforts undertaken by the Palestinian Authority, civil society groups and organizations of the United Nations aimed at advancing women.

100. Towards the end of the reporting period, violence between Israeli security forces and Palestinian civilians erupted in the occupied territories creating great concern as it jeopardized the peace process and hindered assistance efforts by the organizations of the United Nations system. It is important that United Nations entities continue to be able to operate in the occupied territories and that efforts are made to continue working for the advancement and empowerment of Palestinian women. It is particularly important that Palestinian women continue to be given assistance in areas such as education, health, social services and micro-credit and that efforts are made to increase their full and equal participation in decision-making and peace programmes.

101. The gender perspective should continue to be fully integrated in international assistance programmes, through inter alia, greater gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data, which is currently insufficient. Although the reports of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories, the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human

Rights on Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 all provided valuable information on the situation in the occupied territories, they still lack a thorough gender analysis. Thus, it is important to introduce a gender perspective in all studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of Palestinian women.

### **B. Release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned in armed conflict**

102. At its forty-fourth session, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted resolution 44/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflict. The Commission on the Status of Women requested the Secretary-General to prepare, taking into account the information provided by Member States and relevant international organizations, a report on the implementation of resolution 44/1 for submission to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-fifth session in 2001. In pursuance of this mandate, on 20 July 2000, the Secretary-General sent a note verbale to all States Members of the United Nations. As of 30 November 2000, the Secretariat had received a total of 17 replies from Member States and 12 replies from relevant entities of the United Nations system.

103. Fourteen Member States reported that they were not involved in armed conflicts, one Member State reported that the country's internal violence had assumed the characteristics of armed conflict and two Member States reported that their citizens, including women and children, were still kept prisoners by the Government of neighbouring countries with which they had been in conflict.

104. The Governments of Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, El Salvador, Marshall Islands, Morocco, Nauru, Portugal, Thailand and the United Republic of Tanzania reported that the situation described in resolution 44/1 did not exist in their respective countries.

105. Although not involved in situations of armed conflicts, the Governments of Argentina, China and the Philippines reported support for international humanitarian law and support for international community efforts to stop and prevent conflicts in order to safeguard the rights of women and children. In

addition, the Government of the Philippines also stated its support for resolution 44/1 and called for the need to create a monitoring body on the proper implementation of the resolution and to ensure that violators were forced to comply.

106. The Government of Spain reported that, although the issue of armed conflict did not affect it directly, the Government was involved in cooperation and development projects in Latin America, including in many countries suffering from instability and violence deriving from wars, where mainly women and children were affected. Some of these projects were implemented by the Institute of Women through its "Women and Development" programme, which, inter alia, aimed to improve the situation of victims, strengthen good governance and prevent conflicts.

107. The Government of Bolivia reported that, although there were no armed conflicts within the country nor between Bolivia and its neighbouring countries, the eradication of cocaine had created a problem of violence in the Chapare area and other rural areas, which had the characteristics of armed conflict and which affected mainly women and children. The Government of Bolivia also stated its support for resolution 44/1 and for international humanitarian law aimed at protecting women and children in situations of armed conflict.

108. The Government of Azerbaijan reported that as a result of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, a total of 4,959 citizens of Azerbaijan were counted as missing, including 71 children, 320 women and 358 elderly people. Efforts of the State Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Prisoners of War, Hostages and Missing People in the 1992-2000 period resulted in the release from Armenian captivity of a total of 1,086 persons, including 67 children, 243 women and 246 elderly persons. The Government reported that, in order to address the issue, in December 1999, it advanced a new initiative in the Committee for Political Issues of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe confirming that the problems of prisoners of war, hostages and missing people should be solved in accordance with the articles of the Geneva Convention.

109. The Government of Kuwait reported that, as a result of the 1990 Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, a total of 605 persons, including 7 Kuwaiti women, were held in detention in Iraq. The Government called for the

immediate publication by Iraq of the names of the prisoners who were still alive as well as those who had died. It stated that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) should be allowed to perform the assigned tasks in Iraqi prisons and other places of detention in accordance with the Geneva Conventions. The Government of Kuwait stated that Iraq should expedite the tracing process and facilitate the flow of information related to cases of persons still kept in detention. It also stated that the Security Council should exert the necessary pressure on Iraq in order to bring this humanitarian issue to a conclusion, that this issue should be raised in the Security Council each time matters relating to Iraq's compliance with Council resolutions were addressed, and that Iraq's inadequate response to this issue should be taken into account whenever new resolutions were adopted.

110. The Secretariat also requested information from relevant entities of the United Nations system.

111. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations provided information from six of its field missions. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) reported that the conflict in Sierra Leone had been, and continued to be, characterized by a high incidence of abductions of civilians, including men, women and children, for the purposes of forced recruitment, sexual slavery and forced labour. It also reported that many women and girls were forced to become the "bush wives" of their abductors and that social reintegration of released abductees was very difficult due to the stigmatization that accompanied rape and the resulting pregnancies.

112. UNAMSIL reported that the Committee for the Release of Prisoners of War and Non-Combatants, which was established in July 1999 in accordance with the Lomé Peace Agreement, continued to meet on a biweekly basis despite the renewed instances of fighting in Sierra Leone. It designated its representatives to carry out regular fact-finding missions that served to disseminate information about its activities and any options available to the released abductees.

113. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) reported that, according to information collected by the ICRC, following the transfer of prisoners from Kosovo to Serbia in June 1999, there were still 950 persons from Kosovo who remained in detention in Serbia, including 6 women and 6 minors.



114. Since it did not have a mandate to operate within Serbia, UNMIK was not able to monitor directly the conditions or proceedings against the women and children held in detention in Serbia. However, it continued to highlight the issue of these prisoners and attempted to rally international support to advocate for their release. UNMIK also reported that on 1 September 2000, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights appointed a Special Envoy on persons deprived of liberty in connection with the Kosovo crisis in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to seek comprehensive solutions to the problem of missing persons and detainees from Kosovo.

115. It was reported by the United Nations Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) that, in its area of responsibility, the long-standing practice of hostage taking, in which women were sometimes the victims, continued. These cases were indirectly related to the 1992-1993 armed conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, which produced difficult socio-economic conditions, a lack of governance and effective law enforcement. UNOMIG reported that on 1 June 2000, a UNOMIG patrol, including a woman, was taken hostage for five days in the Kadori Valley and that on 4 August 2000, two international field staff workers of the ICRC, both women, together with their male local driver, were kidnapped and held for 10 days in the Pankisi Gorge.

116. UNOMIG reported that in several regions of Georgia, including Abkhazia, one of the greatest threats to the local population, representatives of the international humanitarian organizations and United Nations personnel, seemed to come from loosely organized and poorly commanded paramilitary organizations, some of which may be supported by political circles while others were exclusively criminally motivated.

117. UNOMIG stated that the Commission on the Status of Women should consider the plight of women and children living in "frozen armed conflict" where active military operations have ceased, but where armed combatants remain active. It stated that the situation of women and children in "frozen armed conflict" should also be reflected in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 44/1.

118. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) reported that, further to the

violence which erupted in East Timor around the ballot of last year, more than 250,000 East Timorese, among them women and children, were forced over the border to West Timor, Indonesia, where they were kept in camps, often under the control of militia groups, and where access to basic needs and services remained poor. UNTAET reported that, in cooperation with UNHCR, UNICEF and international NGOs, more than 250 separated children were returned to their families in East Timor. A further 180 children were also reunited with their families through the Family Reunion Programme of UNTAET and UNHCR, aiming to bring together separated families from each side of the border.

119. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) stated that it had no relevant information related to the implementation of resolution 44/1 and the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) reported that, given its military observer mandate, it has neither the authority, nor the resources or the capability to investigate such matters.

120. In its regular work, the Department of Public Information reported that it had contributed to the implementation of resolution 44/1, particularly through the widespread dissemination of the international instruments on the advancement of women and the human rights of women and children (i.e., the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol), the coverage and promotion of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the organization of press conferences in conjunction with special meetings and awareness-raising activities on the issue.

121. No specific information on women and children taken hostage was provided by OHCHR, UNDP, UNRWA, ECA or ESCWA.

#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> The Egypt Country Team included representatives of: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO),

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Bank.

<sup>2</sup> Technical Review Meeting. Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming and the Empowerment of Women in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Review of UNDP Support Activities, 20-21 March 2000.

<sup>3</sup> In September 1999, the Secretary-General reconfigured the mandate of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. His title was changed to United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. In addition to his responsibilities relating to the occupied Palestinian territory, the Special Coordinator now also has responsibilities for coordinating United Nations development assistance related to the peace process in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic (A/55/137-E/2000/95, para. 2).

<sup>4</sup> See United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories report, Spring 2000, Executive Summary.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: review of gender mainstreaming in entities of the United Nations system**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2001/2 of 24 July 2001 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed concern about the deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-sixth session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report, which covers the period from September 2000 to September 2001, is based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory and in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the

Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Human Rights Inquiry Commission, and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

3. The report is also based on information submitted by entities of the United Nations system providing assistance to Palestinian people, including the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Bank.

#### II. Situation of Palestinian women

##### The unfolding of the crisis

4. In the period under review, the region was marked by the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, or

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\* E/CN.6/2002/1.



second intifada. That crisis between the parties led to a year of violent confrontations which left hundreds of civilians dead, mostly Palestinians (approximately 660 of the over 800 people who died were Palestinians), and tens of thousands wounded and permanently disabled,<sup>1</sup> including many women and children.

5. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories, in its reports (A/56/428 and Add.1 and A/56/491) described several cases of Palestinian women and girls having died or having been wounded by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) or by Israeli settlers as a result of the second intifada. For instance, on 3 November 2000, a 14-year-old Palestinian girl who was on her way back from school in Bethlehem was killed (see A/56/428). On another occasion, on 5 January 2001, a 19-year-old Palestinian woman from Hebron died of wounds from IDF fire in a clash which had erupted on the West Bank. On 7 May 2001, a four-month-old Palestinian baby girl became the youngest person to die in the ongoing hostilities after IDF tanks opened fire on the Khan Yunis refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The infant's mother and grandmother were also seriously injured by shrapnel (see A/56/428/Add.1). In another incident, a Palestinian woman, the mother of three children, was shot by settlers (see A/56/491).

6. The explosive situation on the ground had been further exacerbated by the Israeli settlement policy, the protracted internal and external closures of the occupied Palestinian territory, and the rapid deterioration of the Palestinian economy over the course of the year.<sup>2</sup>

### Israeli settlements

7. The expansion of Israeli settlements, the demolishing of Palestinian homes, the destruction of land and the building of bypass roads in the occupied Palestinian territory continued to create difficulties for the Palestinians. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reported that, in the period from the beginning of the second intifada to 12 September 2001, IDF demolished a total of 559 Palestinian residential buildings and shelled a total of 3,669 residential buildings. In the same period, 112,900 olive trees were uprooted and 3,669,000 square miles of cultivated land destroyed. During 2001, the number of settlers in the occupied West Bank and

Gaza Strip increased by 17,000 and reached nearly 227,000.<sup>3</sup> Such policies continued to have a deteriorating effect on Palestinians living in the occupied territory, including Palestinian women, who, being traditionally employed in the agricultural sector, suffered markedly from the destruction of the land they were cultivating.

8. Episodes of violence against the Palestinian population perpetrated by settlers were frequent. Since the start of the intifada, settlers have killed 16 Palestinian civilians.<sup>4</sup>

### Movement restrictions and closures

9. The reporting period was characterized by the most severe restrictions on movement imposed on the Palestinian population and territory since 1967.<sup>5</sup> The Israeli authorities introduced a policy of recurrent and often prolonged closures. The mobility of persons, vehicles and goods was severely restricted on the borders between the Palestinian territory and Israel, between the West Bank and Jordan, and between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. The closure of borders with Israel resulted in the closure of the safe passage route established as part of the peace negotiations, while internal closures within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip led to the establishment of a dense network of Israeli checkpoints which, in turn, resulted in traffic disruption and road blockades.

10. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported that, as a result of the closures, Palestinians were kept waiting for hours at the crossing points. Women carrying babies were kept waiting under the heat of the sun for hours at a time. Delays, increased travel costs and higher instances of road accidents were repeatedly experienced by the Palestinians who, in periods of severe internal closures, were obliged to use secondary and tertiary roads. The Special Committee reported that in many instances Palestinians had to change vehicles in order to go through border crossings (see A/56/491). During this period, Palestinians often risked intimidation and harm by military authorities or settlers.<sup>6</sup> This situation deterred many Palestinian women, particularly older women, from crossing borders for fear of experiencing intimidation and violence, or because of the inconvenience of having to wait at the crossing points for many hours, thus precluding older women from visiting their children and families.

### **III. Impact of the crisis on Palestinian women and gender relations and measures taken to overcome it**

#### **Education**

11. During the reporting period, schooling was disrupted by systematic restriction on movement imposed by Israel, which prevented many Palestinian children and youths from reaching their schools on a regular basis. As of June 2001, an estimated 190 schools were reported to have been temporarily closed owing to Israeli military orders, curfews or physical damage.<sup>7</sup> In the centre of Hebron, 34 schools were closed, leaving 460 teachers unemployed and 13,000 students without educational facilities (see E/CN.4/2001/121). Furthermore, 55 per cent of older students experienced difficulties in reaching institutions of higher education and over 1,300 Gazan students enrolled at universities in the West Bank were unable to access their campuses.<sup>8</sup>

12. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported that, in East Jerusalem, an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 Arab children aged between 5 and 18 did not attend school. Tuition fees for private schools were high and there continued to be a shortage of public schools. The city spent only 7 per cent of its education budget on the Arab sector although Arabs constituted 33 per cent of the population. Girls continued to suffer from the insufficient number of schools for them. In the area of Sur Baher, for instance, there was not a single public school for girls (see A/56/428/Add.1).

13. In order to address the situation, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), through the Ministry of Education of the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations supported a community-based education programme in Hebron, involving approximately 200 teachers, which allowed 12,000 children to continue their studies (see A/56/123). UNICEF organized summer training camps for youths as well as education classes for illiterate women. The latter initiative benefited 66 women.

14. Data showed that, in the 2000-2001 academic year, 477,216 pupils were enrolled in the elementary, preparatory and secondary schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), of whom 238,903, or 50.1 per cent, were women. Women accounted for 74 per cent of participants in the UNRWA pre- and in-service teacher training courses and for 65.2 per cent of trainees in the UNRWA technical/semi-professional courses. Of the 431 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 2000-2001, 43.9 per cent were held by women. That number was lower than the number of scholarships offered by UNRWA during the preceding year (673), 45.3 per cent of which benefited women.

15. UNRWA has reported that, during 2000-2001, 25 Palestinian women in Lebanon benefited from a scholarship project aimed at women and managed by UNRWA on behalf of the Canadian International Development Research Centre. Women also held 40 per cent of senior managerial posts in the UNRWA Department of Education.

16. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Sustainable Human Development Unit, developed a project for a gender-sensitive education system aimed at assisting educational organizations in elaborating gender-sensitive curricula which address the specific needs of girls and boys. Teachers were trained to develop modules that incorporated gender concerns into the learning process. The project covered public, private and UNRWA schools.

#### **Health**

17. The current emergency situation has caused a severe breakdown in preventive services, including immunization, maternal and child health care and family services. Closures restricted the movement of patients, medical personnel and medical supplies, thus preventing many sick and injured people from accessing the care they needed and resulting in a significant increase in home deliveries, premature deliveries and stillbirths. The health system was under strain, owing particularly to the additional care needed by thousands of individuals who were wounded during the crisis.

18. Restrictions on movement limited access to primary and specialized health care, especially for Palestinians living in rural areas. The sick and wounded, as well as pregnant women, faced restricted access to hospitals. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human

Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories reported that 70 per cent of the citizens in Palestinian areas could not receive medical treatment in hospitals. Many patients died at checkpoints while waiting in ambulances. Owing to restrictions, pregnant women could not go for regular check-ups and some of those women delivered babies while waiting at checkpoints.

19. The Special Committee also reported a fivefold increase in the ratio of home deliveries since the start of the intifada (see A/56/491). UNRWA statistics point to a decline in the utilization of reproductive health services at health facilities. During the crisis, women's access to prenatal care has declined by 18 per cent, deliveries in health facilities have declined by 15 per cent, postnatal care has declined by 13 per cent and access to family planning services has declined by 12 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

20. In order to address the situation, the World Health Organization (WHO) has assumed a leadership role in advocacy and the coordination of the health resources deployed in the occupied Palestinian territory and has set up and coordinated the field task force in the West Bank.<sup>10</sup>

21. UNRWA has reported that the Palestine refugee population had one of the highest birth rates in the occupied Palestinian territory. Approximately one third of women married before the age of 18 years and an equal proportion of women of reproductive age suffered from iron deficiency anaemia. The social, economic and cultural context of women's health has remained underestimated. In order to address those challenges, UNRWA has provided maternal and child health care and family planning services and sustained full immunization coverage for women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supplemented by school health services and the provision of iron supplements for women throughout pregnancy and post-delivery, as well as by health educational programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The services were implemented as multisectoral activities targeting school children and women's programme centres.

22. The programme of assistance of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was adjusted to address the needs determined by the crisis, particularly in relation to basic health services and systems. The

emergency assistance included reproductive health supplies, commodities, contraceptives and necessary equipment. It also included training of midwives on basic emergency obstetric care. Through its programme, UNFPA funded three comprehensive women's health centres in Jabalya, Hebron and El Bureij (Gaza Strip).

23. UNFPA also launched a regional gender initiative aimed at integrating gender in reproductive health as well as in developing a monitoring and evaluation system with country-specific indicators. UNFPA, in collaboration with UNICEF and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, also worked on a project to improve adolescent lives through the integration of sexual and reproductive health into the curriculum of girls' secondary schools. Support for women's health care was also provided through the strengthening of the Women's Health and Development Directorate at the Ministry of Health.

24. In Lebanon, in collaboration with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, UNICEF undertook a health education campaign which reached 85 per cent of women living in the camps. The campaign included topics such as family planning, safe motherhood practices, control of the spread of HIV and other infectious diseases, personal hygiene, and prevention of malnutrition. In West Bank and Gaza, UNICEF provided psychosocial support for Palestinian women and youth affected by the crisis through projects such as telephone hotlines for counselling.

25. UNICEF's Health and Nutrition Programme included the "Women's Health Project" which, beside upgrading the Obstetrics and Neonatal Units in four Government-operated hospitals, provided more than 140 doctors and nurses with training.

## **Economy**

26. The border closures mentioned in paragraphs 9 and 10 above had a devastating effect on the Palestinian economy. In his report on the Palestinian economy, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority (UNSCO) stated that, according to estimates from the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Finance and the International Monetary Fund, the Palestinian economy was expected

to continue to grow as it had grown for the past three years and that real growth rates for gross domestic product and gross national product for the Palestinian territory were expected to reach 5 and 6 per cent, respectively. Instead, the imposition of movement restrictions and border closures has disrupted the economic progress of the occupied Palestinian territory.

27. Estimates by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator indicate that the total income losses of the Palestinian economy since the start of the second intifada ranged from \$1.8 billion to \$2.5 billion.<sup>11</sup> Core unemployment rose from the low of 10 per cent reached in September 2000 to 28.3 per cent by the end of 2000. Despite moderate improvements between the fourth quarter of 2000 and the first quarter of 2001, core unemployment remained high at 26.9 per cent of the workforce. Using a broader measure to include “discouraged workers”,<sup>12</sup> unemployment amounted to 37.8 per cent, an increase of 78 per cent from the pre-crisis levels.<sup>13</sup> According to the World Bank, poverty rates in the occupied Palestinian territory were expected to reach 43.8 per cent by the end of 2001 (see A/56/428), meaning that half of the population would have lived on \$2.00 or less a day.

28. The crisis has exerted a structural impact on the Palestinian labour market. While the proportion of wage workers and employers in the labour force declined steeply, particularly as more than 110,000 Palestinian labourers were prevented from working in Israel (see A/56/428), the number of unpaid family workers and self-employed rose. That led to an increase in the “informalization” of the economy as well as to the worsening of labour market conditions in the context of declining domestic production and income.<sup>14</sup> Considering that women are highly represented in the informal labour force, that situation affected women adversely. In situations of crises and widespread poverty, women are forced to take additional economic and social burdens upon themselves.

29. Although comprehensive data on household coping strategies were scarce, existing information suggested that, owing to the increase in poverty, most Palestinian households had reduced overall consumption and were starting to spend their savings. According to a public opinion poll by Birzeit University in February 2001, 84 per cent of respondents indicated that, in order to cope with the economic downturn, they had reduced expenditures, while 55 per cent had spent accumulated savings. Furthermore, 43 per cent of respondents had

taken new loans and 22 per cent had sold dowry or wedding gifts.<sup>15</sup>

30. Where women were heads of households, due to the death of their husband or other family members, they had to adapt to changes, including changes in their family role, under strained economic conditions. As a result, many women experienced severe psychological trauma. However, the changing role of women within the family, if accompanied by adequate economic conditions, might provide opportunities for women’s empowerment as women gain new decision-making powers within the household.

31. In order to counter the disastrous economic effects of income and job losses, the organizations of the United Nations system have provided assistance through various welfare and income-generating projects.

32. In 2000-2001, UNRWA, through its Income Generation Programme, granted loans valued at \$1.9 million to 3,385 women who supported 22,481 dependants. Since 1994, the Solidarity Group Lending Programme provided loans worth \$12.7 million to 18,182 women organized into 2,787 solidarity groups. Those women were granted loans through a graduated lending methodology that allowed them to obtain larger loans at the end of each successful repayment cycle. The programme was self-sufficient with all operational costs and loan loss provisions covered from revenues generated by lending and banking activities. As a result of the current crisis, the annual repayment rate for the programme fell from 98.65 per cent to 87.4 per cent.

33. In its women’s development project in Lebanon, UNICEF supported the camp committees’ microcredit revolving loan scheme, giving priority to ensuring that women benefited directly from the loans. Half of the loans were given to female-headed households and promoted women’s economic self-reliance. The project provided 350 loans as start-up capital, directly benefiting some 2,000 persons. For sustainability and close monitoring purposes, the management of the loans was turned over to the women’s union and camp committees.

34. In the West Bank and Gaza, the World Bank allocated \$12 million towards job-creation projects. The projects benefited mainly men as they constituted the majority of workers in infrastructure rehabilitation and agricultural sectors. However, 15 per cent of the jobs created went to women and the percentage of women who benefited indirectly was much higher.

35. The World Bank also implemented the “Second Community Development Project”, which identified the need to include women on microprojects’ committees. The project included targeted interventions, such as promoting women’s training centres and nursery schools in order to benefit women directly. Through the Palestinian NGO Project, the World Bank financed 105 projects which provided development grants. Fifteen per cent of those projects benefited women directly.

36. Through its “Development Market Place 2000 Competition”, the World Bank awarded a pilot project on “Pilot Training Centre for Disadvantaged Youth” which aimed to empower both young women and men through skills training.

37. UNRWA provided direct food and material assistance to special hardship case families, around 47 to 50 per cent of which were headed by women. From July 2000 until June 2001, a total of 33,172 participants benefited from the various activities of the Women’s Programme Centre, such as skills training, awareness-raising lectures on health, social, gender, civic and disability issues as well as legal counselling, play centres and nursery schools. Furthermore, the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) issued over \$600,000 in loans to more than 160 women. The Solidarity Group Lending Programme had reached out to more than 260 women’s groups since project-start-up, with a total amount of over \$400,000. Self-support programmes, which provided part-grant, part-loan financial allocations to special hardship case families to help them reach financial self-sustainability, benefited over 131 women and their families.

## **IV. Other measures for women’s empowerment**

### **Human rights**

38. With regard to violence and human rights, Palestinian women were impacted at different levels during the reporting period. On one hand, methods of arrest, administrative detention, methods of interrogation, conditions of detention and limited access to family and lawyers had a severe impact on Palestinians (see A/56/491). On the other hand, Palestinian women suffered from gender-related violence within society as well as within the family.

39. With regard to violence from Israeli authorities, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People reported that there were 2,500 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, many of whom continued to be subjected to psychological pressure and physical torture. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of Palestinian People and Other Arabs in the Occupied Territories reported that there were 10 female Palestinian detainees in the Ramla Prison Female Section. The Special Committee reported the case of one woman who was beaten and had her hands and legs shackled to a bed from 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. for two days. It also reported the case of two women who were kept in the same section as Israeli criminal prisoners and were subjected to attacks and harassment on a daily basis (see A/56/491). Those women prisoners protested against the prevailing conditions and asked for due representation, access to books, the media, letters, family visits and medical assistance. However, the prison administration did not respond to their demands. Female political leaders were kept together with Israeli criminal prisoners also in the Megiddo prison, where, owing to security reasons, family visits or telephone calls were restricted and access to lawyers was denied.

40. The Special Committee also reported that, on 23 January 2001, a Palestinian woman, suspected of luring an Israeli teenager to his death via an Internet relationship, petitioned the High Court of Justice demanding the right to meet with her lawyer. In her petition, she complained against the interrogation procedures of General Security Service interrogators. However, on 15 February 2001, the High Court of Justice issued a ruling stating that it was legal for the General Security Service to adopt interrogation procedures which would prevent suspects from sleeping, as long as the intention was to advance an investigation (see A/56/428).

41. With regard to gender-related violence within society and the family, a study funded by UNDP, and undertaken prior to the beginning of the second intifada, assessed the existing gaps hindering women from attaining equality and social justice within Palestinian society.<sup>16</sup> The study pointed out that Palestinian women and girls suffered from “honour crimes”, rape, incest and other forms of violence, particularly at the family level. For instance, the study suggested that annually, several girls were either killed or threatened with death for tarnishing “family” honour



and that, in the period between 1996 and 1999, 38 cases of “honour crimes” had been documented. It also reported that, according to 1998 statistics issued by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, a total of 115 cases of rape or attempted rape occurred in the occupied Palestinian territory. However, given the taboo surrounding the issue of domestic violence, according to the study, figures did not necessarily adequately reflect the volume of the problem. Gender discrimination was also inherent in criminal legislation whereby the crimes of rape, indecent assault and incest fell under the category of “crimes against public morals and ethics” rather than “crimes against individuals”. Such crimes were thus punished with shorter sentences.<sup>17</sup>

42. In situations of conflict or complex emergencies worldwide, many cases of increasing violence against women and girls are documented. Thus, it might be possible that, even in the occupied Palestinian territory, gender-related violence against women and girls was exacerbated by the political situation owing to the widespread frustration that the conflict was creating among Palestinians.

43. In order to address the issue of violence, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) implemented a project entitled “Helping victims of sexual abuse in Palestinian and Jordanian societies: strategies to aid disclosure and promote gender awareness within the criminal justice system” in February 2001. The project, implemented through the work of the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling in Ramallah and the Jordanian Women’s Union, focused on the sexual abuse of women and the stigma that surrounded the disclosure of such abuse. Project activities included the organization of workshops with girls and boys in public schools, aimed at creating a more open environment to discuss abuse as well as the production of a database on honour killings.

44. The Sustainable Human Development Unit of UNDP, through the Women’s Rights Campaign, funded three television spots on violence against women, as well as a study day on “poverty and violence” in relation to Palestinian women. In order to address the issue of women’s human rights, UNDP also supported the formulation of “A gap analysis report on the status of women in the Palestinian territories in the framework of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women”, carried out in cooperation with the Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling.

## **Peace and security**

45. In the follow-up to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) of 31 October 2000, which recognized the important role played by women in conflict prevention and resolution as well as post-conflict peace-building, the Arab States Regional Office of UNIFEM, together with the Jerusalem office of UNDP, carried out a study on the impact of armed conflict on Palestinian women, in collaboration with the Women’s Department of Birzeit University. The study undertook an analysis of the ways in which the current conflict had altered the status and situation of women, both individually and within the Palestinian community, and how those changes impacted on the provision of social services, education and advocacy support for women in the Palestinian territory. It was expected to be completed by the end of 2001.

## **Decision-making**

46. Despite the contributions of Palestinian women in most areas of development, their participation in the process of decision-making was remarkably low. Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics indicated that, in 1996, women represented only 6 per cent of Legislative Council members, 8 per cent of Palestine National Council members, 8 per cent of Ministers and 8 per cent of Labour Union members.<sup>18</sup> In the judiciary, there were three female judges, but there was no woman judge in the religious courts.<sup>19</sup> There were insufficient statistics on the membership rate of women to make any assessment of the participation of women in all the political parties.

47. On the issue of women in decision-making, UNIFEM funded a project on the Empowerment of women’s leadership which was implemented by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy. The project promoted gender awareness and capacity-building among Palestinian media professionals.

## **Awareness-raising**

48. In order to create awareness about the situation of Palestinian women regionally and worldwide, the United Nations Department of Public Information undertook several activities. United Nations Radio produced numerous radio programmes, including a

programme entitled “Women in black gain prominence”. This international movement of women, initiated in 1988 by a group of Israeli women protesting the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territory, spread to many countries as a movement against violence. The Middle East Radio Unit produced seven features on the social, economic and political hardships faced by women in the occupied Palestinian territory. Among its activities on the question of Palestine, the Department of Public Information also organized a training programme for a group of nine Palestinian media practitioners, including four women, aimed at strengthening their professional capacity as media personnel.

### **Gender mainstreaming**

49. UNIFEM implemented a regional project entitled “Post Beijing follow-up operation — phase II”, which achieved tangible results in building the institutional and organizational capacity of the General Union of Palestinian Women, as well as that of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Advancement of Women, to implement their national strategies and action plans for the advancement of women in the Palestinian territory. The project built the capacity of gender focal points in non-governmental organizations and line ministries to effectively advocate and mobilize Governments and other stakeholders to integrate a gender equality perspective into national planning and policy-making. It also played a facilitating role in establishing a network of Palestinian journalists around gender issues.

50. The UNDP Sustainable Human Development Unit reported that it was developing a comprehensive strategy to build capacity among the staff of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People to adopt a gender mainstreaming approach on the programme and project level and, more generally, to raise the level of awareness on gender issues.

51. The UNDP Sustainable Human Development Unit also initiated a project to support women’s units within various ministries. Furthermore, it funded the establishment of a Gender Statistics Unit at the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, whose purpose was to strengthen the Bureau’s capacity to produce and disseminate statistics related to gender issues.

## **V. Conclusions**

52. In the reporting period, the violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians had a significant negative effect on Palestinian women. Many women were killed or wounded and/or lost their husbands, children or other family members. Furthermore, the economic and social conditions of women were severely affected by the crisis as poverty rates continued to increase while access to basic services, such as education and health, was severely curtailed for women and girls.

53. During the crisis, the Palestinian Authority, civil society groups and organizations of the United Nations system have made considerable efforts to improve the conditions of Palestinian women and to encourage a negotiated solution. In particular, the United Nations organizations and specialized agencies reacted immediately to the emergency situation and shifted their focus from long-term sustainable development projects to the implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes aimed at meeting the urgent requirements of Palestinian women.<sup>20</sup>

54. In view of the current crisis, it is essential that United Nations entities continue to operate in the occupied territory and the refugee camps and that the focus on the advancement of women, particularly in areas such as education, health, social welfare, human rights, employment and economic empowerment, is strengthened. The meaningful work undertaken by UNRWA, as regards activities which benefit some 3.8 million Palestine refugees, including women and children, should be further supported.

55. Since the status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to the achievement of a peaceful resolution of the conflict, new efforts need to be made by the international community in order to end the violent confrontations in the occupied Palestinian territory. In this regard, it is particularly important that women are fully involved in any conflict-resolution and peace-building initiatives to be undertaken in the region in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It is also important that efforts be made to increase women’s full participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

56. The gender perspective should continue to be fully integrated in international assistance programmes,

through, inter alia, greater gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data. It is also important that a gender perspective be introduced in all studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of the Palestinian people.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/56/35)*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories on the Palestinian Economy, Spring 2001, 6 September 2001, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories on the impact on the Palestinian economy of confrontation, border closures and mobility restrictions, 1 October 2000 to 30 June 2001, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> These UNRWA statistics were taken from a presentation made by the United Nations Population Fund entitled "Aspects of the crises: clashes between Palestinians and Israelis".

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/56/35)*.

<sup>12</sup> "Discouraged workers" included those who exited the labour force and those of working age who never entered the labour force owing to their belief that it would have been impossible to find a job (see the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories on the Palestinian economy, Spring 2001, 6 September 2001, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, p. 17).

<sup>13</sup> See the report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories on the impact on the Palestinian economy of confrontation, border closures and mobility restrictions, 1 October 2000 to 30 June 2001, Gaza, Occupied Palestinian Territory, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> See the gap analysis report on the status of Palestinian women in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2001, pp. 5-8.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics were taken from the web site of the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics (<http://www.pcbs.org/english/gender/gdr.htm>).

<sup>19</sup> See the gap analysis report on the status of Palestinian women in the context of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 2001, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> The humanitarian assistance programmes of the United Nations system were coordinated through the Humanitarian Task Force for Emergency Needs, established on 3 October 2000. The Task Force was chaired by the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and comprised representatives of the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations system, the donor community, the International Committee of the Red Cross and key international non-governmental organizations (see A/56/123-E/2001/97 and Corr.1).

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**Commission on the Status of Women****Forty-seventh session**

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women  
and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled  
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”: review of gender mainstreaming  
in entities of the United Nations system****Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between September 2001 and September 2002. It reviews the effects on the situation of women of Israeli settlements and movement restrictions and closures, as well as the effects of the unfolding humanitarian crisis. The report provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, in particular with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, the human rights of women and the media. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2003/1.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 2002/25 of 24 July 2002 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed concern about the continuing dangerous deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-seventh session a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report, which covers the period from September 2001 to September 2002, assesses the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations Human Rights Inquiry Commission, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. Despite occasional references to the situation of women, the reports of these bodies and individuals rarely provided in-depth analysis of the specific situation of women within the overall population during the reporting period. Two recent studies, focusing on the situation of women, were also consulted in the preparation of the report.<sup>1</sup>

3. The report further reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the World Bank.

## **II. Situation of Palestinian women**

4. In the period under review, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including major towns such as Jenin, Ramallah, Nablus and Bethlehem, was characterized by continued violence, which left hundreds of civilians dead and thousands of Palestinians, including women and children, wounded (A/57/63-E/2002/21, para. 4; see A/ES-10/186, sect. III). Between 28 September 2000 and 31 January 2002, the records of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East indicate that an estimated 558 Palestinians were killed in the West Bank, and an estimated 364 Palestinians were killed in the Gaza Strip (A/57/63-E/2002/21, para. 4). Women have been injured near or inside their

homes or when attempting to cross checkpoints. They have also assumed the major responsibility as caregivers to the injured.

5. In May 2002, the Security Council held an Arria Formula meeting with two women, one Israeli and one Palestinian. The closed meeting provided an opportunity for the members of the Security Council to hear the views of women from the region, including on the importance of women's equal participation and full involvement in all conflict resolution efforts in the region.

### **Israeli settlements**

6. The expansion of the Israeli settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the destruction of land and the building of bypass roads in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to create difficulties for the Palestinians.<sup>2</sup> In the Gaza Strip over 400 houses were completely destroyed and 200 seriously damaged, leaving over 5,000 persons homeless (E/CN.4/2002/32, para. 29). Women are affected by house demolitions that usually render whole families homeless, with little or no means to rebuild their homes. Carried out without prior notice, families usually find themselves without clothes, food, furniture or other basic necessities, increasing the hardship for women who carry household responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

### **Movement restrictions and closures**

7. Movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has been severely restricted (E/CN.4/2002/32, para. 33), with Palestinians being subject to a variety of internal and external closures, curfews, roadblocks and restrictions that prevent or seriously inhibit movement and generally keep people confined to their villages or cities and often to their homes for extended periods, making it extremely difficult for the great majority of civilians, including women, to sustain their livelihoods.<sup>4</sup>

### **The unfolding humanitarian crisis**

8. On 7 August 2002, the Secretary-General appointed Catherine Bertini as his Personal Humanitarian Envoy, who travelled to the region (11-19 August) to assess the nature and scale of the humanitarian crisis, review humanitarian needs and propose recommendations for action. The mission concluded that there was a serious humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, inextricably linked to the ongoing conflict, and characterized it as a crisis of access and mobility.<sup>5</sup> During her mission, the Envoy also met with women's groups.

9. As a consequence of the restrictions on movement, normal economic activity, movement of persons and goods, and access to basic services throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have been paralysed, with devastating effects on the Palestinian economy (A/ES-10/186, para. 37 [d]) and sharp declines in all sectors, especially in agriculture, industry, commerce and tourism. Daily Palestinian income losses have been estimated at some \$7.6 million. Since the start of the current intifada, overall income losses have been estimated at \$3.3 billion.<sup>6</sup>

10. The severe economic depression in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip has led to an increase in poverty, including among women. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator estimates that the 60 per cent poverty rate has already been reached, with levels at approximately 55 per cent in the West Bank and 70 per cent in the Gaza Strip. Total economic breakdown has been prevented only with continued injections of budgetary support from international donors. Donor aid, currently at \$900 million United States dollars (US\$) annually, cannot come close to covering the cumulative losses.<sup>7</sup>

11. Lack of domestic economic activity has led to an almost 20 per cent contraction in employment,<sup>8</sup> raising the unemployment rate from 11 per cent in the third quarter of 2000 to 78 per cent in the second quarter of 2002.<sup>9</sup> This decline has also affected women's labour force participation, which has remained persistently low. Women have been severely affected by the decline in the agriculture sector as they play a major role in agriculture production for the household economy, and loss of land, or of access to land, deprives them of a vital source of income for the household. The decline in agricultural activities not only greatly increases the burden on women to provide for their families, but also negatively affects their status within the household and society.<sup>10</sup>

12. Access to water has been greatly affected by closures owing to obstacles placed in the way of water lorries, the destruction of wells, rooftop water tanks and rain collection pools by shelling, the damaging of water resources by settlers and soldiers and the high consumption of water by settlers (E/CN.4/2002/32, para. 36). The plight of some 200,000 Palestinians who do not have access to a water network and rely mostly on rainfall remains especially difficult. Water costs have tripled in some areas, making it more difficult for families to meet their basic domestic and vital needs. Some of the population reportedly went into debt to purchase water, while others cut consumption or used unclean supplies.<sup>11</sup> The water used is of extremely poor quality and has a detrimental effect on people's health, in particular on the most vulnerable population groups — children, women and the elderly.<sup>12</sup>

13. The ongoing conflict has affected the nutritional and health status of women and children. A recent study funded by the United States Agency for International Development<sup>13</sup> found widespread malnutrition, in particular among children and women of childbearing age, with a significant proportion of chronically malnourished children. Children's levels of moderate and severe malnourishment were found to be at 13.2 per cent for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip combined, with rates in the Gaza Strip five times those of the West Bank (17.5 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively). The study also found that women in the Gaza Strip showed a tendency towards a greater prevalence of anaemia, which can lead to low birth-weight infants and premature delivery among pregnant women. A market survey within the study found that market disruptions from curfews, closures, military incursions, border closures and checkpoints affected access to key high protein foods, especially meat and poultry and dairy products, and in particular, infant formula and powdered milk. It also found that a significant portion of the population could not afford high protein foods, and nearly a third had difficulty affording basic inexpensive staples such as bread and rice.

14. According to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the adverse impact of closures and prolonged curfews on

Palestinian villages and towns severely restricted the access of civilians, especially women, to life-saving services such as emergency obstetric care (see A/57/207). Indicators of a breakdown in preventive services in the West Bank, in particular, include an increase in stillbirths and low birth-weight rates, late registration and irregular attendance of pregnant women for antenatal care (see A/57/63-E/2002/21). According to witnesses, the current crisis has adversely affected not only Palestinians' general physical health and health-care facilities, but also their psychosocial well-being. Trauma and stress have already become a serious health problem, especially for women and young people (see A/57/207).

15. The human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has also deteriorated seriously, with severe violations of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population and a rapid escalation of violence in the region. A report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (A/57/63-E/2002/21) described the serious gender impacts of the crisis and reported that incidences of gender-based violence within families had been multiplying. The report also stated that the destruction of homes and the death of male heads of household, coupled with men's frustration owing to unemployment and immobility, have resulted in a sharp increase in incest and domestic violence. According to a UNIFEM study,<sup>14</sup> Palestinian women have been subjected to various violations of their human rights including forced displacement, loss of employment and lack of health services. It reported that over the years many women had been arrested for political reasons, held in solitary confinement, forced to give birth in their prison cells, tortured, verbally and sexually threatened, and abused.

16. Education at all levels has suffered seriously since the beginning of the crisis. Some schools have been used by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) as military outposts; others have been bombed; over a hundred have come under fire, both in the daytime when the schools are in session and at night. School attendance has been hampered by checkpoints, which prevent both pupils and teachers from reaching school on time, and by military curfews. Schools have lost considerable teaching time as a result of interruption and closures; absenteeism is rife as schools no longer provide a secure environment; and academic performance has deteriorated (E/CN.4/2002/32, para. 45).

17. Female pupils and teachers tend to be affected more gravely by the increased problems of access to education and the dangers involved in travelling to and from school, as well as the danger students and teachers are exposed to in schools. Parents have prohibited daughters from attending classes out of fear for their safety, and female pupils and teachers walk long distances in deserted areas to avoid soldiers and settlers. Female teachers are more likely to discontinue working owing to these dangers and to gender-based social perceptions that reduce the woman's role in public life.<sup>15</sup>

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

18. While the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has made it difficult for international organizations to provide direct assistance to Palestinian women, the organizations of the United Nations system have continued to respond to their needs.



## **Economic activities**

19. In its Medium-Term Plan for 2002-2005 and its current programme of work and priorities for 2002-2003, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has given special attention to the socio-economic situation of Palestinian people in general and to Palestinian women in particular. In collaboration with the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organizations and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in Damascus, ESCWA is also executing a project to provide gender-sensitive socio-economic data on the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 60 per cent of whom are women.

20. The United Nations Development Programme has continued to provide support and services to women-owned household economy projects in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. One project aims to create opportunities for women to establish new, or rehabilitate and maintain existing, household economy activities to increase their production and sales volume and improve their financial and technical capacities. The ultimate objective of the project is to secure additional income for poor families, especially in the existing situation, with efforts directed at the poorest areas of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. So far, two Palestinian non-governmental organizations have been contracted to implement such projects in the West Bank. UNDP also supported the establishment of a women's design centre in Bethlehem, which aims to increase the income of rural and urban artisan women and contribute to their sustainable livelihood by promoting Palestinian handicrafts in local and international markets.

21. The United Nations Development Fund for Women launched and continues to support a regional resource network of women's small and microenterprises in the Gaza Strip as well as in Lebanon, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The aim of the project is to increase women's access to and control over economic resources by upgrading their technical and financial business management skills. The network also aims to strengthen the outreach and sustainability of gender-sensitive small and medium-sized enterprise development programmes, and it promotes cooperation between such institutions.

22. During the period 2001/2002 the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East delivered economic assistance to Palestinian refugees through the provision of credit to microentrepreneurs. UNRWA's microfinance and microenterprise programme granted 2,893 loans to women, valued at \$1.36 million. Until the onset of the economic crisis resulting from the closures and restrictions on movement of Palestinian labour and commodities beginning in October 2000, the programme had been fully self-sufficient, covering its costs from credit operations. In 2001, the programme's rate of self-sufficiency fell to 89 per cent as expenditures outstripped income, with declining repayment rates and a reduction in loan size brought about by the closures and economic decline. As a result of the current crisis, the annual repayment rate for the product fell from 97 per cent in 1999 to 91 per cent in 2001 and to 83 per cent in the first half of 2002. However, despite the loss in portfolio efficiency and quality, the women's credit product continued to perform adequately in the face of the enormous pressures facing the business community, and it remains one of the only sources of credit for women microentrepreneurs.

23. From July 2001 to June 2002, UNRWA assisted approximately 6 per cent of its poorest registered refugees (special hardship case families). Out of a total population of almost 4 million Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA, 43 to 52 per cent, depending on the field of operation, are families headed by women. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided those families with a critical safety net in the form of food support and selective cash assistance. The Agency also promoted community participation by and community services for Palestinian refugee women through 70 women's programme centres, which included occupational training programmes, kindergartens and nurseries. A total of 40,240 participants, mainly women and children, benefited from these services. Furthermore, the Agency promoted the self-reliance of Palestinian refugee women through its poverty alleviation programme, which issued \$81,750 in small loans during the period under review to more than 70 women and through the solidarity group lending product, which assisted 261 women's support groups with a total of \$371,186. Other self-support programmes, which provided part-grant, part-loan financing to help special hardship case families generate income, benefited more than 25 women and their families, with a total amount of \$59,265.

24. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization established an integrated support programme to Palestinian industry with a focus on industrial upgrading. The programme is comprised of two major components: (a) building capacity of the Ministry of Industry; and (b) building capacity of the private sector with five subcomponents respectively. While the programme does not have a specific component of assistance to Palestinian women, during the period under review, women were trained in quality management and enterprise upgrading. Women also participated in the training on UNIDO business performance software, and received training in Quality and Enterprise Diagnostic.

25. The ILO Regional Office for Arab States has undertaken activities to provide assistance to Palestinian women. An interregional programme on capacity-building for gender equality, employment promotion and poverty eradication in selected countries of Western Asia and North Africa and in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is currently under implementation. The main objectives of the programme are to enhance capacities at local, national and regional levels to address the linkages between gender, poverty and employment, and to develop and implement anti-poverty employment policies and programmes that contribute to gender equality. The International Labour Organization has also developed several projects aimed at strengthening the national capacity for promoting women's security and employability in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and at strengthening women's participation in Palestinian trade unions. The ILO also reported that disruption created by the crisis made it impossible to implement the action plan for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Labour that it had developed in 2000.

26. In response to the emergency needs, the World Bank manages a total of over \$25 million bilateral donor funds destined for job-creation projects. One of the main selection criteria is a project's ability to benefit women directly. The West Bank and Gaza: second community development project, funded by the World Bank, identifies the need to integrate criteria such as inclusion of women, youth and the poor in social appraisals. Targeted interventions, such as promoting kindergartens and training centres for women, will benefit women directly. Under this project, a series of meetings attended only by women enabled them to voice their opinion on the design and implementation of different project components.

27. The World Bank is also implementing its emergency services support project, approved by the Bank's Executive Directors in February 2002, which aims to mitigate the deterioration of basic social and municipal services brought about by the ongoing conflict and its negative effects on economic activity and revenue. The project will, among other things, improve the availability of basic services in the health sector, sustain municipal waste management and secure essential school supplies. Through its country office in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the World Bank, with other donors, is also an active participant in the gender task force.

### **Humanitarian assistance**

28. At the beginning of 2002, the World Food Programme was providing assistance to some 371,000 non-refugee vulnerable Palestinians who had no reliable source of income. To respond to the increased food aid requirements of the non-refugee population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the World Food Programme merged its ongoing emergency and protracted relief and recovery operations into a new and bigger emergency operation, which was approved jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in May 2002, at a total cost to the World Food Programme of \$18.3 million.

29. Women remain the primary recipients of World Food Programme food aid in the Palestinian territories, constituting about 60 per cent of the food aid beneficiaries of WFP's emergency operation, and food aid is used as a means to reinforce the woman's role as a decision maker in society. Around 900 women participated in committees managing food aid at the municipal and village levels. In September 2000, the chairperson of the inter-ministerial relief committee, who was also the Minister of Social Affairs, was a woman, as were 60 per cent of the social workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs. The strong presence of women in social institutions and their active involvement in welfare work ensured that women's needs as beneficiaries and participants were considered.

30. To the greatest extent possible, considering distances to distribution centres and security conditions, the World Food Programme makes all efforts with its partners to distribute the food rations directly to the adult women of registered families. This is considered a tool to strengthen the woman's role within the family. About 55 per cent of food aid recipients at distribution sites were women. Women were encouraged to participate actively in food-for-work schemes that included rehabilitation of agricultural land in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, rehabilitation of water cisterns and rehabilitation of home gardens. Training activities were organized on topics such as food processing, food security, first aid and literacy, where the women who attended received in exchange a monthly ration of food for their families. About half of the persons living in hospitals and charitable institutions who received WFP food aid were women and girls.

31. Until December 2002, the World Food Programme planned to provide food aid to half a million food insecure poor and destitute persons who were either not able to work even if employment were available (among them many female heads of households, disabled or elderly people) or who had been unemployed for over one year. The plan also included some 10,000 people in hospitals and social institutions.

## Education and training

32. The education programme of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East continued to be one of the primary means by which the Agency promoted the human resource development of female Palestinian refugees. In the 2001/2002 academic year, 486,026 pupils were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools, of whom 243,259, or 50 per cent, were female. Of the Agency's 16,168 teachers, 48 per cent were female. Palestinian refugee women accounted for 72 per cent of the participants in UNRWA's pre and in-service teacher training courses and for 64 per cent of its trainees in technical and semi-professional courses. Of the 197 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 2001/2002, 46 per cent were held by women. In addition, during 2001/2002, 58 Palestinian women in Lebanon benefited from a scholarship project addressed to women only and managed by UNRWA on behalf of a donor country. A separate scholarship programme, administered with the support of two international non-governmental organizations and the Cisco Learning Institute, provided training scholarships to 60 disadvantaged Palestine refugees from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Of those, 75 per cent were given to female refugees.

33. The Department of Education of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) made special efforts to help Palestinian refugee women acquire modern technological skills through a gender-specific project in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women. The project emphasized equal access to information and communication technologies by Palestine refugee women and men, encouraged gender balance in recruitment and retention policies, built capacity to produce appropriate information content for Palestine refugee women and helped them to fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community participation roles. In a further effort to improve the human resources of Palestine refugee women, in 2001 UNRWA revised the admissions policy at its Education Science Faculty in Jordan, which offered pre-service teacher training leading to a first-level university degree, by assigning 50 per cent of the places to qualified Palestinian refugee women in order to promote gender balance in the faculty. UNRWA also sought to promote the human resource capacities of Palestinian refugee women through its recruitment policy. Women occupy 55.5 per cent of senior managerial posts in the UNRWA/UNESCO Department of Education.

34. The United Nations Children's Fund supported the Ministry of Education in the back-to-school campaign, aimed at maintaining high enrolment rates despite economic and mobility difficulties. A media campaign to encourage children to return to and stay in school was conducted, and schools are being supported by UNICEF to provide assistance to 14,000 Palestinian children in need. UNICEF support also reached a considerable number of Palestinian refugee women in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, through a variety of activities. These included training of pre-school teachers, adult literacy sessions, administrative and computer skills training courses, and vocational training for women, including management of small businesses. UNICEF also supported income-generating projects, health education, basic health and first aid concepts, nutrition and early child development, including the detection and prevention of child abuse, and the

training of health workers to educate mothers, provide antenatal care and promote breastfeeding.

35. The International Labour Organization faced difficulties in administering training courses. Owing to internal travel restrictions and border closures, Palestinian participants, including women, were unable to attend annual Arabic language courses undertaken in collaboration with the Arab States programme at the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin. They were also unable to attend courses on women workers' rights, equality in employment and family responsibilities.

## **Health**

36. In order to promote the health status of Palestinian refugee women, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East provided maternal and child health care and family planning services as an integral part of its primary health care. During 2001, more than 76,000 women received antenatal care in the Agency's five fields of operation, representing approximately 59 per cent of all expected deliveries among registered refugees. Approximately 20,800 new family-planning acceptors were enrolled in the programme and the total number of continuing users exceeded 87,000.

37. UNRWA sustained full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases, supported by school health services and iron supplementation for women throughout pregnancy and post delivery as well as by health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, which were implemented as multisectoral activities targeting schoolchildren and women. Great attention was paid to improving the access of women to quality care, health information and services. Within the context of its family planning services, the health programme addressed such issues as early childbearing and its consequences for the health of women and children as a matter of high priority. The health programme sought to strengthen its gender-sensitive programming by obtaining, whenever possible, sex-disaggregated data, with the objective of reducing gender-based health disparities.

38. The United Nations Children's Fund continued to facilitate Ministry of Health access to remote and closed areas by making available international staff and a United Nations vehicle, thereby sustaining routine vaccination services in the West Bank. Technical support was given to the Ministry of Health to expand immunization, monitor maternal and child health programmes, and train health workers. UNICEF also assisted in the procurement of vaccines and essential medicines on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development. In response to the growing concern for the nutrition of women and children in the occupied Palestinian territories, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health's efforts to enhance the capacity of maternal and child health workers in the following areas: providing appropriate child feeding, growth monitoring, advice and referral; coordinating with all key stakeholders to ensure the fortification of flour supplies with iron; proposing more efficient iron and folic acid supplementation programmes; increasing awareness-raising activities on the importance of breastfeeding; and expanding public education programmes, including public health announcements on television.

39. The United Nations Children's Fund supported a women's health project in which the obstetrics and neonatal units of two hospitals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were upgraded with the provision of equipment and support for staff training in quality essential obstetric and neonatal care. To strengthen the maternal care monitoring system, UNICEF supported the updating and printing of registry books for high-risk pregnancy and maternal and child health, in addition to the completion of a verbal autopsy of all deaths of women of reproductive age as part of a national survey on maternal mortality. UNICEF supported psychosocial interventions at the national and district levels conducted by the Palestinian Authority and non-governmental organizations, including the training of social workers to improve their skills; the provision of psychosocial information and services to families; awareness-raising through television spots and brochures for parents; and the delivery of family kits. UNICEF initiated or supported psychosocial coordination and planning in Jenin, Jericho, Tulkarem and the five districts of the Gaza Strip, and continued to chair the United Nations psychosocial coordination group.

40. The outcomes of various nutrition studies by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and its own recent field mission to Jerusalem reinforced that agency's determination to pursue its initiatives to provide assistance for policy formulation and strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Agriculture, and to support the field activities of the numerous local non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and other international stakeholders.

### **Women's human rights, including violence against women**

41. Under a technical assistance project, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights funded the women's unit of a non-governmental organization dealing with human rights. The United Nations Development Fund for Women supported the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to develop strategies to aid disclosure and promote greater awareness within the criminal justice system of crimes of violence committed against women. The project has trained judges on the legal aspects of sexual abuse and provided information on such cases to promote greater public awareness on the issue. Through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women, UNIFEM supports a project to empower Palestinian women to confront and protect themselves against violent behaviour.

### **Media**

42. The Department of Public Information held its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners from October to December 2001, in which nine Palestinian broadcasters and journalists, including four women, participated. United Nations radio produced an English magazine entitled "Israeli and Palestinian women offer a model of cooperation" which focused on the Security Council meeting held in May 2002 during which Israeli and Palestinian women were invited to share their views on the conflict in the Middle East. The Middle East Radio Unit produced five features on Palestinian women, including their activities in a non-governmental organization conference held concurrently with the World Conference against

Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa in 2001, and their role in helping children to cope with violence. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information interviewed a number of prominent Palestinian women.

43. The United Nations Development Fund for Women supports a project to strengthen strategic partnerships between media and women's organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Through the initiative, a media and women leaders network has been established, and local media and women's organizations have been trained in gender-sensitive reporting and campaigning.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

44. **The situation of Palestinian women is inextricably linked to overall developments in the region and to progress in the peace process. There are, however, important and significant differences in how women and men respectively are affected by the socio-economic and political situation. These effects are apparent in such areas as basic social services, including education and health, economic opportunities and means of livelihood, and require particular attention in terms of data collection and analysis as well as remedial action. As the international community seeks ways to end the conflict, it is important that gender perspectives are highlighted and that women are fully involved in the conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.**

45. **While the reports by relevant bodies and individuals provided valuable information on the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in some instances also referred to the particular situation of women, further opportunities should be sought to highlight fully the specific ways in which the crisis impacts on women as compared with men so that targeted action can be taken to mitigate negative gender-specific impact. The collection of data disaggregated by sex, which is currently insufficient, and specific studies on the impact of the crisis on women in particular areas should be encouraged.**

46. **The entities of the United Nations system, and especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, continued to provide assistance to Palestinian women through humanitarian assistance, as well as projects to enhance women's capacity to provide for themselves and their families and to maintain women's access to education and health. United Nations entities, however, also encountered difficulties in their work as a result of the crisis.**

47. **Continuing support by the entities of the United Nations system is critical for the benefit of Palestinian women in the occupied territories and refugee camps. As the conflict exacerbates existing hardships and creates new difficulties, continued assistance should focus in particular on such areas as women's employment and economic empowerment, education, health, social welfare and violence against women. Further efforts should be undertaken to explicitly identify and address gender perspectives in all international assistance programmes, in addition to implementing projects specifically targeted to women.**

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*Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> Eileen Kuttab and Riham Bargouti, “Impact of armed conflict on Palestinian women”, study prepared for the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (2002); and Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University, “Preliminary findings of the nutritional assessment and sentinel surveillance system for West Bank and Gaza” (Global Management Consulting Group; Brussels, Care International; and Washington, D.C., United States Agency for International Development, 2002). Available from [http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/reports\\_1.htm](http://www.usaid.gov/wbg/reports_1.htm).
- <sup>2</sup> Office of the United Special Coordinator, *The Impact of Closure and Other Mobility Restrictions on Palestinian Productive Activities, 1 January 2002-30 June 2002* (United Nations, 2002).
- <sup>3</sup> Kuttab and Bargouti, op. cit.
- <sup>4</sup> Kuttab and Bargouti, op. cit.; Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator, *The Impact of Closure ...*; Catherine Bertini, “Mission report of the Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General, 11-19 August 2002” (United Nations, 2002), available from [http://domino.un.org/bertini\\_rpt.htm](http://domino.un.org/bertini_rpt.htm).
- <sup>5</sup> Bertini, *ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/57/35)*, para. 21.
- <sup>7</sup> Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator, *The Impact of Closure ...*.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/57/35)*, para. 21.
- <sup>10</sup> Kuttab and Bargouti, op. cit.
- <sup>11</sup> Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator, *The Impact of Closure ...*.
- <sup>12</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/57/35)*, para. 29.
- <sup>13</sup> Johns Hopkins University and Al-Quds University, “Preliminary findings ...”.
- <sup>14</sup> Kuttab and Bargouti, op. cit.
- <sup>15</sup> Kuttab and Bargouti, op. cit.
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**Commission on the Status of Women****Forty-eighth session**

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"****Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between September 2002 and September 2003. It reviews the effects of continued movement restriction and closures, the construction of settlements, outposts and a separation wall, as well as the unfolding socio-economic crisis, on the situation of women. The report provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, in particular with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, the human rights of women, and the media and advocacy. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2004/1.

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2003/42 of 22 July 2003 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-eighth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report, which covers the period from September 2002 to September 2003, assesses the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and in the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the United Nations Human Rights Inquiry Commission, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, and the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority. Despite occasional references to the situation of women, the reports of those bodies and individuals rarely provided an in-depth analysis of the specific situation of women within the overall population during the reporting period.

3. The report further reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank.

4. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2003/42, ESCWA commissioned a report which provides an overview of the most important demographic indicators over the period 1990-2000, such as population size, age/sex, structure of the population, marriage patterns, fertility rates, types of households and employment status.<sup>1</sup> It further examines the situation of Palestinian women in different areas, such as political participation, the labour market, education and health, and focuses also on poverty among women.

5. The second part of the report provides a review of the political and socio-economic situation facing the Palestinian community as a whole since the inception of the second intifada (29 September 2000) and the particular impact of that intifada

on the situation of Palestinian women. The report indicates that women's lives were greatly affected by loss of income, increased poverty and decreased access to health services as well as by the death or injury of family members, including primary breadwinners and children.

6. The report emphasizes the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes. It also highlights the importance of developing special policies and programmes that will target the vulnerable groups of women, such as women heads of household and women in poverty.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

7. During the period under review, the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel continued to have a serious detrimental effect on all aspects of the living conditions of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian economy continued to accumulate losses, currently equal to half of its annual gross domestic product. Unemployment increased threefold and poverty rose among more than two thirds of the population. Women and children have borne a special and enduring burden resulting from the occupation.<sup>2</sup>

8. The human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose a residence, the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing, the right to education, the right to health and the right to life, has drastically deteriorated.<sup>3</sup> The serious violation of economic, social and cultural rights has been accompanied by the continued violation of civil rights and international humanitarian law. Detentions, inhuman treatment and the destruction of property have also multiplied, while Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza continue to grow.<sup>4</sup> Despite some hopes generated by the launching of the road map in early June 2003, a number of concerns were reported in connection with the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>5</sup>

9. According to the *Palestine Monitor* and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel, between September 2000 and July 2003, the deaths of 2,572 Palestinians and 828 Israelis were recorded as a result of widespread violence. The *Palestine Monitor* reported that the vast majority of Palestinians killed were male, 325 were children under the age of 15, and 173 were women.<sup>6</sup> Between 1 July 2002 and 30 June 2003, 696 civilians were killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (413 in the Gaza Strip and 283 in the West Bank), according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights.<sup>7</sup>

10. The humanitarian crisis, emerging from sharply increasing unemployment and deteriorating economic conditions due to the Israeli closure policy, has been further exacerbated by the increasing restrictions imposed on access to international humanitarian agencies. Between April and June 2003, access to the Gaza Strip was denied or delayed to international citizens, including staff of United Nations agencies, and international and Palestinian organizations. In May 2003, borders were closed to all international citizens, except diplomatic passport holders, for a period of nine days.<sup>8</sup>

11. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Detainees, women living in the Occupied Palestinian Territories have been arrested in Israel for political reasons.

Prior to the outbreak of the crisis in September 2000, there were three Palestinian women prisoners. Over the past three years, an additional 77 women were arrested, seven of whom are from Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup> Since June 2002, the reunification of Israeli-Palestinian families has been suspended.<sup>10</sup> Under the new Israeli rule, Palestinian women living in East Jerusalem, currently governed by Israel, were regarded as mere residents and were not allowed to give their nationality or residency to their husbands or children.<sup>11</sup>

12. The current crisis continued to affect the situation of Palestinian women. Women's responsibilities within households had expanded due to the death, imprisonment or unemployment of male members of households. Many women were placed in the position of being a primary household provider, caregiver and the main strategist for coping financially, mentally and physically with the new situation.<sup>12</sup>

### **Movement restrictions and closures**

13. Due to the closures of roads, local curfews and the multiplication of checkpoints, thousands of ordinary Palestinian citizens are prevented from going to work, cultivating their fields or sending their children to school. In some cases, women were injured near or inside their homes or when attempting to cross checkpoints in the course of going to work or seeking employment.<sup>13</sup> About 140 checkpoints operated in the West Bank, and 25 to 30 others in the Gaza Strip.<sup>14</sup> Hundreds of farmers lost their income since they were unable to cultivate their fields due to local curfews, road closures and checkpoints.<sup>15</sup> Women have been severely affected by the decline in the agricultural sector, a vital source of income for the household.<sup>16</sup> Many schools were unable to operate for extended periods during curfews. According to the World Bank, 170,000 children and over 6,650 teachers were unable to reach their regular classrooms and at least 580 schools were closed owing to curfews, closures and home confinement.<sup>17</sup> Since September 2002, children and students from kindergarten to the university level in most areas have been unable to attend school for about half of the total school days due to closures and curfews. School closures, loss of employment and economic pressures contributed to an increase in child labour, especially for those under 15 years.<sup>18</sup> Many secondary school students, including girls, failed to reach the examination centres in time for their yearly exams.<sup>19</sup>

14. For security reasons, visas are no longer issued for young Palestinians under 35 years of age to travel abroad or to move from one city of the Occupied Palestinian Territory to another. It was also reported that a number of expectant mothers could not reach the nearest hospital in time and gave birth instead at checkpoints under disastrous hygienic conditions. An increasing number of ambulances have been made to wait for hours at the checkpoints.<sup>20</sup>

### **The construction of a separation wall**

15. According to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Israeli Ministry of Defence announced on 31 July 2003 that the construction of Phase I of the wall had been completed. Its 145-kilometre route runs from the village of Salem in the north to the "Elkana" settlement, south-east of Qalqilya. During the construction, Palestinian homes were demolished and swathes

of land were bulldozed and seized. The completed construction has already resulted in the confiscation of 2,850 acres of high-income Palestinian land. Over 50 communities along the wall's path have been affected. In August 2003, the Israeli authorities issued land expropriation orders for the "Jerusalem Envelope" barrier, which could leave some 50,000 Palestinians isolated on the Israeli side. In early September 2003, the Treasury decided to provide an additional 500 million new shekels (about \$112 million) to complete the separation wall in the Jerusalem area. On 1 October 2003, the Israeli Cabinet approved the second phase of the wall, running from "Elkana" to Jerusalem, where a separate network of barriers was being built.<sup>21</sup>

16. In some places the wall is located as much as 6 kilometres inside the West Bank. As a result, villages and communities are physically separated from the rest of the West Bank and have become isolated Palestinian pockets where the inhabitants will be effectively cut off from their land and work places and/or their schools, health clinics and other social services.<sup>22</sup> It was estimated that about 200,000 inhabitants of the West Bank in more than 65 towns and villages will be directly affected.<sup>23</sup>

17. Access to safe drinking water will be disrupted and farmland destroyed, threatening the livelihoods of tens of thousands of Palestinians and damaging a wide spectrum of economic flows and social and educational services. It has been estimated, in accordance with UNICEF statistics, that 100,000 dunums of the West Bank's most fertile agricultural land, confiscated by the Israeli occupation forces, has been destroyed during the first phase of the wall construction. Vast amounts of property, notably private agricultural land and olive trees, wells, citrus groves and hothouses, which tens of thousands of Palestinians relied upon for their survival, have disappeared. In addition, further agricultural land adjacent to the wall has allegedly been declared off limits to Palestinians.<sup>24</sup>

### **Humanitarian and socio-economic crisis**

18. According to the World Bank, at the end of 2002, all Palestinian economic indicators showed a persistent decline. Gross national income per capita had fallen to nearly half of its 2000 level. More than 50 per cent of the Palestinian workforce was unemployed. The portion of the population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip living under the poverty line of US\$ 2 per day had increased from 20 per cent in 1999 to 60 per cent by December 2002. The number of the poor had tripled from its level of 637,000 in September 2000 to nearly 2 million in March 2003.<sup>25</sup>

19. The number of work permits issued by Israel declined sharply with the outbreak of the intifada. Only 32,000 permits had been issued by the end of 2002, compared with the figure of approximately 128,000 Palestinians working in Israel and Israeli settlements in September 2000. The proportion of women active in the labour market also continued to decline, falling to 11.6 per cent in the first quarter of 2003, from 13.9 per cent in the third quarter of 2000. The informal labour sector, where women were largely represented, had also been adversely affected by the economic crisis.<sup>26</sup>

20. According to the Humanitarian Plan of Action 2003 for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, compiled by the United Nations Technical Assessment Mission of October 2002, more than 200,000 people who depend on supplies

brought in by water tankers were left without adequate water supply for long periods because of curfews and closures. Problems of access were compounded by the fact that a number of water systems (water pipes, pumps and wells) were destroyed and a sizeable number of wells and reservoirs in rural areas have been damaged, destroyed or made inaccessible because of the ongoing violence. A number of West Bank villages adjacent to Israeli settlements have suffered from recurring closures of the main valves on their water networks.<sup>27</sup>

21. The dramatic decline in the standard of living increased malnutrition and has resulted in a worsening of health conditions. According to the World Bank, real per capita food consumption had declined by 30 per cent in the past two years. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics has reported that approximately one in every four women and children under the age of five suffers from mild anaemia, while 15.3 per cent of children under five, and 6.1 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 49, suffer from moderate anaemia.<sup>28</sup> An update of the nutritional assessment carried out by the World Bank in January 2003 found global acute protein-calorie malnutrition in 9.3 per cent of the children across the West Bank and Gaza (13.3 per cent in Gaza and 4.3 per cent in the West Bank).<sup>29</sup>

22. A joint WFP/FAO Food Security and Nutrition Assessment Mission fielded in April/May 2003 noted that the capacity of Palestinian households to cope was increasingly declining. The mission further indicated that among the negative coping mechanisms adopted by many affected households were reducing expenditures on health and education, resorting to cheaper and less nutritious foods, and eating only one meal per day. A vast majority of Palestinians had become dependent on food aid for their survival.<sup>30</sup>

23. According to UNICEF statistics for June 2003, 38 per cent of Palestinian mothers reported increased difficulties in gaining access to health services and 65 per cent reported that the quality of their food had deteriorated.<sup>31</sup> A sharp increase was observed in the number of births in ambulances or at home, causing distress and complications to mothers.<sup>32</sup> According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, delays at checkpoints had resulted in 46 women delivering their babies while waiting for permission to pass through, and as a result, 24 women and 27 newborn babies had died.<sup>33</sup> The incidence of psychosocial trauma continued to climb, and it was also reported that 43 per cent of Palestinian women had requested psychosocial support.<sup>34</sup>

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

24. While the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories has made it difficult for international organizations to provide direct assistance to Palestinian women, the organizations of the United Nations system have continued to respond to their needs.

#### **Economic activities**

25. During the period 2002/03, UNRWA delivered economic assistance to Palestinian refugees through the provision of credit to microentrepreneurs. The Agency's microfinance and microenterprise programme granted 3,748 loans to

women, valued at \$1.75 million. During the reporting period, nearly 1,250 women received a total of four loans or more each from the Solidarity Group lending product programme. A prime engine of the programme's recovery was the women's lending product, through rising repayment rates that increased to 94 per cent in 2002, and had already reached 91 per cent during the first six months of 2003. The women's credit product remained the most resilient of all of the programme's credit products, and it was catering to an increasing number of women microentrepreneurs who had entered the informal economy as a result of increased household poverty and hardship. The UNRWA Solidarity Group lending product programme remained one of the few sources of credit for such women.

26. During the period under review, UNRWA assisted approximately 6.05 per cent of the poorest registered refugees (special hardship case families). Out of a total population of 4,108,461 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA, 45.8 per cent were families headed by women. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided those families with a critical safety net in the form of food support and selective cash assistance. The Agency also promoted community participation for Palestine refugee women through 71 women's programme centres, with activities including occupational training programmes, kindergartens and nurseries. A total of 48,757 participants, mainly women and children, benefited from these services. Furthermore, the Agency promoted the self-reliance of Palestine refugee women through its poverty alleviation programme, which disbursed \$82,533 in small loans to more than 76 women during the period under review, and through the Solidarity Group lending schemes, which assisted more than 95 women's support groups with a total of \$180,470. Other self-support programmes, which provided part-grant/part-loan financing to help special hardship case families generate income, benefited over 20 women and their families, with a total amount of \$63,023.

27. UNDP provided its assistance to Palestinian women through project activities targeting female-headed rural households. One project, entitled "Emergency response programme for social infrastructure development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and aimed to achieve sustainable food security and income generation through investing in livestock. Another project, entitled "Emergency support to existing small income generation projects", aimed to provide financial and technical support to 30 small, women-run projects. As a result of the stagnation of the economy and the high unemployment rate of the male breadwinners, the small and unsustainable projects run by these women have come to be the only means for income generation for the household. UNDP also continued the implementation of two other projects: "Fund for women's initiatives in local communities" and "Support to the women-owned household economy" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Through these projects, UNDP continued to provide technical and financial support as well as training for community-based women's organizations, as well as women business owners. These projects benefited 620 women and their families and communities.

28. UNCTAD collaborated with the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committee to support the livelihoods of Palestinian farmers, including women, by assisting them in marketing their large surplus of olive oil.

29. The ILO Regional Office for Arab States has undertaken activities to provide assistance to Palestinian women, including through an interregional programme on capacity-building for gender equality, employment promotion and poverty eradication. The main objective of the programme is to formulate and implement gender-sensitive employment policies and programmes, aimed at eradicating poverty. ILO also reported that disruption created by the humanitarian crisis made it impossible to implement the action plan for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Labour that it had developed in 2000.

30. The World Bank effectively incorporated gender dimensions in its activities and actively participated in the Gender Task Force in the West Bank and Gaza. In response to emergency needs, the World Bank managed \$25 million in bilateral donor funds for job-creation projects. Of this, a total of about \$2.7 million was implemented through non-governmental organizations. One of the main selection criteria for receiving emergency grants was a project's ability to benefit women directly. The Bank supported a counselling centre for women in difficult circumstances, aimed at providing support, therapy, advocacy and vocational training services to Palestinian women subject to domestic violence.

31. In December 2002, the World Bank completed a beneficiary assessment report of the second Community Development Project. In accordance with that assessment, nearly 40 per cent of all schools rehabilitated under the project were girls' or co-educational schools. The Bank constructed a girls' orphanage residence, provided vocational training to women under the development grants and provided an integrated educational programme to women with children under the project on the development of the mothers' school.

32. ESCWA formed a special task force on the socio-economic rehabilitation of Palestinian people. A gender perspective has been mainstreamed into the formulation of planned projects and programmes. ESCWA provided technical assistance to producers of gender statistics in Palestine.

### **Humanitarian assistance**

33. WFP sent several missions to the Occupied Palestinian Territory to assess the scale of the humanitarian crisis and suggested measures to prevent further deterioration of the situation. The United Nations Inter-Agency Technical Assessment Mission, led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, visited the area in October 2002, following the assessment mission of the Personal Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in August 2002. WFP approved the expansion of its emergency operation for a period of one year at a total cost of \$31 million, in order to specifically address the needs of 530,000 vulnerable non-refugees. In 2003, WFP began a supplementary feeding programme for 6,145 malnourished children and their families in Gaza and the southern West Bank. WFP also provided 11,190 metric tons of foodstuff to the International Committee of the Red Cross to assist 180,000 hardship cases in the rural areas of the West Bank. WFP encouraged women to receive their food entitlements directly at distribution sites to increase the effective utilization of food assistance at the household level. As a result of these efforts, over 55 per cent of food aid recipients in the Palestinian territories were women.



34. Between February and June 2003, FAO and WFP jointly undertook a comprehensive food security and nutrition assessment across all districts of the West Bank and Gaza. One key objective was to understand and document the conditions affecting the livelihood, food security and nutritional vulnerability of the population, men as well as women. The assessment examined, in particular, the food security and nutritional status of women and children. The assessment report is being finalized and will provide, inter alia, a series of recommendations for addressing the special needs of both women and men in the West Bank and Gaza.

35. FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture of the Palestinian Authority, in collaboration with the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP-PAPP), in the preparation of an agriculture revitalization programme (ARP) for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The programme is an intermediate phase between emergency assistance and sustainable rehabilitation leading to longer-term agricultural development. It aims to improve rural livelihoods by first maintaining and then revitalizing agricultural activities in the West Bank and Gaza. FAO's support under the agriculture revitalization programme focused on livestock production, horticulture, rehabilitation of small-scale irrigation, marketing and capacity-building.

### **Education and training**

36. The UNRWA education programme continued to be one of the primary means by which the Agency promoted the human resource development of female Palestine refugees. In the 2002/03 academic year, 490,949 pupils, of which 245,733 or 50.1 per cent were female, were enrolled in UNRWA preparatory, elementary and secondary schools. Of the Agency's 15,163 teachers, 48.4 per cent were female. Palestine refugee women accounted for 66.6 per cent of participants in the UNRWA pre- and in-service teacher training courses and for 33.3 per cent of its trainees in technical and semi-professional courses. Of the 56 continuing UNRWA scholarships in 2002/03, 48.2 per cent were held by women. During the same period, 90 Palestinian women in Lebanon benefited from a scholarship project addressed to women only and managed by UNRWA on behalf of a donor country. A separate scholarship programme, administered with the support of two international NGOs and the Cisco Learning Institute, provided training scholarships to 60 disadvantaged Palestinian refugees from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 50 per cent of which were given to female refugees.

37. The Department of Education of UNRWA made special efforts to help Palestine refugee women acquire modern technological skills through a gender-specific project in collaboration with UNIFEM. The project emphasized equal access to information and communication technologies by Palestine refugee women and men, encouraged gender balance in recruitment and retention policies, built capacity to produce appropriate information content for Palestine refugee women and helped them to fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community participation roles. In a further effort to improve the capacity of Palestine refugee women, UNRWA continued its admission policy to its pre-service teacher training programme leading to a first-level university degree by assigning 50 per cent of the places to qualified Palestine refugee women, in order to promote gender balance among the faculty members. UNRWA also sought to enhance the capacities of

Palestine refugee women through its own recruitment policy: women occupy 55.6 per cent of senior managerial posts in the UNRWA Department of Education.

38. UNICEF supported alternative education projects in areas suffering from strict closures to ensure the opportunity for children to continue learning. UNICEF also supported initiatives to keep children in school, such as the back-to-school campaign to ensure that 1 million Palestinian children could attend school and remain in school throughout the school year. Specific interventions focusing on current and potential girl dropouts were implemented in four villages in the Bethlehem district, where the highest rate of girl dropouts was reported. These interventions included life-skills-based education for 700 girls. In addition, UNICEF supported 48 awareness-raising sessions for parents to advocate for the importance of girls' education in strengthening the economy and in national development.

39. In an effort to support and empower women, WFP provided food assistance to poor women and adolescent girls as an incentive for them to attend education and training programmes. The programmes focused on literacy, food management and income-generating skills, such as harvesting of olives for commercialization and raising animals for household consumption and sale.

## **Health**

40. In order to promote the health status of Palestinian refugee women, UNRWA provided maternal and child health care and family planning services as an integral part of its primary health-care programme. During 2002, more than 79,900 women received antenatal care, representing approximately 60 per cent of all expected deliveries among registered refugees. Approximately 21,000 new family-planning acceptors were enrolled in the programme and the total number of continuing users exceeded 90,000. UNRWA sustained full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases and supported school health services and iron supplementation for women throughout pregnancy and post-delivery. It also sustained health educational programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, which were implemented as multisectoral activities targeting school children and women. Attention was placed on improving access of women to quality care, information and services. Within the context of its family planning services, the health programme addressed such issues as early childbearing and its consequences for the health of women and children as a matter of high priority. The health programme sought to strengthen its gender-sensitive programming by obtaining, whenever possible, sex-disaggregated data, with the objective of reducing gender-based health disparities.

41. UNFPA devoted a significant proportion of its programme to ensuring women's access to appropriate and quality reproductive health care, especially emergency obstetric care and psychosocial counselling. The programme focused primarily on: the training of health professionals, including physicians, nurses and midwives in emergency obstetric care (EOC) at the community level; organization of a community campaign to disseminate information on the EOC training through the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees, a Palestinian NGO; and continuation of delivery of essential drugs for family planning and reproductive health at a time when the Ministry of Health and NGO service providers were severely hampered by a lack of such supplies.

42. UNFPA also provided comprehensive support to women's health centres. Counselling services were organized at three women's health centres in El-Burej, Jabaliya and Hebron for traumatized women and their families. The women's health centres in Bureij and Jabaliya continued to provide quality reproductive health care to women in the most populated and underprivileged areas of the Gaza Strip, despite continued restricted access to the refugee camps. These centres, in collaboration with a number of local organizations, including the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC), took a proactive role in the communities to curb the increasing level of violence against women. In 2003 WCLAC developed a manual on legal and psychosocial assistance in reproductive health and 15 health-care providers were trained.

43. WHO provided support for strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Health to lead and coordinate the health sector. WHO participated in a health sector review which addressed, inter alia, issues affecting women. WHO also worked on the reorganization and upgrading of mental health services and reorienting its approach to the community level, so that more women might benefit. WHO participated in a number of thematic group discussions aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian women.

44. UNFPA, WHO and UNICEF developed an advocacy network to promote access to health care as well as to raise awareness on the precarious health situation, particularly for women in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Communication professionals from UNICEF, UNFPA, UNRWA, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and WHO meet regularly to coordinate their advocacy activities. UNFPA assisted the Ministry of Health in producing a documentary film on the adverse impact of the closures on access of women in labour to hospitals, and on the reproductive rights of Palestinian women.

### **Women's human rights including violence against women**

45. Under a technical assistance project, OHCHR has supported the Palestinian Authority since 1996 to ensure that national laws are in compliance with international human rights standards and norms. This has had a positive impact on women who encounter gender-based discrimination and domestic injustices. OHCHR funded the Women's Unit of LAW, a human rights NGO which provides legal counselling to women facing gender-based discrimination and inequality. It also offers legal aid and representation before government bodies, institutions and courts of law for women engaged in litigation to redress violations of their human rights. The Women's Unit has undertaken research on the effect of Palestinian law on women's rights, with a view to formulating recommendations for consideration by the Palestinian Legislative Council. The adoption of these legal recommendations, as well as their implementation, is closely monitored by the Women's Unit. In addition, OHCHR organized a number of training courses in human rights for different target groups, such as lawyers, prison officials, women leaders, journalists, official staff of the Palestinian National Authority, prosecutors and health-care personnel. Of the 249 participants in these training courses, 65 were women. In Gaza, OHCHR organized a four-day intensive training course for women leaders, entitled "Women and Human Rights", with the aim of strengthening the capacity of women in the area of human rights.

## Media and advocacy

46. The Department of Public Information held its annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners, in which eight Palestinian broadcasters and journalists, including three women, participated. In March 2003, the Department revised and updated the publication entitled “The Question of Palestine and the United Nations”<sup>35</sup> in all United Nations official languages and widely disseminated it to all United Nations offices in the field. Chapter 9 of the booklet specifically addresses issues concerning Palestinian women. United Nations Radio provided extensive coverage on the various aspects of the situation in Palestine which impact on the lives of Palestinian women.

47. UNIFEM supports a project to strengthen strategic partnerships between the media and women’s organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Within the context of this initiative, a media and women leaders network has been established and local media and women’s organizations have been trained in gender-sensitive reporting and campaigning. In addition, gender units were set up at 17 independent television stations.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

48. **During the period under review, the living conditions of Palestinian women have drastically declined. The deteriorating economic conditions, due to the Israeli closure policies, have resulted in widespread unemployment, a decline in standards of living and an increase in poverty, while access to basic services such as education and health was severely curtailed. The humanitarian and socio-economic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory has reached unprecedented levels. The capacity of Palestinian women to cope with this new situation has been declining, and the number of women dependent on emergency assistance, particularly food assistance, has risen. Women have also become subject to increasing violence.**

49. **The status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to the achievement of a peaceful resolution of the conflict. There are important differences in how women and men respectively are affected by the socio-economic and political situation, which are apparent in such areas as basic social services, including education and health, economic opportunities and means of livelihood. These differences need to be taken into account in research, data collection, policy and strategy developments and implementation and monitoring of projects and programmes on the ground. It is also important that efforts be made to increase women’s full participation in decision-making processes at all levels. As the international community seeks ways to end the conflict, it is important that gender perspectives are highlighted and that women are fully involved in the conflict resolution and peace-building initiatives, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, as well as in Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).**

50. **As a result of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the United Nations system faced the challenge of adopting a two-track strategy, handling both emergency humanitarian**

assistance to the rapidly growing socio-economic crisis and the continuation, whenever and however possible, of ongoing development programmes.<sup>36</sup> Despite the difficult working conditions, the entities of the United Nations system, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, continued to provide assistance to Palestinian women through humanitarian assistance, as well as projects aimed at enhancing women's capacity to provide for themselves and their families, and to maintain women's access to education and health.

51. It is essential that United Nations entities continue to operate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps. As the conflict exacerbates existing hardships and creates new difficulties, continued assistance to Palestinian women, focused on food security, nutrition, psychosocial/trauma counselling, health, including reproductive health, education, human rights and economic empowerment, should be provided. Special attention should be given to the difficult situation faced by women where their responsibilities have expanded to include that of primary household provider or caregiver due to the death, injury, detention or unemployment of the male members of the family, and to increased poverty due to movement restrictions and closure and the construction of a separation wall.

52. While the reports by relevant bodies provided valuable information on the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and increasingly referred to the particular situation of women, further opportunities should be sought to highlight fully the specific ways in which the crisis impacts on women as compared to men so that targeted actions can be taken to mitigate negative gender-specific impacts. The collection of data disaggregated by sex, which is currently insufficient, and specific studies on the impact of the crisis on women in particular areas, should be encouraged. In this regard, the linkage between the current crisis and the increase in domestic violence could be further explored. Efforts should be undertaken to explicitly identify and address gender perspectives in all international assistance programmes, in addition to implementing projects specifically targeting women. All reports on the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory should include attention to the specific situation of women and girls in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> Eileen Kuttab, "Palestinian women: situation analysis 1990-2003" (Women Studies Institute, Birzeit University, Palestine, November 2003).

<sup>2</sup> A/58/75-E/2003/21, Summary, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> See A/58/311, paras. 24-75.

<sup>4</sup> E/CN.4/2003/30, para. 2.

<sup>5</sup> A/58/311, Summary, p. 2, and para. 33; A/58/75-E/2003/21, para. 3; the text of the road map is contained in S/2003/529, annex. The Quartet (composed of the United States of America, the United Nations, the European Union and the Russian Federation) formally presented its road map to the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority on 30 April 2003.

- <sup>6</sup> Information received 16 September 2003 from the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories (UNSCO), para. 2.
- <sup>7</sup> A/58/311, para. 71.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., para. 43.
- <sup>9</sup> UNSCO, op. cit., para. 4.
- <sup>10</sup> A/58/311, para. 59.
- <sup>11</sup> UNSCO, op. cit., para. 5.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 4.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid., para. 3.
- <sup>14</sup> A/58/311, para. 34.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid., para. 53.
- <sup>16</sup> UNSCO, op. cit., para. 11.
- <sup>17</sup> A/58/88-E/2003/84, para. 8.
- <sup>18</sup> A/58/311, para. 59.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., para. 35.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., para. 35.
- <sup>21</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/58/35)*, para. 22.
- <sup>22</sup> The Impact of Israel's Separation Barrier on Affected West Bank Communities. Report of the Mission to the Humanitarian and Emergency Policy Group of the Local Aid Coordination Committee, May 2003, p. 3, para. 1.
- <sup>23</sup> A/58/311, para. 26.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>25</sup> A/58/88-E/2003/84, para. 9.
- <sup>26</sup> UNSCO, op. cit., para. 6.
- <sup>27</sup> E/CN.4/2003/30, para. 15.
- <sup>28</sup> A/58/88-E/2003/84, para. 8.
- <sup>29</sup> *Twenty-Seven Months — Intifada, Closures and Palestinian Economic Crisis: An Assessment* (World Bank, Washington, D.C., May 2003), para. 18.
- <sup>30</sup> A/58/311, para. 56.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., para. 61.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., para. 62.
- <sup>33</sup> A/58/75-E/2003/21, para. 51.
- <sup>34</sup> A/58/311, para. 63.
- <sup>35</sup> DPI/2276.
- <sup>36</sup> See A/58/75-E/2003/21.
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**Commission on the Status of Women****Forty-ninth session**

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled****“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”****Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2003 and September 2004, in reference to Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/56 of 23 July 2004. It reviews the unfolding humanitarian and socio-economic crisis in the situation of women and provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, in particular with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, the human rights of women, and the media and advocacy. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2004/56 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report, which covers the period from October 2003 to September 2004, reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967. The reports of those bodies and individuals made occasional references to the situation of women but did not provide in-depth analysis of the specific situation of women within the overall population during the reporting period. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory in June 2004. However, the report on that visit was not available at the time the present report was prepared (see para. 38 below).

3. The report further reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Bank. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/56, the report also draws on information contained in the report prepared by ESCWA on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/59/89).

4. The first part of the report provides a review of the second intifada (from 29 September 2000) and its specific impact on the situation of Palestinian women, as well as the political and socio-economic circumstances of the Palestinian community in general. The second part of the report provides information on how the United Nations system has continued to assist Palestinian women.



5. Taking into account that women tend to suffer disproportionately during times of political unrest and instability, the report stresses the need to mainstream gender perspectives in policies and programmes to ensure that the concerns and needs of both women and men are addressed.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

6. In the period under review, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People expressed grave concern over the devastating effects of the occupation on the lives of the most vulnerable members of Palestinian society, women and children.<sup>1</sup> The Committee noted that the hardship of daily life was felt most acutely by Palestinian women who carried the burden of responsibility within the household because of the death, imprisonment or unemployment of male members.<sup>2</sup> UNSCO reported that women also assumed the additional burden of responsibility as caregivers to the injured in the absence of adequate institutional services in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

7. It also reported that Palestinian women were among those who had died since the onset of the crisis. Between September 2000 and September 2004, more than 3,500 Palestinians had died, including approximately 650 children under the age of 18 and 250 women.

8. Over the past four years, the number of women detainees in prison increased. According to UNSCO, prior to the outbreak of the crisis, there were three Palestinian women prisoners. Since then, an additional 300 women have been arrested, of whom 103 remained in prison in September 2004. Furthermore, the death, imprisonment and unemployment of adult male members of the community increased poverty and social burdens that contributed to increased domestic violence and stress (A/59/89-E/2004/21, para. 58).

9. According to UNRWA, the social, economic and cultural context of women's health remained challenging during the period under review owing to the high birth rate of Palestine refugee women. In particular, malnutrition continued to have a major impact on the lives of Palestinian women and children. WHO reported that during a home visit programme conducted by the Ministry of Health, 69.7 per cent of 1,768 expectant women, within one month of delivery, were found to be anaemic. UNRWA indicated that in 2003 the anaemia rate of nursing mothers accessing its services was 15.3 per cent, and that the anaemia rate of pregnant women was 38.3 per cent. UNSCO reported that the nutritional health status of women and children was also affected by the internal closures. In particular, the closure policy impacted greatly on food security, which led to a decline in both the quantity and the quality of food of 73 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip populations, with four out of 10 households identified as chronically insecure by FAO.

10. Human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to destroy the fabric of Palestinian society (A/59/256, para. 6), including the rights to freedom of movement, to choose a residence, to an adequate standard of living including adequate food, clothing and housing, to education, to health and to life, all of which continued to drastically decline (A/59/381, paras. 30-86). Land confiscation and the destruction of cultivated fields and houses reached unprecedented levels. Families and communities were divided, farmers were denied access to their land, workers to their jobs, children and youth to schools, colleges

and universities and women and children to basic health and social services (A/59/381, para. 30). With the continued demolition of houses and destruction of property, damage to public structures and properties reached an estimated US\$ 1.2 billion.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Palestinian women in prison were reported to have been subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment (A/59/256, para. 6).

11. Restrictions on the movement of goods and persons continued to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by increasing unemployment and poverty, preventing health care and interrupting education (A/59/89-E/2004/21, para. 14). The ILO noted that mobility restrictions entailed different consequences for men and women. Regarding access to education, restrictions affect female teachers and pupils more than their male counterparts, owing to the difficulties and dangers they face travelling to and from schools. Fearing for their safety, parents may keep daughters from attending classes. Female teachers are more likely to stop going to work when they have to walk long distances in isolated areas to avoid checkpoints and settlers.<sup>4</sup>

12. UNFPA reported that access issues continued to be an important barrier to women's utilization of appropriate reproductive health care, including family planning and obstetric care. Soldiers at checkpoints prevented ambulances and individuals on their way to health-care facilities from reaching the nearest hospital (A/59/381, para. 79). UNSCO noted that medical personnel were unable to reach their place of work regularly and that distribution of medical supplies to rural areas was difficult. Delays have resulted in women delivering their babies while waiting to pass, which has led to maternal and infant deaths.<sup>5</sup>

13. The severe economic depression of the Palestinian economy since September 2000 continued unabated during the reporting period.<sup>6</sup> Reality of life in the occupied territories is one of economic strangulation, with consequent far-reaching social impacts.<sup>7</sup> The mild economic recovery reported in 2003 was short-lived, with trade flows remaining below pre-intifada levels.<sup>8</sup> The World Bank reported that Palestinian business owners and managers continued to report difficulties arising from internal closures that hampered their ability to receive necessary inputs and to market goods. The Bank indicated that in 2004 domestic employment had recovered to the extent that the number of Palestinians employed in the West Bank and Gaza surpassed pre-intifada levels. However, it was reported that the number of unemployed had increased, from 73,000 in the third quarter preceding the intifada in 2000, to 198,000 currently.<sup>9</sup> Low levels of employment resulted in high levels of poverty among Palestinians, particularly women. According to the World Bank, by mid-2004, 47 per cent of Palestinians lived in poverty, on less than \$2.10 per day. Female-headed households display an incidence of poverty 1.3 times higher than households headed by men.<sup>10</sup> Community and family disapproval of women's work in the absence of male breadwinners are major obstacles to women seeking wage employment.<sup>11</sup>

14. In spite of high-level educational attainment, women remained marginalized in the labour market. The International Labour Organization reports that the generally positive correlation between female education and labour force participation was not applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Women's labour force participation remains low, in spite of their high and successful secondary school enrolment. That observation was attributed to the high fertility rate among Palestinian women, relatively early marriage and large families. Those factors, coupled with the large

numbers of male Palestinian prisoners, the high number of persons killed in conflict and the destruction of homes, placed increased pressure on the care economy, and specifically on women, the primary providers of care.<sup>12</sup>

15. In cases where women participate in the labour market, they are mostly located in the agriculture and service sectors. Women are deeply affected by movement restrictions and closures, which affect agricultural production.<sup>13</sup> The ILO observed that, by comparison with men, women are disadvantaged in terms of wages and social security benefits, and that there are unequal barriers for women entrepreneurs in terms of property and inheritance rights, access to credit, penal liability and the availability of childcare facilities. Households resorted to a variety of strategies to cope with the sharp fall in income, including reducing expenditure and consumption, postponing payment of bills, applying for credit, seeking family support, engaging in subsistence activities and other measures.<sup>14</sup> The ILO also found that coping strategies of households tend to fall disproportionately on women and to restrict women's options.<sup>15</sup>

16. UNSCO carried out field research in 30 West Bank rural communities in 2004 and found that women attempted to substitute for the loss of male income, even if that entailed travel and overnight stay outside the community. In addition, field research revealed that, although some women found work in textile workshops, the majority worked inside the community as unpaid family agricultural labourers. It was also found that women's entry into the labour force did not result in economic development, but, instead, added to existing domestic and childcare burdens.

17. According to UNICEF, there are significant gaps in the female literacy rate — only 87.4 per cent — compared with a 96.3 per cent male literacy rate. UNICEF reported that the gaps are most prominent among the older population. School enrolment rates at the basic, secondary school and post-secondary levels grew during the past decade and are roughly the same for boys and girls. Furthermore, enrolment was slightly higher for girls than boys at the first two levels. UNICEF also reported that a substantial number of males and females aged 10-24 years do not continue to secondary education. The main reason for boys and young men dropping out was attributed to lack of interest in education, which could be an indication that starting work is a higher priority for men and boys. On the other hand, the figures for girls show that nearly half (46.5 per cent) drop out because of marriage.<sup>16</sup>

18. Efforts were made to address discrimination against women and the concerns of Palestinian women through the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs. Previously a sub-unit of the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was mandated to reinforce the gender mainstreaming strategy that previously had been the major responsibility of focal points in various ministries. According to UNDP, a number of objectives have been identified to address the low participation of women in the labour force (only 11 per cent of women of employment age participate in the labour force) owing to low salaries, compared to those of men, and poverty among female-headed households. The objectives include upgrading governmental political commitment to include gender, democracy and human rights issues in the policies and plans of the various ministries and relevant legislation and regulations; linking lobbying and advocacy activities with the development of policies and laws; and building a network of links with women governmental institutions and non-governmental organizations and human rights organizations at

the regional and international levels, and exchanging experience with them on the implementation and support of international conventions on women and human rights, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

#### **Economic activities**

19. The World Bank reported on a number of projects aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian people, including women. The 2005 higher education project aims at strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and at providing support to higher education institutions to improve the management, quality and relevance of programmes. The objectives of the \$80-million social safety net reform project are to protect and enhance the human capital of children in the poorest households and to strengthen the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Social Affairs to assist in the implementation of the special hardship case programmes. Under an improved targeting scheme, poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood will receive cash assistance from the special hardship case programmes. Children suffering from malnutrition and women of childbearing age benefit from the second emergency services support project, which is supported by a Trust Fund grant and co-financed by five other donors in the amount of \$40 million.

20. The World Bank also implemented the second Palestinian NGO project. A main selection criteria for receiving emergency grants is the project's ability to reach women as direct beneficiaries. Under the project, a counselling centre for women in difficult circumstances was designed with the objectives of providing support, therapy, advocacy and vocational training services to Palestinian women subject to domestic violence, and to build institutional capacity aimed at reducing the incidence of violence against Palestinian girls and women. The project is financed by the Government of Italy through the World Bank. The Gaza industrial estate project development objectives are to increase direct and indirect employment in Gaza and to contribute to the gross domestic product of Gaza by creating conditions conducive to private sector industrial investment, including appropriate physical infrastructure. The project has a well developed management information system and includes a breakdown of workers by sex, which is monitored and updated on a monthly basis. Although employment figures under the project are currently below expectations owing to the crisis, on average there are about 100 women employed by tenant firms representing approximately 18 per cent of total employment.

21. The ILO established a Palestinian fund for employment and social protection. The fund provides a strategic framework for mobilizing resources to improve the social conditions of the Palestinian people, who are suffering from both occupation and diminishing welfare. It also serves as a tool for the consolidation of all activities undertaken to generate employment and provide social protection, ranging from technical advice and capacity-building to direct financial assistance. The fund is expected to integrate a significant gender component and to apply a gender mainstreaming approach. In selecting projects, consideration will be given to activities that support the employment and social protection needs of Palestinian

women and men workers. Project proposals will be evaluated to ensure attention to gender equality concerns.

22. UNDP initiated a number of projects aimed at women's economic empowerment. As part of its Emergency Response Division, the UNDP programme of assistance to the Palestinian people continued to work with the Ministry of Agriculture to execute a poverty alleviation project targeting female-headed rural households. The project aims at achieving sustainable food security and creating a source of income for rural women in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through investing in livestock. In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 42 small agricultural income-generating projects for female-headed households have been established. Another project provides emergency support to existing small-income generation projects run by female-headed households. The project aims at providing financial and technical support to 30 small women-run projects that were affected as a result of the ongoing political crisis. As a result of economic stagnation and the high unemployment rate of male breadwinners, the small and unsustainable projects run by those women are the only means for income generation for the households. Support to those small projects aims to increase their sustainability and potential for generating income for the households.

23. UNRWA reported granting 4,498 loans valued at \$2.47 million to women through its microfinance and microenterprise programme. The microcredit community support programme also issued more than \$880,000 in loans to both low-income families and entrepreneurs, including women.

#### **Humanitarian assistance**

24. As follow-up to an FAO/WFP food security and nutrition assessment undertaken across all districts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 2003, FAO reported working on the establishment of a multisectoral integrated food insecurity and vulnerability information system. The objective is to facilitate stakeholders' access to comprehensive, up-to-date and user-friendly information on food security, nutrition and vulnerability. Institutional mechanisms and capacity for the collection, analysis and use of food security- and nutrition-related information disaggregated by sex will also be strengthened. The sex-disaggregated information will provide a basis for decision makers in the design, targeting and implementation of policies, strategies and interventions designed to protect and promote food security and improve the nutritional status of the entire population — men and women, boys and girls — throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

25. UNIFEM opened a programme office in Jerusalem in April 2004 under the auspices of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. UNIFEM is actively involved in local United Nations coordination efforts, including the Consolidated Appeals Process for humanitarian aid to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the United Nations inter-agency humanitarian advocacy group.

26. UNRWA continued to assist Palestine refugee women through its special hardship case programme. UNRWA reported that of the special hardship case families, 46 per cent were families headed by women. Under that programme, families are provided with a critical safety net in the form of food support and selective cash assistance. Community services are provided for women through 64 women's programme centres, which include occupational training programmes,

kindergartens and nurseries. Over 90,000 refugees, mainly women and children, have benefited from those services.

27. WFP coordinated with local non-governmental organizations to implement the Supplementary Feeding Programme for 5,000 children and their families, which included two free medical days for mothers and children under the age of 12. A total of 217 women and children attended the free medical service.

### **Education and training**

28. The UNICEF response in the education sector focused on ensuring that as many children as possible had the opportunity to continue learning, even if they cannot reach their schools. UNICEF supported alternative projects for children in areas experiencing strict closures, as well as initiatives to keep children in school, such as the “back to school” campaign, to ensure that a million Palestinian children could attend school by September 2003 and remain in school throughout the school year. UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in integrating basic life skills into the curricula of grades 4 and 9; the curricula of grades 5 and 10 were to be covered during 2004. Training in effective screening and treatment of psychosocial distress was provided to school counsellors, kindergarten teachers and social workers to assist them in supporting Palestinian women and children affected by ongoing violence. UNICEF has made concerted efforts to mainstream gender perspectives into all UNICEF programme communication. During 2003/04, specific programme communication materials targeting the girl child and women were developed, including on iron deficiency, anaemia and the importance of breastfeeding, a life-skills training manual, remedial education worksheets and anti-smoking campaigns for young people.

29. The ILO reported that three Palestinian women participated in a national training workshop organized by the ILO Regional Office for Arab States on the theme “Vocational training methods and training curricula for people with disabilities”, held in Amman in 2004 for 10 Palestinian rehabilitation workers. In 2004, a new training programme on the theme “Promotion of social dialogue: strengthening national social dialogue mechanisms” was initiated. The programme is aimed at fully involving women national machineries in all activities. The first course was held from 13 to 19 June 2004, with 15 Palestinian participants from the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and the Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. A Palestinian woman from a trade union participated in the course. A Palestinian woman representative from the newly established Ministry of Women’s Affairs of the Palestinian Authority also attended as an observer.

30. With the cooperation of the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) organized a meeting of 16 representatives of key Palestinian women NGOs and institutions in Tunis in February 2004. The meeting aimed at identifying the strategic needs of Palestinian women in the social and human sciences, and to develop a plan by which UNESCO could contribute to meeting those needs. Outcomes of the Tunis meeting were a project proposal for the establishment of a specialized independent Palestinian women’s resource centre, which was prepared and submitted for consideration, as well as funding to various stakeholders. The objective of the centre would be to contribute to the development of research-based

policies that promote gender equality and the human rights of Palestinian women by serving as a monitoring centre and clearing house on information related to women's issues in Palestine. It would, inter alia, conduct, collect and house research and documentation produced on the status and the condition of Palestinian women; analyse and disseminate information to policy makers and relevant partners; and facilitate training, networking and empowerment of women's organizations.

31. Taking into account the link between women's and girls' education and women's empowerment, UNDP supported the construction of a large number of girls' schools in rural communities where tradition does not allow girls to travel to a distant school, as well as the expansion of schools to allow increased enrolment of girls. Approximately seven schools for girls were constructed, expanded or rehabilitated with sanitary facilities. Assistance was also provided for the development of gender-sensitive educational curricula and teaching modules and for teacher training in their use. The objective is to foster appropriate gender perspectives among both boys and girls. A training manual on gender issues was developed and widely distributed to schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza.

32. To address the lack of education and skills of some women, WFP supported literacy-, health- and nutrition-skills training. Advanced specialized courses on the environment, farming, animal husbandry and other income-generating activities, such as handicrafts, home gardening and food processing, were provided.

33. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the UNRWA Department of Education continued to assist Palestine refugee women acquire modern technological skills through a gender project. The project stresses equal access to information and communication technologies by Palestine refugee women and men, encourages gender equality in recruitment and retention policies, builds capacity to produce relevant information content for Palestine refugee women and helps them fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community participation roles.

## **Health**

34. UNFPA continued its emergency obstetric care programme. In particular, training was provided to health-care providers at the community level. For the period under review, UNFPA trained 168 physicians, nurses and midwives in community emergency obstetric care, bringing the total number to 268 providers since the inception of the emergency programme. In addition, 85 health-care providers were trained in how to deal with traumatized women. A mapping exercise of primary health-care facilities with reproductive health services was carried out and completed in October 2003. The exercise was completed in partnership with the largest service providers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory from Government, non-governmental organizations and UNRWA facilities. It was the first of its kind and will be key to improving service delivery in the area of reproductive health, especially for women.

35. As part of its regular programme activities, UNFPA also collaborated with a national NGO in producing a manual on psychosocial and legal counselling in reproductive health. The manual covers a number of difficult areas of reproductive health and rights, including rape, incest, domestic violence and psychological abuse. It also provides a legal guideline and framework for providers in dealing with women and their families, in order to promote empowerment and rehabilitation. It is the first of its kind in the Arab region and was produced in Arabic.

36. WHO addressed the issue of mental health in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially among women, who are greatly affected by the social stigma of mental illness. Women also continued to bear major responsibility for caring for family members while coping with their own ill health. As part of the implementation of the new mental health policy, three community mental health centres were opened and an anti-stigma campaign was launched to address the general public. The majority of psychologists and social workers working in the mental health system are women.

37. UNRWA continued to provide maternal and child health-care and family planning services as an integral part of its primary health-care services to Palestine refugee women. UNRWA supported full immunization coverage for women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases; iron supplementation for women throughout pregnancy and post delivery; and health education programmes aimed at preventing HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. UNRWA sought to make its health programmes more gender-sensitive by obtaining, whenever possible, data disaggregated by sex, with the objective of reducing gender disparities in health care and health-care services.

#### **Women's human rights, including the implications of violence against women**

38. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences visited the Occupied Palestinian Territory on official mission from 13 to 18 June 2004. The purpose of the mission was to address the impact of the conflict and occupation on women, in particular the implications of violence against women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Special Rapporteur met with a number of Government officials, including the Minister of Women's Affairs and representatives of women's organizations. The conclusions of the Special Rapporteur will be presented to the Commission on Human Rights at its sixty-first session, in 2005.

39. In August 2004, the OHCHR Palestine office contributed to a workshop held in Ramallah for 15 high-ranking women from various Palestinian ministries, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The workshop covered many issues, including international human rights mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and women's rights.

40. OHCHR organized, under the component "Human rights education/awareness-building", a one-day seminar focusing on Palestinian women working in the development field, on the theme "Development and human rights". The seminar, held on 3 August 2004, in cooperation with the women's affairs centre located in the Gaza Strip, particularly addressed women working in the development field. Of the 24 trainees who participated in the seminar, 18 were women. The course aimed at strengthening the capacity of women working in the field of human rights and at providing them with the basic human rights instruments as tools to be used in their daily work. The seminar also succeeded in making linkages between development, human rights and the rights-based approach.

#### **Advocacy and media**

41. The Division for Palestinian Rights, Department of Political Affairs, continued in 2004 to work closely with civil society through international meetings and conferences, including to bring attention to the situation of Palestinian women. The



civil society declaration, adopted by the United Nations Forum of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace in Cape Town, South Africa, in July 2004, acknowledged that Palestinian women bear the harshest burden of the occupation, and called on women's organizations in Africa to express solidarity with Palestinian women. The plan of action adopted at the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People, held at United Nations Headquarters in September 2004, specifically called for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) mandating the full participation of women in all international peace and justice efforts regarding Palestinian rights. The Division also continued to include information on the situation of Palestinian women in its monthly monitoring publication *Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine* and a monthly bulletin, as well as in its documents collection in the United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), under the subject category "Women". A special web address has been created permitting external web sites to link on an ongoing basis to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women.

42. The Department of Public Information continued its annual international media seminars on peace in the Middle East, bringing together current and former policy makers from the region as well as senior officials, international experts and representatives of the world media. Several Palestinian women journalists participated in the seminar. The revised and updated Department of Public Information publication, issued in the six official languages of the United Nations, was widely disseminated to all United Nations field offices. Chapter 9 of the booklet addresses various issues concerning Palestinian women, including social and economic progress. On the United Nations web site, the News Centre has covered a wide range of developments related to the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and its impact on Palestinian women.

43. United Nations radio reported extensively on issues related to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women. The vital role of women as peacemakers and builders of society in many regions of the world, including the Palestinian Occupied Territory, was highlighted as one of "Ten stories the world should hear more about", a new project launched by the Department in May 2004. The issue of Palestinian women is also addressed on the programme "Women" produced by United Nations Radio. From 10 November to 19 December 2003, the Department organized a training programme for a group of six Palestinian broadcasters and journalists, including four women, to strengthen their professional capacity as information media personnel. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva also promoted the question of Palestine, for example, by issuing a press release on 24 June 2004, in English and French, on the visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

#### **Institutional arrangements**

44. In June 2004, UNDP entered into an agreement with the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs of the Palestinian Authority to support the development of a three-year action plan aimed at promoting gender-sensitive structures, programmes and policies. The plan will be carried out in consultation with women's groups, NGOs, ministries and experts. UNDP, in coordination with UNIFEM, assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Palestine with the drafting of

an interim work plan and strategic vision. In efforts to promote gender equality, including within the context of the Millennium Development Goals, the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People has committed to providing the necessary human resource base to ensure the smooth operation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. As a follow-up to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, support was also provided for the establishment of women's units within ministries of the Palestinian Authority to advocate for gender-sensitive policies and promote the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for the advancement of women.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

**45. In the reporting period, the ongoing conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had a significant negative effect on Palestinian women. Women were among those killed or wounded and/or who lost their spouses, children or family members. Furthermore, the declining economic conditions, caused by restrictions on movement, perpetuated massive unemployment, an increase in poverty and lack of access to health care, health-care services and education. Restriction of movement has also resulted in the death of pregnant women and infants. Furthermore, pressures of the ongoing conflict have led to increased domestic violence and psychological stress among women and children. In view of that increase, it is imperative that the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs, in collaboration with NGOs, focus on the root causes and consequences of domestic violence in order to identify appropriate measures to combat the problem.**

**46. The organizations of the United Nations system have continued to make efforts to improve the conditions of Palestinian women. Many of the initiatives undertaken by the entities of the United Nations system have been aimed at long-term sustainable development for Palestinian people, including women. It is important that the United Nations entities continue to assist Palestinian women in coping with the socio-economic difficulties they face as a result of the conflict. Palestinian women continue to require assistance with income-generating projects aimed at poverty alleviation, education and training, access to health care and health-care services, and with ongoing advocacy initiatives aimed at combating violence against women and protecting their fundamental human rights. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women. These targeted efforts should be accompanied by increased efforts to visibly address gender dimensions in all activities of support and assistance to the Palestinian people in the socio-economic and humanitarian fields.**

**47. While the reports by relevant bodies provided considerable information on the overall situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and made reference to women, limited information was provided on the specific situation of women and girls. The specific impacts of the crisis on women, as compared to men, should be highlighted so that targeted actions can be taken to mitigate gender-specific negative impacts. Gender perspectives should be more fully integrated into international assistance programmes through, inter alia, in-depth gender analysis and the collection of data disaggregated by sex. Gender**

**perspectives should also be fully incorporated into all studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the Palestinian people in order to effectively assess the impact of the situation of Palestinian women.**

**48. Since the status and living conditions of Palestinian women are linked to achieving a peaceful resolution of the conflict, additional efforts need to be made by the international community to end the violent confrontations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In that regard, it is particularly important that women are fully involved in all conflict-resolution and peacebuilding initiatives to be undertaken in the region, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). It is also important that efforts be made to increase women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels.**

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/59/35)*, para. 26.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 25.
- <sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004), para. 18.
- <sup>5</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/59/35)*, para. 26.
- <sup>6</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/59/13)*, para. 6.
- <sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004).
- <sup>8</sup> World Bank, "Palestinian perceptions of their quality of life and of the current economic environment", *West Bank and Gaza Update* (2004).
- <sup>9</sup> World Bank, "Recent economic developments", *West Bank and Gaza Update* (2004).
- <sup>10</sup> International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", International Labour Conference, 92nd session, 2004 (ILO, 2004), para. 90.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 72.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 79.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 91.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics 2004 youth survey.

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**Commission on the Status of Women****Fiftieth session**

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled****“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for  
the twenty-first century”****Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women\*\*****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2004 and September 2005, in reference to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/43 of 26 July 2005. It reviews the situation of women and provides an overview of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system, inter alia with regard to economic activities, humanitarian assistance, education and training, health, and the human rights of women. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2006/1.

\*\* The submission of the present report was delayed due to the need for consultation with relevant departments.

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2005/43, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave deterioration of the situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation and to assist Palestinian women by all available means, and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fiftieth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2004 to September 2005. The first part of the report reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel since 1967, and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

3. The second part of the report reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), ESCWA, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) and the World Bank.

4. The report also provides recommendations aimed at improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. Despite a period of relative calm from February to August 2005 which marked the evacuation of Israeli settlers from the Gaza strip,<sup>1</sup> the majority of Palestinian women and children continued to suffer the consequences of the conflict and restrictions of access (E/ICEF/2005/P/L.29, para. 34). Poverty and unemployment persist in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (E/CN.4/2005/29, para. 8) and human rights violations in the form of violence against women are pervasive (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, p. 2). An increasing number of families have exhausted the means that enabled them to cope with the crisis over the past five years and face difficulties in meeting their basic needs. This negative trend is a major source of stress and anxiety for a population already weakened by years of violence, isolation, movement restrictions and severe economic decline. As a result, women and their families suffer chronic insecurity.<sup>2</sup>

6. The *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*<sup>3</sup> emphasized that development was not possible without women's participation. It highlighted the growing concern about the existing gap between women and men in terms of opportunities, choices and living conditions.<sup>4</sup> The report highlighted the limited participation of women in the official development process, the job market and in decision-making processes in public institutions.<sup>5</sup> The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences attributed the increasing inequality of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to a double system of subordination, that is occupation and patriarchy, which was sustained through multiple forms of direct and indirect violence inside and outside the home (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 47).

7. The Special Rapporteur reported that women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are killed or threatened with death for tarnishing family honour. Women's transgressions of socially expected behaviours, derived from prevailing patriarchal norms and standards, are believed to violate the "honour" of men and the family and legitimize violence against women as a disciplinary measure to maintain or restore family honour. Women accused of promiscuity may be imprisoned in their homes, subjected to verbal and physical violence, married to their violator or even murdered in the name of honour (Ibid., para. 56).

8. The patriarchal biases prevailing in the legal provisions and criminal justice system prevent women from accessing justice and escaping violence (Ibid., para. 60). The Personal Status laws that regulate women's rights and roles within the family in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are not unified. For example, Muslim women in the West Bank are subject to Jordanian law; those in the Gaza are subject to Egyptian law; and Christian Palestinians are subject to laws established by their respective churches (Ibid., para. 60 (a)).

9. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences welcomed the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2003 and reported that it was addressing violence against women as a cross-cutting issue in all of its programmes (Ibid., para. 62). The Ministry of Women's Affairs worked with the Ministry of the Interior to train police on women's rights and to create police stations that facilitate women's access. The Special Rapporteur noted that the Ministry has the potential to improve the situation of Palestinian women and promote and protect women's rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory if it

receives the necessary resources and support (Ibid., para. 63). Non-governmental organizations conducted community educational workshops in accordance with international standards on women's rights and monitored the criminal justice system's response to victims of violence (Ibid., para. 67).

10. The Special Rapporteur noted that the occupation permeated all aspects of life and entailed violations of economic, social and cultural rights (Ibid., para. 13) and reported a noticeable regression in terms of women's rights and fundamental freedoms (Ibid., para. 66). The death, imprisonment or unemployment of many adult male members of the community, which affected all areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, increased poverty and social tensions that contribute to increased domestic violence (Ibid., para. 48).

11. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 reported that the occupation and the wall violated women's rights (A/60/271, para. 43). Palestinian women were routinely harassed, intimidated and abused at checkpoints and gates and were humiliated in front of their families and subjected to sexual violence by soldiers and settlers (Ibid.).

12. The Special Rapporteur also reported that approximately 120 Palestinian women were in prison, 11 of whom were in administrative detention — that is, being held without charge or trial. A total of 22 of the female prisoners were married and 18 were mothers (Ibid., p. 42).<sup>6</sup> Women prisoners were subjected to gender-based violence while under investigation and detention (A/60/271, para. 43). The conditions in prisons raised concerns about women's health and well-being (Ibid.).

13. The Special Rapporteur on adequate housing emphasized on several occasions the disproportionate effects of house demolitions on women, children and the elderly (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 28). House demolitions and the destruction of natural resources increased the economic and psychological burden on Palestinian women, who remained primarily responsible for running households and caring for family members.<sup>7</sup> Extra hours spent at checkpoints added to the time burden faced by women.<sup>8</sup>

14. Restriction of movement through closures continued to play a defining role in the lives of most Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> Drawing on the 2005 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey, ILO reported that 52.5 per cent of households cited the closure measures, 53.6 per cent cited military checkpoints and 16 per cent of households cited the wall as obstacles to accessing health services.<sup>10</sup> Some women had been forced to give birth at checkpoints after having been denied passage or while waiting to pass, which had led to maternal and infant deaths; others had not been able to reach medical facilities for pre- and post-natal care.<sup>11</sup> Information provided by UNRWA revealed that 15 pregnant women in 2004 and 8 in 2005 had experienced delays of 1 to 2.5 hours while being transported to hospital by ambulance (A/60/324, para. 6). The problem was more acute in rural areas, especially for women who lived in villages cut off by checkpoints from the cities where the hospitals were located (Ibid., para. 11).

15. At its thirty-third session in July 2005, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women reviewed the third periodic report of Israel (CEDAW/C/ISR/3) and expressed concern about the number of incidents at Israeli checkpoints which had had a negative impact on the rights of Palestinian women,

including the right of access to health-care services for pregnant women. The Committee called upon Israel to ensure that the authorities at all checkpoints were instructed to ensure access to health care for pregnant women, while protecting the security of Israel (A/60/38, paras. 257-258).

16. UNWRA reported that the social, economic and cultural context of women's health remained challenging during the period under review, as the Palestine refugee population had one of the highest birth rates in the region. The *Palestine Human Development Report* expressed concern about the high fertility rates in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which were attributed to social custom and tradition, both of which encouraged large families and early marriage for girls.<sup>12</sup> The report observed that fertility rates in the Palestinian territories were among the highest in the world.<sup>13</sup> Approximately one third of Palestine refugee women marry before the age of 18, and an equal proportion of women of reproductive age suffer from iron deficiency anaemia. The preliminary results of a study conducted by UNRWA revealed that over 36 per cent of pregnant women and over 43 per cent of nursing mothers in the Gaza Strip were anaemic (A/60/65-E/2005/13, para. 53). ESCWA reported that food insecurity had adversely affected women's health (Ibid., para. 53). A home visit programme conducted by the Ministry of Health found that the nutritional health status of women and children was affected by internal closure measures.<sup>14</sup>

17. UNICEF reported that although the overall health service coverage had been stable, the utilization and quality of maternal and child health services continued to be jeopardized. While 98 per cent of births were attended by skilled health staff and 96 per cent of pregnant women benefited from antenatal care, prematurity and low birth weight, related to the health and nutritional status of the mother and the quality of maternal and newborn health services, accounted for 41 per cent of infant deaths. That percentage was close to 46 per cent in the Gaza Strip.<sup>15</sup>

18. UNICEF also reported that preventive and curative maternal and child health services and health promotion activities were disrupted by the current conflict, resulting in decreased essential care for women and children. Only 42 per cent of mothers who delivered in hospitals over the past five years had received health education on key maternal and infant health topics, such as breastfeeding, maternal nutrition and family planning. Neonatal mortality played a role in the stagnation or aggravation of the infant and under-five mortality rates among Palestinian children.

19. Women's access to decision-making remained limited.<sup>16</sup> The *Palestine Human Development Report* revealed that female representation in ministries, parties and community organizations was still very limited. An indication of the low levels of political participation of Palestinian women was demonstrated by the decreasing number of women in executive, legislative and local institutions. Female representation on the Palestinian National Council did not exceed 8 per cent, while the Legislative Council had only 5 women members out of a total of 88. Within the executive authority, the Cabinet included only 2 women ministers, while women represented only 12.5 per cent of the 250 directors general appointed in various ministries. In municipal and local councils, the percentage of women had never exceeded 1 per cent until the elections held in late 2004, when it rose to 17 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

20. For the first time in 28 years, positive developments were, however, noted in the first round of multiparty local elections held in December 2004 and January



2005. There was a record participation of women, both as candidates and as voters. As a result of legislation establishing quotas, there should be at least two women in each council.<sup>18</sup> According to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, women's groups had called for quotas for women candidates in the elections — 30 per cent for local council elections and 20 per cent for the legislative council. ILO reported that there had been some debate around women's candidatures. However, a number of Palestinian organizations, in addition to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, have supported the idea.<sup>19</sup>

21. Poverty remained widespread in the occupied territories.<sup>20</sup> Approximately 11 per cent of all Palestinian families living below the poverty line in Palestine were headed by women, and the overall percentage of poor families headed by women was greater than that of poor families headed by men.<sup>21</sup> The *Palestine Human Development Report* observed that there was a close relationship between female poverty in Palestinian society and the nature of the male-dominated job market. Horizontal and vertical segregation between women and men had a negative effect on women, especially those living below the poverty line.<sup>22</sup>

22. The participation of women in the labour force remained low.<sup>23</sup> In the third quarter of 2004, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics labour force survey reported the unemployment rate as 27.4 per cent for men and 23.1 per cent for women. ILO noted that the working patterns of women and men were highly differentiated in the occupied territories. More women than men were studying. However, only 1 woman in 10 of working age was employed.<sup>24</sup> With regard to wages, the hourly wages of women were above those of men in agriculture and in services but below those of men in manufacturing and in commerce, hotels and restaurants.<sup>25</sup>

23. ILO reported that one in three young persons aged 15-24 and over half of those aged 25-29 were in forced idleness, which reinforced the exceptional circumstances prevailing in the occupied territories.<sup>26</sup> ILO stated that the situation required urgent attention in the form of significant assistance in vocational training, business development and employment orientation specifically directed at young women and men. Young women and men also faced numerous constraints in mobility within the territories and in accessing employment in Israel or in the industrial estates.<sup>27</sup>

24. The proportion of women in part-time work was significantly higher than that of men: 40 per cent for women compared to 17 per cent for men. ILO noted that this might be a factor in the very moderate real wage increases registered in 2004 and might also explain why 27 per cent of workers earned less than the average wage and less than the minimum wage.<sup>28</sup> A number of work permits for business people had been issued, although utilization had been low. The photographic control of women and men workers at checkpoints through the use of customized screening machines was perceived by Palestinians as an example of indecent working conditions, a health hazard and a humiliation.<sup>29</sup>

25. For the period under review, the Ministry of Women's Affairs took measures to further the political, economic and social empowerment of women.<sup>30</sup> It established good working relations with other ministries and collaborated on gender mainstreaming initiatives. Efforts were made, for example, to mainstream gender perspectives in the social security policy, with the assistance of ILO. Examples of good practices were also disseminated in order to develop a gender-responsive budgeting process.<sup>31</sup>

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

#### Economic activities

26. The World Bank reported on an improved targeting scheme of the Social Safety Net Reform Project, which would enable poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood to receive cash assistance from the special hardship case programme.

27. IFAD reported on phases I and II of its rehabilitation and development programme. IFAD mobilized \$10 million towards phase II, aimed at restoring access to essential services and social and physical infrastructure in Gaza and the West Bank and providing immediate income through the provision of employment in infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion; and promoting opportunities for the target group to access resources needed to improve their income-earning opportunities. Specific initiatives targeting poor rural women were included in the programme, such as two community centres (in Azzoun and Jayyous villages), under the savings and credit associations which serve the financial and social needs of women in the area. The community centre for the Women's Rural Development Society was opened to provide training courses to meet the financial needs of women. In addition, a rural credit component, implemented in cooperation with the Arab Bank, continued to provide direct financing to rural women to set up and/or expand their small income-generation activities. Since the beginning of the project, a total of 340 women's income-generating activity loans were made, amounting to \$950,300. The repayment rate for women's loans was reported by the Arab Bank as 96 per cent, as of 31 March 2005.

28. UNRWA continued its microcredit community support programme to promote the socio-economic status and self-reliance of the most vulnerable among the refugees, including women. The microcredit community support programme issued more than \$1.87 million in loans to a mix of low-income families and small entrepreneurs, including women. Furthermore, UNRWA reported granting 4,719 loans valued at \$2.93 million to women through its microfinance and micro-entrepreneurship programme.

29. UN-Habitat introduced a housing and income-generating programme for widows and underprivileged women in Hebron, with an initial funding of \$6.2 million. The objectives of the project are to foster self-reliance by facilitating the transition from welfare to gainful employment, promoting the local economy and contributing to poverty alleviation through job creation. The initial phase of the project aimed at supporting 100 female-headed households in Hebron municipality through the provision of shelter and opportunities to engage in income-generating activities.

30. UNDP reported on the establishment of eight centres for the empowerment of community women. Within the framework of the community centres activation project, those centres were established in collaboration with UNIFEM and a Young Men's Christian Association women's training programme. The establishment of the centres (2 in the north of the West Bank and 6 in southern West Bank) have contributed to job creation and enhanced women's access to services and resources. In addition, UNDP, with support from the United States Agency for International Development, established a rural women's empowerment centre in the northern West Bank village of Shufa. Educational and economic empowerment programmes

were initiated in partnership with the municipality and with the technical support of UNIFEM. In order to enhance girls' access to education, approximately eight schools for girls were constructed, extended or rehabilitated, including upgraded sanitary facilities, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

31. Empowering Palestinian women and fostering their contribution to economic development was among the main objectives of the UNCTAD integrated capacity-building programme. The project for promoting the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises sought to foster individual entrepreneurial capabilities and build institutional capacity for establishing a dynamic private sector and internationally competitive small- and medium-sized enterprises. Women were encouraged to join the programme through targeted promotional activities, including seminars and print advertisements. Moreover, the project stipulated that at least 30 per cent of participants in the initial achievement motivation workshop, the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop, should be women. To date, the programme had attracted 17 women out of 61 entrepreneurs. They included promising women entrepreneurs, including the owners/managers of existing enterprises, and those who were willing to start their own businesses.

32. UNIDO activities in Palestine aimed at building the capacity of the Ministry of Industry and the Private Sector to promote and foster the sustainable development of the Palestinian industrial sector in terms of competitiveness, quality, productivity, export, partnership potential, contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP), as well as the creation of sustainable employment and income-generating opportunities. Those activities, directly or indirectly, benefited Palestinian women.

#### **Humanitarian assistance**

33. UNRWA provided essential educational, health, relief and social services to over 4 million registered Palestine refugees in the Agency's five areas of operations: Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Agency's assistance to Palestine refugee women focused on education and technical training, delivery of women-focused health services, social service support and the provision of microfinance. UNRWA also provided emergency assistance to the Palestinian refugees living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to respond to the urgent needs generated by the ongoing crisis. The emergency appeal programmes focused on food aid, emergency employment creation, repair and reconstruction of the conflict-damaged infrastructure in kind and cash assistance, and mobile health clinics. The Agency created 2,037,886 days of temporary work under its direct-hire programme and community-based infrastructure and construction projects to help beneficiaries maintain minimum levels of income and support their families. In the Gaza Strip, approximately 20 per cent of the beneficiaries of the direct-hire component were female heads of households, while in West Bank, due to the nature of the work, around 12 per cent of the beneficiaries were women.

34. Through its socio-economic unit, UNSCO continued to monitor social and humanitarian indicators relating specifically to women, such as access to health-care services, and the incidence of childbirth at roadblocks and checkpoints. This information has been shared for use in the reports of key partners, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. UNSCO also undertook a comprehensive study of the impact of economic fragmentation on rural communities in the West Bank, highlighting the specific effect of closures on women.

35. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated the response of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian bodies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Consolidated Appeals Process included four themes: fragmentation; impoverishment; acute crisis areas; and protection of civilians. Gender-based projects were integrated into the Consolidated Appeals Process and the Common Humanitarian Action Plan to address the impact of the humanitarian crisis on women.

36. UNHCR reported on programme activities that were designed to ensure the participation and empowerment of refugee women in decision-making. Of the 8,873 Palestinian refugees registered in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, approximately 4,000 were women. UNHCR assisted 2,274 refugees. Refugee women had access to material assistance, counselling and medical support through UNHCR implementing partners. Refugee women in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya continued to benefit from the job placement activities, microcredit project schemes and job-oriented and vocational training of UNHCR.

37. The WFP office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory achieved significant progress in advocating the role of Palestinian women in management and access to food assistance and participation in food-for-work and food-for-training activities, implemented in partnership with key organizations and ministries working closely with women. Some food-for-training courses included gender sensitization, introduction to HIV/AIDS awareness and women's human rights. Women were encouraged to personally receive their food entitlement or were authorized to designate another person to collect the rations on their behalf.

### **Education and training**

38. The World Bank reported on a tertiary education project (\$10 million) that aimed to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and to provide support to higher education institutions to improve their management and the quality and relevance of programmes. During the period under review, the Development Grant Facility supported the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research in its regional research work on Arab women and decision-making, which includes a Palestinian national research team.

39. Education programmes continued to be one of the primary means by which UNRWA promoted the development of girls and women. In the 2004/05 academic year, some 489,000 pupils, half of them girls, were enrolled in the Agency's elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. More than half of the Agency's teachers were women, as were 67 per cent of the 1,170 participants in pre-service teacher training courses. UNRWA administered 110 scholarships for Palestinian women in Lebanon and other scholarship projects for approximately 70 female refugees. The UNRWA Department of Education, in collaboration with UNIFEM, continued to assist Palestine refugee women in acquiring modern technological skills. The project emphasized equal access to information and communication technologies (ICT) by Palestine refugee women as well as men, encouraged gender equality in recruitment and retention policies, and built capacity to produce appropriate information content for Palestine refugee women to assist them to fulfil their socio-economic, reproductive and community roles. UNRWA also promoted community participation by and community services for Palestine refugee women through 65 women's programme centres. Activities included occupational training

programmes, kindergartens and nurseries. Over 133,450 refugees, mainly women and children, benefited from these services.

40. UNICEF provided 40,000 children in areas affected by violence, deteriorating economic conditions and closures with remedial worksheets, school bags and stationary, as well as basic clothing. A total of 904 school-in-a-box kits were purchased, of which 375 were distributed to schools in Gaza. The rest were pre-positioned to the West Bank in order to provide emergency response in the districts of Nablus and Hebron. The kits assisted about 70,000 students to continue their education during closures. UNICEF also piloted the child-friendly school concept in 100 schools in Gaza and the West Bank. In addition to ensuring that physical school conditions were more child-friendly, especially for girls, the project trained approximately 850 schoolteachers on child-centred pedagogy and participatory school and classroom processes. The participation of adolescent girls in year-round sports programmes, including summer recreational activities, was realized. Out of a total of more than 6,000 adolescents, 3,250 females participated in weekly sports programmes aimed at relieving stress and the damaging effects of violence.

41. UNESCO provided policy and planning advice and other capacity-building assistance to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. By supporting the provision of gender-responsive educational services, including guidance and counselling for school-age girls, teacher training and the production of learning materials, UNESCO focused on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education in the Palestinian territories. In collaboration with UNIFEM and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, UNESCO developed training in the areas of vocational counselling and guidance for girls in grades 8 to 12; academic assistance; and workshops for parents to raise their awareness of the importance of education for girls.

42. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs reported that one of three trainees from the Palestinian Authority in the annual training programme for staff of the Palestinian Authority was a woman.

43. UNFPA organized training at the Ministry of Women's Affairs to improve mainstreaming of gender perspectives in the planning process and monitoring of progress through the development, testing and use of gender analysis tools, including for gender audits. Training was also provided for women newly elected to municipalities and focused on developing capacities for advocacy and mobilization of communities in local development, particularly women.

44. UN-Habitat supported a technical and vocational training centre for underprivileged women in the southern area of the Gaza Strip, with an initial funding of \$2 million. There were previously only two such training centres for women in the northern and central areas of the Gaza Strip, and women's enrolment in vocational, industrial and commercial training schools and institutes was marginal. The proposed centre for the southern area of the Gaza Strip targeted women who were registered as hardship cases with the Ministry of Social Affairs. The project aimed at empowering women who were the poorest of the poor, without income, or who were socially marginalized as divorcees, widows and heads of households.

45. OHCHR organized training courses for different target groups, including Palestinian police forces and prison personnel, judges and workers in the

development field, taking into consideration gender balance in the selection of participants and integrating women's issues into all training activities. Training curricula and programmes included sessions on women's rights. In addition, OHCHR worked closely with the Palestinian Ministry of Women's Affairs to carry out training sessions for Ministry staff.

### **Health**

46. In order to address the challenges of high fertility rates and promote the health status of Palestine refugee women, UNRWA continued providing maternal and child health-care and reproductive health services as an integral part of its primary health care. A total of 85,737 women received antenatal care in five fields of operation of the Agency. In addition, 20,088 new women sought family planning guidance. The total number of continuing users was 104,803. UNRWA also sustained full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. Those services were supported by school health services, the provision of iron supplements for women throughout pregnancy and post delivery, and health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

47. WHO reported on a project to strengthen the nutrition department of the Ministry of Health and establish a national nutrition surveillance system. The project assisted the development of a nutrition department, improved the technical capacity of relevant personnel, developed nutrition-related policy documents and plans of action, and supported training and research on improving nutritional services, particularly for women and children. The project benefited women by strengthening nutrition surveillance systems and coordinating nutrition activities through thematic groups and nutrition service delivery, particularly for women.

48. UNFPA reported on a capacity-building programme to support the Ministry of Health that focused on improving the quality of services and expanding the scope of the reproductive health package to include early detection of the most common cancers among women (breast and cervical cancer), in addition to ante- and post-natal and family planning counselling, management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and reproductive tract infections, and health education. Guidelines and protocols for reproductive health services were developed for hospitals and primary health centres. Special attention was paid to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STIs through the STIs/HIV/AIDS management/provider's manual and training of health providers. In addition, UNFPA designed a programme to train health providers, general practitioners, midwives, nurses and community health workers to reach 10,000 pregnant women and 50,000 people who reside in 100 selected localities. Moreover, a training workshop addressed different reproductive health issues, including gender-based violence, counselling skills, family planning and reproductive rights.

49. In preparation for the disengagement operations in the northern West Bank and Gaza Strip, UNICEF provided critical supplies for mothers and children in the form of emergency health kits, midwifery and obstetric kits, and family water kits, raised community awareness on appropriate hygiene practices and promoted breastfeeding. In areas where access to health facilities was difficult, support was provided to such facilities, together with the upgrade of the skills of health-care workers. UNICEF also provided vaccines and vaccine-related supplies to cover 100 per cent of

Palestinian children and women of child-bearing age for the immunization services provided by the Ministry of Health, UNRWA and non-governmental organizations. UNICEF initiated a pilot project aimed at promoting awareness of HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls and boys.

50. The UNAIDS secretariat supported the participation of seven representatives from the Occupied Palestinian Territory national AIDS committee, medical relief committees and the Culture and Free Thought Association in the UNAIDS regional meeting on the theme “Women, girls and HIV/AIDS”, held in Amman in February 2005.

### **Women’s human rights, including violence against women**

51. UNICEF equipped mothers with the basic skills to detect distress among their children and to respond to it, as well as to deal with their own stress. Groups of mothers were formed in the areas most affected by violence and movement restrictions, such as those in the proximity of settlements or the wall. Each group attended a series of 12 sessions, addressing issues such as child developmental stages, child rights, psychosocial well-being, and the negative impact of early marriage and domestic violence and abuse. More than 15,000 caregivers, the majority of whom were mothers, attended such sessions.

52. In support of the right to due process, UNICEF provided legal aid for girls as well as boys. UNICEF also set up a monitoring system which gathered data on, inter alia, charges, sentencing, pre-trial detention and age and geographic location. The situation of children in detention was monitored and legal aid was provided.

53. OHCHR continued to support the Palestinian National Authority through a project on the rule of law. The project had a positive impact on women’s rights by addressing specific problems of discrimination and domestic injustices, including by vetting national laws for adherence to international human rights standards and norms. The project also sought to empower women to know and claim their rights. On 3 March, OHCHR participated in a workshop organized by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme and the Women’s Empowerment Programme on women’s political participation in Gaza City, involving activists from civil society and the governmental sector. It was also involved in a meeting in Gaza for approximately 70 women in a marginalized area of Gaza City organized by the Palestinian Working Women’s Society for Development, which focused on women’s rights, including women’s participation in political life, in the context of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other human rights instruments.

54. As part of efforts to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), UNFPA provided support to Palestinian women to produce a lexicon for advocacy purposes. Such support was undertaken in a participatory manner, together with the Coalition Combating Violence against Women and other governmental institutions, to promote national consensus on terminology on major issues related to gender-based violence. The lexicon also promoted examples of best practices from each of the institutions. UNFPA, together with the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, implemented advocacy activities on sensitizing legislators, decision-makers and community leaders on the negative effects of early marriage on the development of Palestinian society.

55. UNIFEM negotiated an agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to initiate a national programme on women's rights, with focus on femicide.

### **Advocacy**

56. In organizing international meetings and conferences for, and under the guidance of, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs has included items dealing with the situation of Palestinian women and ensured the participation of women's organizations and women representatives of other civil society organizations. The meetings focused on the legal aspects of the question of Palestine in light of the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>32</sup> The hardship caused by the wall for Palestinian women through limiting their access to places of work and worship, schools, hospitals and community services formed part of the deliberations. Renowned women lawyers, and women activists from civil society organizations working in the field of law, were among the panellists guiding the discussions.

57. The Department of Public Information carried out a special information programme on the question of Palestine, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 59/30 of 1 December 2004, aimed at sensitizing public opinion. Working in close cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs, and through it with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Department used a variety of means to inform the public and reach out to the media and civil society. The United Nations News Centre continued its coverage of developments related to the situation in the Occupied Territories and its effect on Palestinian women. Various United Nations activities, statements and documents related to the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women were also highlighted through a special "News Focus: Middle East" page featured on the United Nations News Centre. The Department of Public Information issued 18 press releases (9 each in French and English) dealing specifically with assistance to Palestinian women.

58. United Nations in Action series of UNTV featured a programme on microcredit schemes for Palestinian women, which highlighted the role of UNRWA.<sup>33</sup> In its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines for worldwide and regional dissemination, United Nations Radio covered, inter alia, the report of a round-table discussion with three Palestinian women representing non-governmental organizations to CEDAW held during its March 2005 session; the report on the struggle for equality of Palestinian women living in Israel 10 years after Beijing; the affirmation by CEDAW of the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories according to a report introduced by Palestinian Women; the report introduced by the Arab Women in Israel to CEDAW on Israeli discrimination against Arab women in Israel; a report on a delegation of Palestinian Women who travelled to New York to participate in Beijing+10; and a report on cooperation between the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs and the World Bank.

59. ESCWA provided technical assistance to the Palestinian National Authority Ministry of Women's Affairs for building the capacities of its Advocacy, Media and Communications Department. Three training workshops were conducted for



Ministry staff on addressing gender issues in plans and programmes of other ministries and to improve their use of data and statistics for lobbying and advocacy. The ESCWA Centre for Women developed an interactive website to include country profiles on Arab women, including Palestinian women. Those profiles are updated on a regular basis to reflect the latest developments in population dynamics, health, poverty, education, human rights, conflict, labour, political participation and leadership and the work of the national machinery and non-governmental organizations.

60. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs chaired the inter-agency advocacy group, which includes members of the key United Nations humanitarian agencies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During 2005, the Office initiated a group activity on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March. The inter-agency advocacy group published a press release entitled "Towards a more secure future: United Nations agencies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory call for action in improving the situation of Palestinian women". Signed by 10 agencies, the press release was sent to the local media and received good coverage.

61. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs updated its documents collection under the subject category "Women" in the Internet-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL) and electronic links to relevant websites outside UNISPAL. The special web address permitting external websites to link to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women on an ongoing basis was also maintained.

62. In terms of its publications programme, the Division for Palestinian Rights included information on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, as available, in its monthly monitoring publications *Chronological Review of Events Relating to the Question of Palestine* and *Monthly Bulletin*, which review action taken by the United Nations system and intergovernmental organizations relevant to the question of Palestine, as well as other publications.

### **Institutional arrangements**

63. UNDP supported the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs in the development of a three-year strategic action plan whose central objective was the empowerment of and support to Palestinian women to actively participate in building and developing a democratic Palestinian state. Since June 2005, the gender mainstreaming capacity of the Ministry and newly created gender units of various line Ministries has been increased in order to provide decision makers with the needed skills and knowledge to operationalize their commitment to gender equality and women's rights.

64. The ESCWA Centre for Women sponsored technical assistance activities and advisory services on institution-building in the Ministry of Women's Affairs, concentrating on the formulation of the Ministry's strategy and policy document. Advisory services were also provided to enhance the technical cooperation programme of the poverty alleviation department of the Ministry. Capacity-building training workshops were organized and conducted for Ministry officials.

65. The Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals and the UNV programmes continued to support the ongoing efforts of UNDP, UNIFEM and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to ensure that gender issues were mainstreamed in all policies and reflected in all programmes. In this regard, UNV supported the institutionalization process within the newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs through the provision of gender training, an ICT unit and support to the development of a website for Palestinian women to meet and share experiences.

66. In response to a joint request from Palestinian and Israeli women leaders and activists, UNIFEM convened and facilitated a strategy and planning meeting from 26 to 28 July 2005 in Istanbul, Turkey. The purpose of the meeting was to develop and advance a plan to establish an international women's commission for a just and sustainable Israeli-Palestinian peace. The Commission was established in the context of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and other international conventions and instruments that call upon States parties to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. The Commission brought together Palestinian, Israeli and international women dedicated to end the Israeli occupation and bring about a just peace based on international law, human rights and equality. The Commission worked for an ongoing and comprehensive reconciliation in order to realize a mutually secure and sustainable peace and co-existence within the context of mainstream negotiations.

#### **IV. Conclusion and recommendations**

**67. During the reporting period, the impact of the conflict continued to adversely affect women in all spheres of life. Women and their families lived in a permanent state of insecurity, tension and fear (E/CN.4/2005/72/Add.4, para. 74). They were negatively affected by the restrictions on movement, the deteriorating economic conditions, poverty and lack of access to health care and health services. Palestinian women continued to bear the combined burdens of occupation and patriarchy which have deepened their inequality and denied them the possibility for enjoyment of rights, fundamental freedoms and liberty (Ibid., para. 72).**

**68. The outcome document of the 2005 World Summit highlighted the importance of eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. The important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding was also highlighted. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. In this regard, it is important that Palestinian women are fully involved in all conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, including at decision-making levels. Taking into account that women tend to suffer disproportionately during times of political unrest and instability, there is a need to mainstream gender perspectives in policies and programmes to ensure that the contribution, priorities and needs of both women and men are addressed.**

**69. Entities of the United Nations have continued to make efforts to improve the situation of Palestinian women. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant institutions**

should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women.

70. The Commission may wish to encourage entities of the United Nations system to increase the participation of women in all assistance activities in order to fully integrate women's priorities and needs in the development process, for example, through increasing women's involvement in poverty-reduction programmes.

71. The newly established Ministry of Women's Affairs has undertaken important initiatives to promote gender mainstreaming in all ministries. United Nations entities and other international organizations should continue to coordinate and collaborate to provide financial, advisory and technical assistance to the Ministry and to gender units in line ministries to ensure that gender perspectives are identified and addressed in policies and programmes in all policy areas.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The contribution of UNICEF to the preparation of the present report.

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF input to the preparation of the report.

<sup>3</sup> The *Palestine Human Development Report 2004* was prepared by the Birzeit University, Development Studies Programme, with support from the United Nations Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and in association with the Ministry of Planning.

<sup>4</sup> See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, "Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (Geneva, 2005) para. 31.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., para. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., para. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., para. 19.

<sup>12</sup> *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> International Labour Organization, op. cit., para. 20.

<sup>15</sup> UNICEF input to the preparation of the present report.

<sup>16</sup> See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> International Labour Organization, op. cit., para. 10.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., para. 10.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., preface.

<sup>21</sup> See *Palestine Human Development Report 2004*.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> International Labour Organization, *op. cit.*, para. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., para. 80.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., preface.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., preface.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., para. 88.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., para. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., para. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., para. 14.

<sup>32</sup> United Nations International Meeting on the Question of Palestine, United Nations Office at Geneva, 8 and 9 March 2005; United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Middle East Peace, UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 12 and 13 July 2005.

<sup>33</sup> The programme was aired on CNN International in January 2005.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-first session

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda\*\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2005 and September 2006, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/8 of 25 July 2006. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system, inter alia, with regard to humanitarian assistance, economic activities, education and training, health and the human rights of women. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons.

\*\* E/CN.6/2007/1.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2006/8 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2006/4) and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2005 to September 2006. The report reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the World Bank.

4. The report provides recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. The period under review was marked by several major developments. It was dominated by the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank and the election of new parliaments in both Israel and the Palestinian Authority, resulting in the subsequent nomination of new Governments.<sup>1</sup> After the election of Hamas in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the fiscal deficit widened as, inter alia, the Government of Israel began to withhold the payment of the taxes and duties collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.<sup>2</sup> Prospects for continued international financial support for the Palestinian Authority diminished, leading to a risk of contraction in the Palestinian economy.<sup>3</sup> The United States and the European Union announced a freeze on their assistance to the Palestinian Authority until it commits to the three principles spelled out by the Quartet on 30 January 2006, while maintaining direct assistance to the Palestinian people.<sup>4</sup>

6. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, movement was limited as a result of checkpoints, curfews, closures and the separation barrier and its associated regime.<sup>5</sup> A climate of economic uncertainty and social hardship continued throughout 2005 and 2006, worsened by recurring violence, ongoing construction of the separation barrier, restrictions on movement, land confiscation, house demolitions, arrests and detentions by the Israeli authorities and intensification, from August onwards, of the fiscal crisis.<sup>6</sup>

7. Increased restrictions on free movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and within the West Bank left many women unable to access basic services.<sup>7</sup> Access by some villagers to nearby urban centres had improved temporarily when the number of closure obstacles decreased to 376 between February and August 2005.<sup>8</sup> The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 noted, however, that the number of checkpoints increased from 376 in August 2005 to over 500 in August 2006.<sup>9</sup> As a result, Palestinian women currently live under conditions of forced isolation and are often separated from their families and communities, which provide support, safety and solace.<sup>10</sup>

8. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the humanitarian situation continued to deteriorate in the Gaza Strip due to shortages of electricity and water, caused by the 28 June 2006 bombing by the Israeli Air Force of the Gaza power plant, and the continued sporadic opening of only some of Gaza's crossing points.<sup>11</sup> The substantial reduction of the electricity and fuel supply,

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<sup>1</sup> A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., para. 6.

<sup>5</sup> UNRWA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>6</sup> A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 8.

<sup>7</sup> OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>8</sup> A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 24.

<sup>9</sup> A/HRC/2/5, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>11</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory, Gaza Strip Situation Report, 12 July 2006, 12 p.m.

together with the disruption of water supplies, had a severe impact on the daily life of Palestinians who were without light at night and electricity to do their cooking.<sup>12</sup>

9. Women account for 49.4 per cent of the Palestinian population, a total of 1.86 million,<sup>13</sup> in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. While only 13.8 per cent of overall households in the refugee population were female-headed, such households accounted for 46 per cent of the special hardship families, illustrating the burden of poverty borne by women in the refugee population.<sup>14</sup> Special hardship assistance was provided to 386 families headed by widowed, divorced or abandoned women.<sup>15</sup>

10. According to the report of the Director-General of ILO on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, four out of every 10 Palestinians in the territory were living in poverty on less than \$2.10 a day. The absolute figure increased from 600,000 in 1999 to 1,600,000 in 2005.<sup>16</sup> The poverty rate was nearly 50 per cent in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with the Gaza Strip rate at approximately 70 per cent in May 2006.<sup>17</sup> Spiralling poverty rates owing to the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis had a disproportionate impact on Palestinian women and increased the vulnerability of youths and young women.<sup>18</sup>

11. The school enrolment ratio of girls as compared to that of boys is almost equal for primary and secondary education.<sup>19</sup> Gender stereotypes continued to exist in the school curricula.<sup>20</sup> The Palestinian Higher Education Statistics Report (2004) indicated that more female students (5,043) than male students (4,829) were enrolled in the science and technology fields. Although women accounted for approximately 50 per cent of information technology graduates between 2002 and 2005, only 3 per cent of them were employed in the field, compared to 67 per cent of male graduates.<sup>21</sup>

12. According to the 2006 report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people, continued closures within and between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank severely challenged the Palestinian health system's ability to function at appropriate levels.<sup>22</sup> WHO noted that the financial crisis threatened to undermine the delivery of health services that served the majority of the Palestinian population, including women.<sup>23</sup> UNICEF's Humanitarian Action Report 2006 also noted that

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<sup>12</sup> A/HRC/2/5, para. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by UNDP Communications Office, Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/60/13)*, para. 120.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, page iv.

<sup>17</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/61/35)*, para. 32.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> UNFPA "Gender-based violence in Occupied Palestinian Territory", Women, Peace and Security Initiative, Technical Support Division, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> A/61/80-E/2006/72, para. 53.

<sup>23</sup> WHO contribution to the report (2006).



basic equipment for maternal and newborn health was lacking in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>24</sup>

13. Food insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was the result, in part, of the absence of purchasing power, as few people had sufficient money to cover their family's basic food needs.<sup>25</sup> The results of a study conducted by UNRWA revealed that, in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively, 54.7 per cent and 34.3 per cent of children aged 6 to 36 months were anaemic, as were 40.2 per cent and 29.9 per cent of pregnant women and 45.7 per cent and 23 per cent of nursing mothers. Other micronutrient deficiencies of concern were subclinical vitamin A deficiency, rickets and iodine deficiency.<sup>26</sup>

14. The Palestine refugee population has one of the highest birth rates in the region, as approximately one third of Palestinian refugee women marry before the age of 18.<sup>27</sup> Approximately 39.4 per cent of the Palestinian refugee population is below 18 years of age and 24.6 per cent consists of women of reproductive age.<sup>28</sup> The total refugee fertility rates vary from 2.5 and 2.6 in the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon to 4.4 in the Gaza Strip.<sup>29</sup> As a result of increased literacy, generalized socio-economic hardship, increased public awareness of the need for child spacing and the widespread use of modern contraceptive methods, the historically high population growth rates of more than 3.5 per cent among the Palestinian refugees over the past two decades slowed to 2.5 per cent.<sup>30</sup> This trend, however, has been reversed in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the humanitarian crisis in 2000.<sup>31</sup>

15. According to the 2004 labour force statistics of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, women accounted for 15.9 per cent of the total labour force in the West Bank and for 9.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip. The share in Jerusalem was the lowest in the West Bank, accounting for only 10.1 per cent.<sup>32</sup> Female employment rates have historically been low in the entire region; however, they have declined even further with the crisis.<sup>33</sup> Unemployment among the working female population stands at 19.6 per cent.<sup>34</sup> The closure and separation of the rest of the West Bank from East Jerusalem has limited the access of women from East Jerusalem to employment opportunities.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2006, p. 106.

<sup>25</sup> A/HRC/2/5, para. 32.

<sup>26</sup> A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 55.

<sup>27</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixtieth Session, Supplement No. 13 (A/60/13)*, para. 67.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 79.

<sup>34</sup> Focus 2005, vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

<sup>35</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

16. Despite their low participation in the workforce, Palestinian women have traditionally played a major role in agricultural production.<sup>36</sup> Nearly 90 per cent of unpaid female family members are engaged in agricultural work.<sup>37</sup> With the loss of land to Israel, Palestinian women are affected by the loss of both a vital source of income and their role as economic producers.<sup>38</sup>

17. During the reporting period, the labour market of the Occupied Palestinian Territory was subject to persistent and unpredictable security restrictions on the movement of people and products.<sup>39</sup> Higher levels of conflict and closure also placed a greater economic and psychological burden on Palestinian women, who not only remained primarily responsible for running the household and caring for family members, but also increasingly engaged in informal employment or self-employment activities to supplement their household incomes.<sup>40</sup>

18. To compensate for lost household income, more Palestinian women were initiating various types of income-generating activities with the support of microcredit institutions.<sup>41</sup> Despite the difficult environment prevailing in the West Bank and Gaza, the number of women participating in savings and credit associations increased by 6 per cent, the savings mobilized increased by 24 per cent and the total amount of loans increased by 32 per cent.<sup>42</sup> The total number of women members in the savings and credit associations stood at 5,636 persons and their savings reached \$1,471,524.<sup>43</sup> The total number of loans issued by the savings and credit associations reached 3,634 loans.<sup>44</sup> The savings and credit associations' loans provided employment opportunities to female and male members of the households and improved the overall income of the beneficiaries.<sup>45</sup>

19. Employment opportunities were limited for women,<sup>46</sup> as illustrated, for example, by the fact that Palestinian women accounted for 31.2 per cent of lawyers, 21.4 per cent of journalists and 11.7 per cent of doctors.<sup>47</sup> The female Palestinian labour force continued to be heavily concentrated in agriculture and services, whereas the male labour force is more evenly distributed across the main sectors.<sup>48</sup>

20. Palestinian women have limited access to decision-making. Only 9 per cent of judges and 12.2 per cent of prosecutors in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were women.<sup>49</sup> The Millennium Development Goals Report for the Occupied Palestinian

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<sup>36</sup> A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 73.

<sup>37</sup> World Bank (2006) "West Bank and Gaza, Economic Update and Potential Outlook", p. 24.

<sup>38</sup> A/61/67-E/2006/13, para. 73.

<sup>39</sup> ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, preface.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., para. 38.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., para. 90.

<sup>42</sup> IFAD contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> ILO (2006) report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 106.

<sup>47</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics cited in World Bank (2006) "West Bank and Gaza, Education Sector Analysis", para. 123.

<sup>49</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

Territories (2005) pointed out that the political participation of women in Palestinian society is low.<sup>50</sup> The proportion of seats held by women in the national parliament remained 5.7 per cent from 1995 to 2004.<sup>51</sup> At the level of local government, women's political participation in 2005 was higher, at 19.3 per cent in the West Bank and 17 per cent in the Gaza Strip.<sup>52</sup> By 2005, more than seven ministries had established gender units, including the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Local Government.<sup>53</sup>

21. Although the Palestinian Constitution promotes gender equality, this is not always reflected in the drafting or implementation of laws and legislation.<sup>54</sup> Palestinian women are subjected to discrimination under the laws governing marriage, divorce, the custody of children, inheritance and domestic violence.<sup>55</sup>

22. As reported by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967, the occupation and the separation barrier continued to violate Palestinian women's rights.<sup>56</sup> The Special Rapporteur noted that the barrier in Jerusalem, in particular, resulted in the separation of families, as husbands and wives may separate to allow the Jerusalem identity holder to retain his or her benefits.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, an Israeli law on citizenship prohibited Palestinians who marry Israeli Arabs from living with their spouses in Israel.<sup>58</sup>

23. Continuous violence took an intolerable toll on the physical and psychological well-being of Palestinian women.<sup>59</sup> Every aspect of their daily lives was impacted by violence and restrictions on their freedom and dignity.<sup>60</sup>

24. A case study on gender-based violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, commissioned by UNFPA and presented to an international symposium in Brussels in June 2006,<sup>61</sup> suggested that gender-based violence was increasing as a result of the increased political tension and violence.<sup>62</sup> According to a report released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in February 2006 on domestic violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory,<sup>63</sup> 61.7 per cent of married women had been exposed to psychological abuse, 23.3 per cent to physical abuse and 10.6 per cent to

<sup>50</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 32.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>53</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 34.

<sup>55</sup> UNFPA "Reassessing institutional support for Security Council resolution 1325, defining the UNFPA role and strengthening support for women affected by conflict" consultative meeting, Bucharest, 17-20 October 2005.

<sup>56</sup> E/CN.4/2006/29, para. 46.

<sup>57</sup> A/HRC/2/5, para. 63.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> [www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/index.htm](http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06/index.htm) (accessed on 4 October 2006).

<sup>62</sup> UNFPA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>63</sup> Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press conference on the preliminary results of the Domestic Violence Survey (2005), February 2006, [www.pcbs.gov.ps](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps), cited in UNIFEM "Gender profile of the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

sexual abuse. In addition, 63.6 per cent of unmarried women (18 years and over) were exposed to psychological abuse and 24.6 per cent to physical abuse.

25. Steps have been taken by the Palestinian Authority to address the issues identified in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.<sup>64</sup> A quota law providing that women must make up 20 per cent of local councils was approved; legislative steps were taken to address crimes against women committed in the name of honour; the police and the judiciary were being trained on issues related to violence against women; and gender units were created in police departments. In addition, a ministerial committee was created to amend the penal code to provide better protection to women and provide shelters to the victims of violence.<sup>65</sup>

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

26. This section is based on information submitted by entities of the United Nations system for the preparation of this report. Nine areas of assistance have been identified: education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; participation; human rights, including the elimination of violence against women; humanitarian assistance; advocacy; media; and gender mainstreaming.

#### **A. Education and training**

27. UNRWA, IFAD and the World Bank provided assistance in the area of education. The UNRWA education programme is one of the chief means of contributing to the human development of girls and women. The Agency promoted occupational training programmes, kindergartens and nurseries, through 65 Women Programme Centres. Women Programme Centres in three camps of the West Bank provided refugee women with information technology training and assisted 73 Palestinian refugee women in obtaining high school diplomas. About half of the teachers and those enrolled in the UNRWA pre-teaching service courses were women. The IFAD three Village Community Multipurpose Centres were used to conduct training courses for women in various educational fields.

#### **B. Health**

28. Several United Nations entities reported on activities to improve access to health care for Palestinian women. WHO established a thematic group for women and child health, which coordinates project activities of different donors and implementing agencies, exchanges information, provides advice and recommends priorities for women and children's health. WHO also provided logistical support to the Ministry of Health, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP and UNFPA as required.

29. UNRWA undertook multisectoral activities, including full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases. UNRWA also

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<sup>64</sup> E/CN.4/2006/61, para. 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

provided pre-conception folic acid, iron and folic acid supplementation for pregnant women throughout pregnancy, as well as health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, the UNRWA community mental health programme in the Gaza Strip provided essential psychosocial support for Palestinian refugees living in situations of protracted violence and armed conflict. To facilitate gender-sensitive programming, the UNRWA health programme provides sex-disaggregated data whenever possible. To reduce gender-based health disparities, UNRWA encourages gender balance in recruitment and retention policies in its health programme.

30. UNFPA provided technical assistance on population and development, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, especially among adolescents. UNFPA strengthened the integration of reproductive health care in 39 public health centres and two non-governmental organization clinics. Through its emergency obstetric programme, UNFPA continued to ensure safe delivery for women in isolated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Bureij and Jabaliya, two innovative women's health centres continued to provide reproductive health care to women in two of the most populated and underprivileged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

31. UNFPA also aided the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Health to identify indicators to measure the impact of the collapse of the health system on pregnant women, as well as on the overload of the maternity wards in central referral systems.

32. UNIFEM undertook activities to strengthen the institutional capacities of service providers in order to improve the quality of services, resources and information for women. Activities included gender training for the psychosocial teams employed by UNICEF in the Gaza Strip. Coordination meetings among counselling service providers were also set up. UNIFEM also worked on mobilizing and strengthening existing networks among non-governmental organizations to build capacity for better service provision for rural women. During the reporting period, 15 psychosocial counsellors and social workers provided psychosocial counselling interventions for over 1,000 women in the Gaza Strip.

33. UNV is implementing a project on solid waste management to improve the health and environmental conditions of residents of the town of Asira and four surrounding villages in the Nablus area. Women volunteers lead training sessions and organize and conduct visits to households to train other women on waste separation and proper modes of waste collection.

## **C. Employment**

34. Assistance provided in the area of employment included training, research and the provision of jobs. UNRWA expanded the apprenticeship programme offered by seven Women's Programme Centres, to give 151 unemployed refugee women in Lebanon access to training and employment opportunities. As part of a larger research initiative, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process assessed the impact of the Israeli disengagement from Gaza on living conditions, with particular emphasis on women's participation in the labour market.

## **D. Entrepreneurship**

35. Several United Nations entities provided loans, grants and training to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. Phase II of the IFAD Rehabilitation and Development Project continued to have a strong focus on women's economic empowerment, primarily through access to microfinance and entrepreneurial skills. IFAD noted that the activities for women entrepreneurs had shown a great degree of resilience, as evidenced by the safeguarding of their capital and the continued growth of the enterprises. The IFAD Business Service Centre in Gaza disbursed 228 loans (amounting to \$579,800) to women entrepreneurs for animal and agricultural production and, to a lesser degree, for food processing and handicrafts. A similar business service centre was being established in Jericho.

36. As a part of phase II of the Rehabilitation and Development Programme, two community centres in Azzoun and Jayyous villages were officially opened to serve the financial and social needs of women in the area. The Palestinian Agriculture Relief Committees granted 12 women's regional savings and credit cooperatives interest-free loans. Ten women members of savings and credit associations participated in an exhibition during the olive harvest festival of Bethlehem, in which the complete cycle of production of income-generating projects was demonstrated, encouraging other women to consider establishing joint projects for marketing goods and obtaining group loans.

37. During the reporting period, UNRWA disbursed over 3,558 solidarity group loans to women microentrepreneurs in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. UNRWA had a portfolio of over 12,980 loans in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with an outstanding portfolio of over \$7.9 million, of which 23.4 per cent were held by women clients.

38. UNIFEM implemented projects in nine rural communities as part of the pilot phase II of the Sabaya programme, which focused on the economic security of women. Through this initiative, a total of 106 rural women procured equipment and machinery and acquired skills that helped them in the establishment of their enterprises. As a result, four income-generating enterprises were established, run and managed by the women themselves: an electronic bakery, a sewing factory, a day-care centre and a chicken farm. In April 2006, the Sabaya programme was expanded to include a total of 18 women centres in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip. A large cross-regional exhibition on the development and marketing of Palestinian women's handicrafts was organized, where products from some of the women's centres under the Sabaya programme were exhibited and contacts established with individuals, groups and organizations involved in the handicrafts sector, with a view to future cooperation.

39. UNCTAD established a Palestinian Shippers Council, chaired by a successful businesswoman. It actively promoted the recruitment of Palestinian women to the Council and encouraged women's participation in all Council activities.

40. Training activities to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurial capacities were provided by several entities. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized interactive training sessions for over 100 women as a means of upgrading their dairy processing skills. WFP provided Palestinian women with food for work and training activities, including the development of essential skills to reduce the gender gap in accessing education and training and

thereby support women's contribution to household food security. WFP worked to ensure the equal participation of women and men in all WFP funded activities.

41. IFAD continued to provide capacity-building to the cooperatives of savings and credit associations: 1,250 women participated in 14 exchange visits to analyse the performance of the savings and credit associations and exchange knowledge and experience with other members.

42. The UNCTAD integrated capacity-building programme (Empretec) promoted the creation of sustainable support structures to help promising entrepreneurs build innovative and internationally competitive small and medium-sized enterprises. To date, Empretec has graduated 123 entrepreneurs, 16 per cent of whom were women.

## **E. Participation in decision-making**

43. Several entities provided assistance to enhance the participation of Palestinian women in various sectors. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs maintained close links with women decision makers, including briefing newly appointed women ministers and government officials on developments in the humanitarian situation and how they affect women. During the local and legislative elections of December 2005 and January 2006, UNDP supported eight non-governmental organizations involved in voter education programmes to increase awareness of human rights, democratic participation and better integration of women in the democratic election process. With the support of UNDP, newly elected women members of local government were enabled to participate in training workshops on finance, management and law organized in eight districts in the West Bank.

44. At the local government level, UNIFEM supported the mobilization of over 140 rural women in 18 target locations. A women's committee and a coordinator were elected in each location to represent all the women of the communities. Workshops and periodic follow-up meetings to develop a needs assessment and workplan for each location have been instrumental in strengthening channels of communication between women and their local government representatives, in securing women's access to key infrastructure and in ensuring their involvement in decision-making on the best use of this infrastructure.

45. UNESCO organized the international symposium on the theme "Arab women between east and west" in June 2006, with the aim of building links between Arab and European women and promoting the participation of Arab women in economic, social and cultural development. The Symposium's side-event exhibition, "Creativity of Arab women", presented works of Palestinian female artists and craftswomen, and illustrated their role in perpetuating traditions.

46. The World Bank Development Grant Facility supported the Arab Gender and Development Network. Fifteen Palestinian members benefited from an exchange of gender equality information with other members of the Network as well as research and training. The regional research project on the theme "Arab women and decision-making", supported by the World Bank, included a Palestinian national research team.

## **F. Women's human rights and elimination of violence against women**

47. Several United Nations entities provided assistance related to Palestinian women's human rights, including the elimination of violence against women. OHCHR followed developments in Palestinian legislation with regard to women's rights; worked with Palestinian civil society partners on the incorporation of international human rights standards into existing or draft Palestinian legislation; and held discussions with the Women and Child Department of the Palestinian Legislative Council, together with women members recently elected to the Council, focusing on the role and the rights of Palestinian women.

48. OHCHR, UNFPA and the World Bank provided assistance to address violence against women. OHCHR worked closely with the judicial reform support group in the area of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour, and informed the group about the cultural background and legal framework behind this phenomenon. In November 2005, OHCHR participated in an initial advocacy campaign launched by civil society organizations to address the issue of domestic violence and worked in partnership with the national human rights institution and civil society to promote human rights, including women's rights.

49. UNIFEM supported the development of a Palestinian Women's Bill of Rights, a joint project between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the General Union of Palestinian Women, with substantive inputs from Palestinian human rights non-governmental organizations and women's non-governmental organizations.

50. UNFPA supported the development of the national action plan of the Forum of Non-Governmental Organizations Combating Violence against Women, which includes the use of training for advocacy and strategy development on reproductive health to ensure that the national legislation is in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and awareness-raising campaigns on the national action plan. The World Bank supported the Counselling Centre for Women in Difficult Circumstances, which provides support, therapy and vocational training to, and advocacy services for, Palestinian women subject to domestic violence.

51. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, OHCHR, UNDP and UNRWA supported capacity-building on women's human rights and on the Convention. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia supported capacity-building for 61 government employees from various Palestinian ministries — including the Ministries of Women's Affairs; Social Affairs, Interior, Planning, Justice, Local Governance; Economy; Health; Education; Finance; Labour; Culture; Sports and Youth; and Agriculture — through four capacity-building training workshops on the Convention and on preparation of national reports, in accordance with the guidelines set by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

52. The OHCHR training courses for the staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs provided an induction to United Nations human rights treaties and mechanisms, including reporting to treaty bodies, with a focus on the Convention. OHCHR also conducted training sessions on the Convention and the development of human rights concepts for representatives of Palestinian civil society, including various human rights organizations and non-governmental organizations. OHCHR continued to



integrate women's issues into all training activities, including curricula, and to consider gender balance in the selection of participants.

53. UNDP supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs to provide capacity-building to gender units and staff in 15 line ministries on gender-responsive planning and research, and monitoring and reporting on implementation of the Convention.

54. With the support of UNRWA, the Women Programme Centres, which are pivotal in protecting the human rights of women and children, organized workshops, seminars and training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In the Gaza Strip, over 19,000 women participated in awareness-raising workshops and in the Syrian Arab Republic, a large workshop was held on civil law and legal issues related to women.

## **G. Humanitarian assistance**

55. Humanitarian assistance included provision of food, cash assistance, temporary work and access to health and other services. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided assistance to approximately 6 per cent of the Agency's poorest registered refugees (special hardship case families), 46 per cent of which were female-headed families. As part of its emergency programme, UNRWA distributed food to approximately 135,000 refugee families in the Gaza Strip and 75,000 others in the West Bank. During the reporting period, UNRWA created an estimated 1.8 million days of temporary work. Approximately 23 per cent of the beneficiaries of the Agency's emergency job creation scheme in the Gaza Strip were female heads of households. In the West Bank this figure was 17 per cent. WFP reported that at least 51 per cent of total hardship cases and institutional feeding beneficiaries assisted through the Ministry of Social Affairs were women.

56. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNFPA in developing the Consolidated Appeal Process for several projects, including food security and capacity-building initiatives for marginalized women in 10 villages in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; reproductive health services; mobile psychosocial centres for women in the Gaza Strip; and psychosocial and reproductive health support to poor women in Gaza.

57. The World Bank, through its improved targeting scheme, under the Social Safety Net Reform Project, enabled poor adult women living on their own because of separation, divorce or widowhood, to receive cash assistance from the UNRWA Special Hardship Case Programme.

58. The socio-economic unit of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process continued to monitor women's participation in the labour market and the effects of closure on their participation. Analysis from data collected each month was used in recommendations to donors and in a published study, "Economic fragmentation and adaptation in the rural West Bank".<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process "Economic fragmentation and adaptation in the rural West Bank", October 2005.

## H. Advocacy

59. Several United Nations entities carried out advocacy activities on the situation and rights of Palestinian women. OHCHR participated in various seminars and discussions addressing specific issues of concern on women's human rights, with the goal of highlighting how non-governmental organizations can use human rights mechanisms, especially Special Procedures. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs met with representatives of the Palestinian Women's Institutes, non-governmental organizations and decision makers, including the Ministry for Women's Affairs, and emphasized the role of advocacy for Palestinian women's human rights.

60. International meetings and conferences organized by the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs included discussions of the situation of Palestinian women, with Palestinian women and representatives of civil society organizations as panellists. Participants at the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in April 2006, the United Nations International Meeting in Support of Middle East Peace in June 2006 and the United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of the Palestinian People in September 2006 discussed, among other issues, the impact of the occupation on Palestinian women and children, the most vulnerable segment of the Palestinian society.

61. WFP collaborated with the Ministry of Agriculture to organize International Women's Day celebrations in March 2006. To mark International Women's Day in the Gaza Strip, OHCHR held a meeting with 50 refugee women, highlighting women's rights and participation in political life, and participated in activities that emphasized the challenges facing Palestinian women following the recent Palestinian Legislative Council elections.

62. UNESCO inaugurated the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre on 18 January 2006. UNDP supported the second phase of the management of TAWASOL women's resource centres, which disseminate information on Palestinian women.

## I. Media

63. During the reporting period, the Department of Public Information issued four press releases (two in French and two in English) related to Palestinian women. Through its UNifeed service, a daily satellite television newsfeed that reaches hundreds of broadcasters around the world, the Department distributed 12 stories related to the question of Palestine, some of which referred specifically to women and children. In its daily news programmes and current affairs magazines, distributed regionally and worldwide, the Department covered issues related to Palestinian women and children, in both official and non-official languages. The Department also organized an international media seminar on the theme "New challenges in the Middle East peace process and Israeli-Palestinian dialogue" (June 2006), in which two Palestinian women participated.

64. The United Nations Information Service at Geneva organized five press conferences during the reporting period on matters pertaining specifically to Palestinian women. The inter-agency public information and advocacy committee of

the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs published press statements providing the latest facts and figures relating to women.

65. Several entities provided assistance in film production activities related to Palestinian women. UNRWA produced the film “Mother Aysha”, which tells the story of a woman in the Gaza Strip who freed her family from economic difficulty by starting a small business with a loan from UNRWA. UNFPA produced a film on reproductive health services for adolescents, entitled “Strengthening emergency obstetric care in Palestine”, focusing on the work in reproductive health with refugees of the Jabaliya and Bureij Women’s Health Centres in the Gaza Strip. The UNESCO documentary film on women’s experiences, “On the road to dialogue”, demonstrates the potential of dialogue for increasing understanding through joint Israeli-Palestinian experiences. In connection with the first Palestinian women’s film festival, organized in August 2005 with support from UNESCO, the non-governmental organization Shashat set up a multimedia reference library in Ramallah on the subject of women’s cinema.

66. Assistance also included training in media and news production. In the Department of Public Information Training Programme for Palestinian Media Practitioners (November 2005), six of the 10 media participants were women. UNESCO designed and conducted a training course for 10 Palestinian women journalists on television journalism and television reporting (December 2005). As part of its Sabaya programme, UNIFEM conducted training in filming, photography and web design at one of the phase I centres, which benefited 10 rural women from five villages.

67. The Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information have included information about Palestinian women in their websites. The Department of Political Affairs continued to update the documents collection under the subject category “women” in the Internet-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as well as electronic links to relevant web sites outside UNISPAL. The Department of Political Affairs continues to maintain a special web address (<http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/women>), which allows external websites to link to the UNISPAL subject category on Palestinian women. The Department of Public Information, through a special feature page, “News Focus: Middle East”, maintained easy access to a variety of source documents and information materials on the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women.

## **J. Gender mainstreaming**

68. Several United Nations entities undertook activities to strengthen institutional capacities for gender mainstreaming. UNDP supported the Palestinian Ministry of Women’s Affairs to mainstream gender perspectives in major sectors through the establishment of gender units in 15 line ministries. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to highlight the situation of Palestinian women in its reports using data disaggregated by sex and age and data on the number of women living below the poverty line, or in deep poverty.

69. UNFPA provided assistance for institutional capacity-building for gender mainstreaming through the development of a gender audit in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The audit provided a comprehensive review of the gaps

preventing the effective implementation of gender equality and the empowerment of women in national planning and policy.

70. FAO carried out sensitization and training in gender analysis, including the training of trainers, to raise awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process, and of empowering existing women's associations to play a greater role in cooperative production and marketing. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported that its post-conflict assessments will include sex-disaggregated data on a systematic basis.

71. To support the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in national planning processes, UNIFEM collaborated with the Ministry of Women's Affairs in drafting the chapter on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in the 2005 progress report on Millennium Development Goals in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIFEM also collaborated with the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the content of the gender equality section of the "country assessment lite" document (a simpler version of the Common Country Assessment exercise), in preparation for a future common United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

#### **IV. Conclusion and recommendations**

**72. During the reporting period, the conflict and the widening fiscal deficit adversely affected women in all spheres of life. Increased restrictions on free movement in and out of the Gaza Strip and within the West Bank left many women unable to access the most basic services.<sup>67</sup> The reduction of electricity and fuel supply, together with the disruption of water supplies, had a severe impact on the daily life of Palestinians.<sup>68</sup> Female employment rates, which have been historically low in the entire region, declined even further with the crisis.<sup>69</sup> Unemployment among the working female population stands at 19.6 per cent.<sup>70</sup> Palestinian women were not only primarily responsible for running households but were also increasingly engaged in informal employment or self-employment activities to supplement their household incomes. The Millennium Development Goals Report for the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2005) pointed out that political participation of women in Palestinian society remained low.<sup>71</sup> Gender-based violence was reported to be widespread.<sup>72</sup> Steps were, however, taken by the Palestinian Authority to address the issues identified in the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.<sup>73</sup>**

**73. Entities of the United Nations system continued to make efforts to improve the situation of Palestinian women. WHO noted that the financial**

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<sup>67</sup> OCHA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>68</sup> A/HRC/2/5, para. 5.

<sup>69</sup> ILO, 2006, report of the Director-General on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, para. 79.

<sup>70</sup> Focus 2005, Vol. 4, published by the Communications Office of the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to Palestinian People, p. 45.

<sup>71</sup> Millennium Development Goals, Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2005 Progress Report, December 2005, p. 32.

<sup>72</sup> UNFPA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>73</sup> E/CN.4/2006/61, para. 4.

crisis threatened to undermine the delivery of health services that served the majority of the Palestinian population, including women.<sup>74</sup>

74. The achievement of gender equality and empowerment of Palestinian women is dependant on a secure and lasting peace. Efforts should be made to ensure that conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation and reconstruction efforts fully incorporate gender perspectives and that women are involved in these activities, as called for in the Beijing Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

75. The Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its High-level Segment in July 2006 underlined the important contribution that employment generation can make to post-conflict reconstruction and development.<sup>75</sup> The creation of an enabling environment for gender equality and the empowerment of Palestinian women requires ending discrimination against Palestinian women in the labour market, through both legal and policy measures, including eliminating occupational segregation and gender wage gaps.

76. The Commission may wish to encourage Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders to intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women, to fully incorporate gender perspectives into all areas of support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to systematically assess the impact of these efforts.

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<sup>74</sup> WHO contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>75</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-first Session, Supplement No 1 (A/61/1)*, para. 50.



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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Fifty-second session

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Item 3 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2006 and September 2007, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/7. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system, inter alia, with regard to humanitarian assistance, economic activities, education and training, health and the human rights of women. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2008/1.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2007/7 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2007/4) and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2006 to September 2007, and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Special Rapporteur of the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Bank.

4. The social and economic situation of Palestinian women from 2000-2006 was highlighted in a report commissioned by the ESCWA Centre for Women (E/ESCWA/ECW/2007/Technical Paper.1), which was distributed to countries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) during the fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women. ESCWA also prepared the report entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, including Palestinian women, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan", contained in the note by the Secretary-General (A/62/75-E/2007/13).

5. The present report provides recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

6. During the period under review, the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory deepened and continued to claim lives (A/62/82-E/2007/66, para. 77). The Israeli-Hizbullah conflict in Lebanon and its political fallout brought to a halt any Israeli attempts to implement a unilateral withdrawal from parts of the West Bank (*ibid.*, para. 9). Settlement activity and construction of the barrier continued in the West Bank, as did Israeli incursions into population centres. Efforts to bring political progress through dialogue between President Abbas and Prime Minister Olmert have continued, under the auspices of the United States Secretary of State.

7. In addition, an intense round of intra-Palestinian violence in Gaza in December 2006 and January 2007 threatened to degenerate into civil war (*ibid.*, para. 8). An agreement, reached on 8 February 2007 to end the factional violence, and the subsequent formation of the Palestinian Government of National Unity, calmed the situation, though clan feuds continued in Gaza where law and order are yet to be fully restored and the firing of rockets into Israel is yet to be halted (*ibid.*). The Government of National Unity came to an end in June 2007, when President Abbas dismissed Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh and appointed a Government led by Salam Fayyad, which committed to the Quartet principles. With the formation of the Government, the European Union and the United States announced their intention to renew direct assistance to the Palestinian Authority.<sup>1</sup> The United Nations strongly advocated for all parties to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law regarding the use of force and the protection of civilians. Through the Quartet and other channels, the United Nations worked to facilitate the release of Palestinian customs and tax revenues through agreed mechanisms, and encouraged the international community to continue to assist Palestinians in need (A/62/82-E/2007/66, para. 10).

8. The conflict continued to have a serious detrimental effect on all Palestinian people. According to the report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization on the situation of workers in the occupied Arab territories, living standards declined; poverty and unemployment increased; and social disintegration and political disarray intensified.<sup>2</sup> The report also indicated that the financial embargo imposed by the international community on the Palestinian Authority, the withholding of Palestinian revenues by Israel, the suspension by Western donors of their direct budget support, and the restrictions on mobility have led to the further deterioration of the situation as compared with the previous year.<sup>3</sup>

9. The ongoing conflict has resulted in a near collapse of the Palestinian economy, soaring unemployment and a sharp increase in poverty.<sup>4</sup> The World Bank

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Information, News and Media Division, Press release of 5701st meeting (AM) of the Security Council, 20 June 2007 (SC/9053).

<sup>2</sup> ILO (2007). Report of the Director-General on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, para. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, Country Brief: Middle East and North Africa Region, West Bank and Gaza (September 2007).



reported that during the last two years, the collapse has accelerated, with gross domestic product contracting by nearly 9 per cent in 2006 and by 4.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2007. The long-standing fiscal crisis deepened further in 2006 as a result of Israel's withholding of Palestinian clearance revenues and the aid boycott, resulting in a deficit of over 1 billion United States dollars (\$).<sup>4</sup>

10. Poverty and unemployment reached very high levels, with close to 66 per cent of all households in the Occupied Palestinian Territory living below the national poverty line and 24 per cent of the labour force unemployed.<sup>5</sup> The situation was particularly severe in Gaza, where 80 per cent of the population relied on United Nations food aid and 88 per cent lived below the official poverty line of \$2.20 per day (*ibid.*, para. 15). There are substantial gender differences in the labour market, and military occupation has tended to reinforce discrimination both directly and indirectly.<sup>6</sup> According to ILO calculations based on the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2006 only 14.7 per cent of women were in employment, compared to 52.0 per cent of men. Most women were engaged in housekeeping (54.1 per cent) or studying (21.1 per cent).<sup>7</sup>

11. While 6 out of 10 young women in the 15 to 24 age group were engaged in studies, the investment was lost to Palestinian society as very few Palestinian women were in employment.<sup>8</sup> Only 4.5 per cent of young women were in employment in 2006, compared to 28.6 per cent of young men. Nearly one in three young women was engaged in housekeeping.<sup>7</sup>

12. The lives of Palestinian women continued to be at great risk as evidenced by the increasing number of women killed or injured.<sup>9</sup> Between 1 September 2006 and 31 August 2007, a total of 67 Palestinian women were killed as a result of the direct conflict or internal violence and 120 were injured throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During the same period, direct conflict resulted in the killing of 2 Israeli women and the injury of 12 others.<sup>9</sup> As of June 2007, 118 Palestinian women, including minors, pregnant women and mothers, remained in Israeli prisons, detention facilities and camps.<sup>10</sup>

13. The right to freedom of movement has continued to be obstructed by more than 500 checkpoints, roadblocks, earth mounds and other types of obstacles. Movement is also curtailed by the permit system and the barrier (A/62/360, para. 24). During the period under review there has been a 43 per cent increase in the number of checkpoints and obstacles to movement in the West Bank (*ibid.*, para. 38). Primarily owing to closures, delays at checkpoints and the barrier, close to 30 per cent of pregnant women in the West Bank had difficulties accessing antenatal care and safe delivery.<sup>11</sup> Both primary and secondary services have declined, especially as the large majority of delivery and newborn care services (80 per cent of the deliveries in six Health Ministry hospitals in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) are unable to perform regular maintenance. Pregnant women with post-natal

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<sup>5</sup> ILO, *op. cit.*, para. 12.

<sup>6</sup> ILO, *op. cit.*, para 87.

<sup>7</sup> ILO, *op. cit.*, table 3.3.

<sup>8</sup> ILO, *op. cit.*, para. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Contribution of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the report (2007).

<sup>10</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/62/35)*, para. 20.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 31.

complications may also be at greater risk when discharged too early from the hospital owing to lack of staff and space. Emergency obstetrics has become a priority (see A/62/75-E/2007/13, para. 49).

14. According to UNFPA, the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health reported that since 2000, at least 68 pregnant Palestinian women gave birth at Israeli checkpoints. Additionally, 10 per cent of pregnant women spent two to four hours on the road before reaching a medical centre or a hospital, while 6 per cent spent more than four hours, when the normal travelling time before the intifada was 15 to 30 minutes. This hardship is estimated to have contributed to an 8.2 per cent increase in the number of home deliveries.<sup>12</sup> According to Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health statistics for 2006, there were an estimated 117,000 pregnant women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including some 18,000 who suffered from difficult pregnancy and birth owing to a lack of appropriate and timely antenatal, delivery and post-natal care. In fact, inadequate medical care during pregnancy was the third cause of mortality among Palestinian women of reproductive age, according to the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Health (see A/HRC/4/57, para. 12).

15. Owing to the closures and the barrier, many families are reluctant to let their daughters endure the degrading experience of waiting at checkpoints or barrier crossing points, to be searched or subjected to harassment by Israeli soldiers, or to have to walk long distances to avoid such experiences. Families are much more likely to pressure young women to drop out of school and not pursue higher levels of education (A/62/75-E/2007/13, para. 65).

16. The Special Committee noted that the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had not improved during the reporting period, and particularly in the Gaza Strip, it had deteriorated significantly (A/62/360, para. 23). It was reported to the Special Committee that one pregnant prisoner was made to sit handcuffed on a small chair, was blindfolded and hit on the face. Some female prisoners had given birth in prison while tied to their beds. The Special Committee was also told that one of the ways to force suspects to surrender to Israel forces was to threaten their spouses and sisters with rape (*ibid.*, para. 64). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the intensity of Israeli actions in the month of May in the Gaza Strip had dramatically affected the already undermined physical and psychological security of women and severely reduced their enjoyment of basic human rights. In the central Gaza Strip, women were forced to cease all activities at a centre for women during the month of May owing to the threat of shelling in the area, as well as inter-factional violence. The increased level of violence among Palestinian factions had been an aggravating factor, contributing to the further collapse of women's protection.<sup>13</sup>

17. A 2005/2006 survey, published in 2007, carried out by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics found that violence against women, especially domestic violence, was one of the problems faced by households in the Western and Arab societies. Approximately two thirds of ever-married women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory stated that they had been subjected to psychological violence

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA news feature, "Checkpoints compound the risks of childbirth for Palestinian women" (15 May 2007), available from <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=972>.

<sup>13</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor: Occupied Palestinian Territory*, No. 13 (May 2007), p. 7.

and almost one quarter had been subjected to physical violence from their husband. Among unmarried women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, more than one half stated that they had been subjected to psychological violence and a quarter of them to physical violence.<sup>14</sup> The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported an increase in the number of deaths for so-called immoral behaviour, including honour killings by families. In 2007 there were 11 cases of honour killings of women reported in the Gaza Strip.<sup>15</sup>

18. The right to education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to be seriously affected by the occupation. UNRWA reported that the dropout rate was very high, graduation rates were low and female education was generally on the decline. It attributed the collapse of Gaza's education system and education standards to the cumulative effects of the occupation, closures, poverty and violence (A/62/360, para. 58). According to UNICEF, primary school enrolment rates for girls fell from a peak of 98 per cent in 2000/2001 to 92.1 per cent in 2005/2006. For boys, the decline was from 95.8 per cent to 90.5 per cent. A huge gap exists between the proportion of girls completing primary school (94.5 per cent) and those enrolling in secondary school (76.4 per cent).<sup>16</sup> Attendance at rural girls' schools declines even further at each education level (A/62/75-E/2007/13, para. 66).

19. UNICEF indicated that young Palestinian girls had few opportunities for development, recreation and participation, and that there were few safe spaces for young girls to congregate. Most of the 300 youth clubs across the Occupied Palestinian Territory lacked funding and were poorly managed and equipped.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, UNICEF noted that the adolescence of many young women has been compromised by household demands, or pressures to marry early as the median age at first marriages for women was 18 years.<sup>16</sup>

20. Food insecurity disproportionately affects women and children. A study conducted by UNRWA in September 2006 revealed that 57.5 per cent of children from 6 to 36 months and 44.9 per cent of pregnant women in the Gaza Strip were anaemic.<sup>18</sup> Of children under 5 years of age, 22 per cent were vitamin A-deficient; 20 per cent showed signs of iodine deficiency (32 per cent in the West Bank and 3 per cent in the Gaza Strip); and 4.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip suffered from clinical vitamin D-deficiency (rickets). The increased incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular diseases and cancer, represents an epidemiological shift that imposes additional burdens on the scarce human and financial resources (A/62/75-E/2007/13, para. 51). The 60th World Health Assembly expressed concern about the health crisis and rising levels of food insecurity and demanded improvement in the living and medical conditions of Palestinian detainees, including of women and children.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Violence against women in Palestinian society (Domestic Violence Survey 2005/2006).

<sup>15</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *OCHA Special Focus: Israeli-Palestinian Fatalities Since 2000 — Key Trends* (August 2007), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF contribution to the report (2007).

<sup>17</sup> *UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2007* (29 January 2007), excerpts.

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA contribution to the report (2006).

<sup>19</sup> Resolution WHA.60.2 entitled "Health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan."

21. Women continued to outlive men. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2006 the life expectancy for men was 71.7 years compared to 73.2 years for women. In the West Bank, life expectancy was reported as 71.9 years for men and 73.6 years for women, and 71.4 years for men and 72.5 for women in the Gaza Strip.<sup>20</sup>

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

22. The present section focuses on the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system. Nine areas of support have been identified: education and training; information and communications technology; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; humanitarian assistance; advocacy and information; and gender mainstreaming.

#### A. Education and training

23. Several United Nations entities focused on initiatives to improve the access of women and girls to education and training opportunities. During the 2006/2007 academic year, approximately 500,000 students, half of them girls, were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. Young women constituted 75 per cent of the beneficiaries of small scholarship projects undertaken by UNRWA.

24. Efforts were made to enhance access to education, including through construction and/or rehabilitation of community buildings for schools, school feeding projects and provision of school supplies. Within the framework of the Integrated Community Development Project (\$15 million), the World Bank supported schools for girls, construction/rehabilitation of community buildings, and rehabilitation of kindergartens. UNIFEM partnered with WFP in a pilot phase of a West Bank school feeding project to provide over 13,000 schoolchildren with healthy midday snacks, which were produced in centres employing over 225 disadvantaged women. Approximately 100,000 schoolchildren in severely affected areas, half of them girls, were provided with school bags and stationery by UNICEF.

25. To enhance the quality of education, training was provided for 75 principals of girls' schools, 150 female school teachers, 2,000 newly appointed teachers and 120 new supervisors. Some 190 librarians in the West Bank were also supported.

26. An initiative was undertaken to empower girls through educational television programmes. The UNESCO Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation are developing a public-private partnership with Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization behind *Sesame Street*, to produce the latest season of *Shara'a Simsim*, the Palestinian version of its internationally renowned educational television series. The season 2007-2008 focuses on promoting girls' education and gender equality.

27. To increase access to alternative spaces for learning and recreation, including those in rural areas, UNICEF supported learning centres. In 2007, some 68,200

<sup>20</sup> Palestinian National Authority, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Demographic and Socioeconomic Status of the Palestinian People at the end of 2006 (December 2006).

adolescents, 51 per cent of them girls, participated in learning and recreational activities and many thousands more used the computer, library, sports and music facilities. The learning centres enabled adolescent girls, especially those living in rural areas, to participate in sports competitions for the first time.

28. Training programmes for women were provided in a wide range of areas, including leadership development, human rights and financial management. In the West Bank, Palestinian women benefited from the WFP Food-for-Work and training activities that focused on skills development, knowledge transfer and enhancement of the productive capacity of women. Women constituted 50 per cent of the village committee members involved in the selection of activities. The International Training Centre of ILO continued a project on “Social and civil dialogue for reconstruction and reconciliation” and provided training to Palestinian participants, 38 per cent of whom were female employees of governmental, employers’ and workers’ organizations as well as national and international organizations. ILO also organized several training workshops for women in trade unions to facilitate their participation in union activities, including election to leadership positions.

29. Activities were undertaken to enhance the capacity of women in financial management. UNIFEM provided training in management, including financial management, leadership and bookkeeping. UNDP organized trainings and workshops on finance, management and law in eight districts in the West Bank to enhance the capacities of newly elected mayors and female members of government. UNIFEM provided on-the-job training to women volunteers and administrative committee members of the Sabaya centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip,

30. A number of training opportunities were also provided to rural women. In the rural areas of the West Bank, UNIFEM provided academic counselling for women and academic support classes for girls. Eighteen community centres established by UNDP are used as women’s centres for capacity development of rural women, legal counselling and income generation. UNIFEM also supported a food security and capacity-building initiative in the Gaza Strip, benefiting 50 women in rural areas by providing them with training and start-up costs for small-scale production projects.

## **B. Information and communication technology**

31. Efforts were made to increase women’s equal access to and benefits from information and communication technologies. The UNRWA Department of Education continued to emphasize, inter alia, equal access of Palestinian refugee women to information and communications technologies, encourage gender equality in recruitment and retention policies and build capacity to produce appropriate information content. The World Bank financed the establishment of five multi-purpose community telecentres that provided safe access by women and girls to information and communications services and technologies through the use of female-friendly office hours, discount offers for female members, a comfortable visiting environment, and a regular focus on female non-formal education opportunities.

32. Through the Sabaya Programme, UNIFEM supported an electronic discussion among rural women aimed at building their capacity to use the Internet as a form of communication and expression, and as a means of collecting and processing data and information relevant to their needs. The use of information technology serves to

overcome movement restrictions imposed upon women by military occupation and by societal customs.

33. UNESCO reported that 28 female journalists and media professionals from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the Palestinian Authority participated in a training workshop on the topic "Use of ICT in media for female journalists", held in Jordan in August 2007. The workshop included, inter alia, an analysis of current media vehicles for women, the way in which the media is addressing women's needs and gender equality issues.

## **C. Health**

34. During the reporting period, United Nations entities focused on increasing women's access to reproductive health services, psychological counselling, health education and disease prevention programmes, immunizations, and provision of safe water and sanitary facilities. UNFPA provided a range of activities geared towards maintaining the integrity of the health system. Among these were: support to the delivery of reproductive health services through the procurement of reproductive health commodities and equipment for primary health centres and maternity wards; delivery of fuel for the referral system; the transfer of emergency obstetric cases and women with genital cancers; and procurement of generators for eight health centres in Gaza after the destruction of the electrical power grid in Gaza. UNRWA sought to strengthen gender-sensitive health programming by obtaining, where possible, sex-disaggregated data and encouraging gender equality in recruitment and retention policies.

35. Family planning and antenatal care was provided by a number of entities. Approximately 90,000 women received antenatal care in the five fields of UNRWA operations. More than 20,000 women sought family planning guidance for the first time and more than 110,000 women benefited from the service. About 100,000 pregnant women and nursing mothers benefited from the UNRWA food aid programme; up to 95,000 women with diabetes and/or hypertension received care in UNRWA non-communicable disease clinics; and 45,000 women were assisted with admission to hospitals. UNFPA also focused on projects that respond to the needs of youth, including young women's needs emerging from the crisis.

36. Various entities also provided psychosocial counselling to women. For example, UNFPA, in cooperation with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, implemented a new project with an innovative approach in the field of psychosocial counselling. The UNRWA Community Mental Health Programme in the Gaza Strip provided essential psychosocial support for Palestinian refugees living in situations of protracted violence and armed conflict. UNIFEM provided psychosocial counselling through specialized lectures, group counselling sessions, one-to-one consultations and information dissemination, with over 1,000 women as direct beneficiaries. UNIFEM also set up mobile psychosocial teams that conducted group sessions, individual therapy, home-delivered psychotherapy sessions, life skills trainings and health counselling services, directly benefiting over 2,500 Palestinian women.

37. Health education and training programmes, including on HIV/AIDS, were provided. UNIFEM conducted a specialized training for female school counsellors on sexuality, health and sexual violence with a focus on, inter alia, girls' education,

including awareness-raising sessions on sexual violence. Sexual health education sessions for university students and youth, aimed at raising their awareness of HIV/AIDS and the vulnerability of women, were also supported. Health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases were promoted by UNRWA.

38. Another important area of support from United Nations entities was vaccination programmes. UNRWA continued to offer women and children full immunization coverage against vaccine-preventable diseases. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health in Gaza in producing vaccination record cards for approximately 140,000 infants and pregnant women, procuring emergency primary health-care kits, including obstetrics, midwifery, first aid, and baby and family hygiene kits. UNICEF also provided tetanus vaccines for 75,000 women of reproductive age, and promoted breastfeeding and appropriate child feeding practices.

39. Taking into account that women and girls have the major responsibility for collecting water for household use and often lack decent sanitation facilities, UNICEF focused on extending access to safe water and decent sanitation facilities in order to improve the situation of women and girls, including at school. UNICEF provided daily drinking water to 343 schools and 32 health facilities across Gaza, and is constructing or rehabilitating sanitation facilities at 52 schools and 8 clinics. In addition to constructing wells and water networks, UNICEF distributed 450 water tanks to rural families, and 6 mobile water tanks to Gaza municipalities.

#### **D. Employment and entrepreneurship**

40. Entities initiated or continued training for job placement, created employment opportunities and supported projects aimed at income generation and entrepreneurship. Joint initiatives, including research projects, were also undertaken by United Nations entities. ILO supported the project “Job placement for graduates of vocational programmes”, which aims to stimulate employment and income generation opportunities for 140 unemployed new graduates from Palestinian industrial/vocational schools and Ministry of Labour vocational training centres. The participation of women was 26 per cent in Gaza and 38 per cent in the West Bank, and 55 per cent of the total trainees received permanent jobs.

41. The Occupied Palestinian Territory was included in the ILO-led regional programme “Gender equality and workers’ rights in the informal economies of the Arab States” (2006-2008), a joint initiative of the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States, the Centre for Arab Women Training and Research, the International Development Research Centre and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations. The two-year initiative consists of three interlinked components: research, training, and policy advocacy. During the research phase, two regional background papers on statistics and social protection and five country case studies (Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Yemen and the Occupied Palestinian Territory), were produced and discussed during a research workshop held in Tunis in April 2007. Three Palestinian researchers developed a country case study that focuses on extending social protection to workers in the informal economy from gender equality and workers’ rights perspectives. Currently the project is entering the training phase, which will culminate in a regional training on social protection and

statistics in the informal economy. The third component on policy advocacy will focus on specific policy briefs and round tables addressing policymakers and think tanks.

42. The International Labour Organization committed \$1 million for the establishment of the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection. The Fund serves as the institutional framework for resource mobilization and for social and economic development in three core programme areas: community infrastructure, enterprise and human resources. In August 2007, the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States fielded a multidisciplinary mission to the Occupied Palestinian Territory to formulate technical cooperation strategies aimed at poverty reduction and the promotion of decent and productive employment for Palestinians, with special emphasis on youth and women.

43. Initiatives, including joint initiatives, were undertaken with a view to building the capacity of key stakeholders in fostering women's entrepreneurship. The Empretec programme of UNCTAD and ILO aims to support the development of small and medium-size enterprises, through building institutional capacity for establishing a dynamic private sector and internationally competitive enterprises. Of the 123 trainees who graduated, 16 per cent were women, representing leading industries and services across the West Bank. A round-table meeting for the Chairmen and Senior Executives of the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and its 14 member chambers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, supported by ILO, aimed to improve the role of employers' organizations in employment creation, particularly through the promotion of small and medium enterprises, with a special focus on strengthening and empowering women's entrepreneurship.

44. As women microentrepreneurs are among the poorest members of communities, credit to these women constitutes a fundamental source of capital that enables them to meet the basic needs of their families. During the reporting period, UNRWA disbursed over 38,000 solidarity group loans, valued at over \$25 million, to women microentrepreneurs in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Agency also provided over 5,500 consumer loans, worth over \$3.2 million, to working-class families in the Gaza Strip with no access to bank loans. In June 2006, UNRWA had a portfolio of more than 13,600 loans in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, valued at over \$9.6 million, 20 per cent of which were held by women clients.

45. With a view to enhancing the role of Palestinian women in the improvement of national food security and the agricultural industry, FAO supported the continuation of the project "Support to household food security and income generation through bio-intensive backyard agricultural production and cottage industry activities for women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip", started in 2006. To date, some 180 women have participated in intensive training in food preservation and processing, with a focus on market orientation. Fifty women were selected for the intensive "backyard production" component that includes grey-water recycling facilities to overcome limited water supply.

46. United Nations entities reported on efforts to create work for women, including through programmes and projects at the community level. UNRWA created an estimated 1.8 million days of temporary work under its direct-hire programme and community-based infrastructure and construction projects to help



beneficiaries to maintain minimum levels of income and support their families. In the Gaza Strip and West Bank, 17 per cent of the beneficiaries were female heads of household. In 2006, UNESCO submitted to the Islamic Development Bank, a \$2.8 million programme focused on generating job opportunities for young women and men, through revitalizing cultural heritage sites of old cities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Through various programmes and projects implemented during the reporting period, UNIFEM created employment opportunities for over 300 women, mostly from rural areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

47. The importance of including women in economic decision-making was highlighted by UNCTAD, which reported on the election, in 2007, of a leading Palestinian businesswoman to the Board that oversees a project entitled "Establishment of the Palestinian Shippers Council (PSC)", launched at the beginning of 2006, with the aim of protecting the interests of the Palestinian shipping community of exporters and importers. It was noted that women currently represent 40 per cent of the PSC management team.

48. In April 2007, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process led a joint United Nations system agency evaluation of socio-economic needs in the Jordan Valley, in particular those of women. Through the evaluation, priority areas of intervention were identified that would increase the economic participation of women in their communities. It is envisaged that a joint United Nations programme, coordinated by the Office, will follow towards the end of 2007.

## **E. Women's human rights**

49. Several United Nations entities undertook initiatives focused on protecting and promoting the human rights of Palestinian women and girls, including through advocacy, training, seminars, support to the fulfilment of reporting obligations and preparation of action plans. OHCHR-Palestine, along with various representatives of Palestinian civil society, continued developing advocacy strategies to encourage the incorporation of international human rights standards into the Palestinian legislation and policy, with a special focus on women's rights. In 2007, OHCHR-Palestine conducted advocacy activities with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry for Women and Children, on the issue of justice sector reform, emphasizing the need for enhancing women's access to justice and other social support mechanisms. OHCHR-Palestine participated in seminars and discussions addressing specific issues relating to women's rights. The work of relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms and the ways in which NGOs can effectively use such mechanisms, especially Special Procedures, to advance the rights of women were highlighted.

50. During the period under review, significant support was provided to capacity-building on women's human rights. OHCHR-Palestine conducted several trainings on women's human rights. Eight training courses were organized in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for representatives of Palestinian civil society, including human rights organizations and other NGOs. Gender balance was taken into account in the selection of participants and gender perspectives were integrated in the development of the curricula, objectives and goals and monitoring and evaluation. An intensive training of trainers course for Palestinian human rights defenders and activists from human rights organizations was organized. Workshops and training courses were

also organized on women's rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, targeting representatives of Palestinian human rights organizations. In May 2007, OHCHR-Palestine conducted two courses specifically for female participants in the West Bank and Gaza City to educate women's groups on United Nations Special Procedures and the United Nations treaty bodies and submission of communications. Training on gender equality and women's human rights was delivered by UNIFEM to male and female youth members of the "Youth Rights Monitor" project's Palestinian Legislative Council Monitoring Committee and of the project's Media Committee.

51. In close cooperation with OHCHR, UNESCO actively participated in the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education Plan of Action for 2005-2007 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The two entities will collaborate on the first stages of this project aimed at promoting human rights, peace, democratic citizenship, intercultural understanding and human rights education. The initial stage of the project, which analyses the current situation of human rights education in the Palestinian school system, was completed in late 2006.

52. As part of its capacity-building and awareness-raising campaign on women's human rights and violence against women in the Gaza Strip, UNIFEM provided legal counselling and legal literacy services to more than 1,500 women in marginalized areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As executing agency for the United Nations Democracy Fund "Youth Rights Monitor" project, UNIFEM has taken a gender-sensitive approach to monitoring youth rights and in advocacy through the local media.

53. OHCHR-Palestine engaged closely with Palestinian women's organizations in coordinating a unified alternative report for the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and participated in various seminars and discussions addressing specific issues related to women's rights, highlighting the work of relevant United Nations human rights mechanisms and how NGOs can effectively use such mechanisms to advance the rights of women.

## **F. Violence against women**

54. The issue of violence against women was taken up by a range of United Nations entities, in collaboration with some Palestinian NGOs. For example, OHCHR-Palestine, UNFPA, WHO and Al-Muntada (Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations against Domestic Violence) organized a series of activities across the Occupied Palestinian Territory in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. These activities included a countrywide media campaign from 25 November to 10 December 2006. Ten workshops, facilitated by Al-Muntada, were held at various locations throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Each workshop focused on gender-based violence and the psychological and social health of women as affected by the current political, social and economic situation confronting the Palestinian society. An advocacy plan was subsequently developed for civil society organizations to ensure that the recommendations would be acted upon. OHCHR-Palestine continued to follow developments in relation to domestic violence against women, including through participation in the initial advocacy campaign launched by civil society

organizations to address the issue. The campaign concluded with the drafting of a plan of action that was formally launched by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in November 2006.

55. UNESCO produced and published a fact sheet on violence against women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was distributed in December 2006 during the National Campaign on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

## **G. Humanitarian assistance**

56. United Nations entities continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian women living in refugee camps and disadvantaged villages. Activities included providing food, monetary assistance, creating an environment conducive for learning and providing extracurricular activities.

57. UNRWA provided special assistance to over 1 million refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 45 per cent of whom were female heads of households. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided the poorest families with a critical safety net in the form of food support, selective cash assistance and preferential access to the Agency's vocational training centres, where pupils could learn skills to help to lift their families out of poverty.

58. UNESCO continued its participation in the project "Isolated and disenfranchised communities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", funded by the Trust Fund for Human Security. The project aims to address the most urgent needs of Palestinian people living in 14 disadvantaged villages and 2 refugee camps, including through enhancing their learning environment and implementing extracurricular activities, promoting intangible and oral heritage, with special attention to cultural projects with potential for employment generation, and producing informative radio programmes, talk shows and documentaries.

## **H. Advocacy and information**

59. Several United Nations entities carried out advocacy activities, including through meetings, conferences, establishment of databases and research. Entities also collected, analysed and disseminated information on the situation of Palestinian women.

60. The Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs organized seminars and conferences that included a focus on the situation of Palestinian women. For example, the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, held in Doha in February 2007, as one of its sub-themes, addressed the plight of the most vulnerable segments of the Palestinian society, including women. The United Nations International Conference of Civil Society in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace, held in Brussels in August 2007, devoted one of its workshops to the topic of the empowerment of women and the role of women's organizations in promoting Israeli-Palestinian peace. The Division also held an annual consultative meeting with civil society organizations, including women representatives. Eighty women's organizations are currently accredited to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. In addition, the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the

Government of Japan and the United Nations University, organized an international media seminar entitled “Re-engaging the Israelis and the Palestinians in the search for a comprehensive and lasting political settlement”, in Tokyo in June 2007.

61. Several actors were instrumental in organizing activities to mark International Women’s Day in 2007. WFP, CHF International (formerly known as the Cooperative Housing Foundation), the Ministry of Agriculture in coordination with UNFPA, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights and the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme organized a commemoration of International Women’s Day in Gaza in 2007. Activities focused on raising awareness on the theme “Ending impunity for violence against women”. In the West Bank, WFP-Occupied Palestinian Territory, in partnership with CHF International and the local committees, organized a celebration of International Women’s Day, including the opening of two exhibitions, of Food for Training products produced by women beneficiaries of the WFP Food for Training programme.

62. Research and documentation, including through databases, on the situation of Palestinian women were supported by a number of United Nations entities. Through its Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Centre, UNESCO commissioned, collected, analysed and disseminated research on gender equality and the human rights of women. The Centre developed online databases, produced publications, organized training courses and targeted seminars to ministries, NGOs, students and researchers. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs gathered information and documents on emerging gender issues through field networks and in collaboration with other humanitarian and development actors to inform its gender advocacy on women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Division for Palestinian Rights continued to update and expand the documents collection on Palestinian women in the Internet-based United Nations Information System on the Question of Palestine (UNISPAL). In addition, the UNESCO Palestinian Women’s Research and Documentation Centre published a documentary study entitled “Deferent roles of Palestinian women in the thirties and the forties: the political participation of Palestinian women”. The two editions were launched on 12 October 2006.

63. In order to raise awareness about the situation of Palestinian women in rural areas, UNIFEM continued to support the development of a database used by the Sabaya women’s centres to gather and update information on resources and services accessible to women within rural communities. During 2007, UNIFEM analysed data gathered from the 18 areas of implementation of its Sabaya Programme and developed relevant indicators on rural women. These indicators serve as a crucial tool for raising awareness about rural women’s needs among decision makers and service providers.

64. Film was also used as an advocacy tool to bring attention to the situation of women in the region. UNIFEM supported the production of an advocacy short documentary film, entitled *Maria’s Grotto* on the issue of femicide in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, filmed in the West Bank by the Palestinian filmmaker Buthina Khouri. The screenings of the film *Divorce — the Iranian Way*, in 18 rural communities through the Sabaya centres were also supported by UNIFEM. Over 660 women attended these film screenings and participated in the ensuing discussion sessions on women’s rights.

65. The Department of Public Information reported a special information programme on the “Question of Palestine”, aimed at sensitizing public opinion on this issue. The English Unit of United Nations Radio filed 10 news stories and 5 feature stories on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including on the situation of Palestinian women. The Arabic Unit of United Nations Radio covered the situation of, and assistance to, Palestinian women through news, features and in its weekly programme on women. Through a special feature page, entitled “News Focus: Middle East”, the Department maintains easy access to information materials on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, including two web-only articles entitled “A difficult future for the Gaza Strip”, by Jonas Hagen, dated 25 January 2007, and “Gaza border closures accompanied by fears of humanitarian crisis”, by Sana Aftab Khan, dated 2 August 2007.

66. The Department of Public Information drew attention to the situation of Palestinian women through its publications, press conferences and briefings and seminars. In addition to the *UN Chronicle* magazine (issue 1, 2007), its monthly compilation entitled “Chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine”, and the bimonthly newsletter *NGO Action News*, the Department of Public Information also reported that the United Nations Information Service in Geneva organized three press conferences and biweekly briefings on matters pertaining to Palestinian women: the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Occupied Palestinian Territory in November 2006.

## **I. Gender mainstreaming**

67. A number of United Nations entities initiated activities to strengthen gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes, including at the country level. The UNDP “In-house gender mainstreaming capacity development” initiative aims to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in programmes and operational activities of the UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People. UNDP also promoted the incorporation of gender perspectives into the development strategy of a participatory rural development and planning project from its inception. FAO supported a project on “Mainstreaming gender dimensions into water resources development and management in the Mediterranean region (GEWAMED)”, coordinated by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari and financed by the European Commission. The project was designed to build a national and regional shared knowledge base on gender equality issues, policies and related actions; to enhance dialogue among the countries of the Mediterranean region; and to contribute to the adoption of national gender-oriented policies and other related instruments. FAO, IFAD and the Gender and Water Alliance are members of the Consultation and Advisory Gender Committee of the project.

68. Other entities adopted policies and employed specialists to advance gender mainstreaming. UNRWA adopted a Policy for Gender Equality to achieve gender mainstreaming in operations and service delivery. The Agency’s assistance to Palestinian refugee women focuses on meeting their human development needs in the areas of education and technical training, female-focused basic health care, and the provision of microfinance.

69. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, requested the deployment of a Gender Adviser to support the work of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in preparing an analysis of the main gender inequality issues and concerns on the ground. The Gender Adviser would also identify gaps in the current programmes/activities, assess the quality and effectiveness of the existing gender equality programmes in the different sectors' humanitarian response, and identify strategies to overcome any deficiencies.

70. During 2006-2007, the ESCWA Centre for Women provided technical cooperation and advisory services to the Palestinian Ministry for Women's Affairs on gender mainstreaming and strategic planning.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

**71. During the period under review, the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory deepened. The conflict and intra-Palestinian violence continued to have a detrimental effect on all Palestinian people. The international financial embargo, the withholding of Palestinian revenues by Israel and the suspension of direct budget support from donors have led to a further deterioration of the situation.**

**72. The situation of Palestinian women was directly affected by increased poverty and unemployment and the decline in living standards and food security. The movement of women and girls was restricted by closures, checkpoints and roadblocks, as well as the permit system, which limited their access to health-care services, employment and schools. Close to 30 per cent of pregnant women in the West Bank had difficulties accessing antenatal care and safe delivery. Both primary and secondary services have declined. Continuing declines in the education system were marked by high dropout rates, a wide gap between girls completing primary school and those enrolling in secondary school, and low graduation rates. Violence against women, especially domestic violence, remained a widespread problem.**

**73. In its resolution 61/143, the General Assembly highlighted violence against women as both a human rights violation and a constraint to development and called for accelerated efforts to eradicate such violence. In the agreed conclusions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-first session, the Commission called for the elimination of discrimination and violence against the girl child. Enhanced efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against Palestinian women and girls and to protect and promote their human rights, including through systematic and effective utilization of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.**

**74. Improving the situation of and enhancing the impact of assistance to Palestinian women is linked to the achievement of a secure and lasting peace. Renewed efforts need to be made by the international community to seek an end to the violent confrontations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Women should be fully involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives to be undertaken in the region, in**

accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

75. United Nations entities should continue to operate in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps. Assistance focused on the empowerment of women, particularly in areas such as education, health, social welfare, employment and economic development, should be strengthened. Enhanced efforts should also be made to increase women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels.

76. A gender perspective should be fully integrated into international assistance programmes, through, inter alia, gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data. All studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of the Palestinian people should incorporate specific attention to gender perspectives. Governments, academic institutions, international organizations, and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, should be encouraged to collaborate on qualitative and quantitative action-oriented research on the situation of Palestinian women and girls.

77. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women and systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between October 2007 and September 2008, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/11. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to, inter alia, education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; and humanitarian assistance. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2009/1.





## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 2008/11 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, in order to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2008/6), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-third session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2007 to September 2008 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

4. The following United Nations entities contributed their input to the present report through the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), WFP, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

5. The report concludes with recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

## **II. Situation of Palestinian women**

6. During the reporting period, new hope for the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine emerged, with the launch of the Annapolis process and regular bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The

Quartet, the League of Arab States, several Arab countries, as well as Turkey, contributed to regional efforts to advance peace (see A/63/368-S/2008/612, paras. 6-9).

7. The situation on the ground in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remained difficult and hampered political efforts to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security. In the Gaza Strip, in particular, prolonged violence and a deepening humanitarian crisis prevailed (*ibid.*, para. 5). Despite the efforts to bring about peace, deaths and injuries resulting from the occupation and the internal conflict increased during 2007 and continued to rise in the first months of 2008.<sup>1</sup> In 2007, some 412 Palestinians were killed, including 10 women. Approximately 345 people were killed between the beginning of 2008 and 21 April 2008, 89 per cent of them in the Gaza Strip, including 31 women and 80 children.<sup>2</sup>

8. Within the framework of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, peacebuilding efforts by Palestinian organizations continued despite the difficult political circumstances. Civil society organizations, such as The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH) focused efforts on linking the political and social agendas of the Palestinian women's movement at the grass-roots level. In addition, the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace engaged in policy dialogue at the international and national levels, to increase women's participation in peace negotiations. The Commission included 20 Palestinian women leaders, working within governmental and non-governmental Palestinian organizations.<sup>3</sup>

9. Internal conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory compounded existing hardships. After the Hamas takeover of Gaza, additional restrictions on the movement of goods and people into the Gaza Strip, led to deteriorating conditions and shortages of basic commodities, including food, electricity and fuel. Increased restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (see A/63/74-E/2008/13, summary).

10. The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories expressed serious concern about the continuing deterioration of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (see A/63/273, paras. 114-118). In particular, the Committee noted that isolation of the Gaza Strip had the most dramatic impact on women and children (*ibid.*, para. 45).

11. The right to freedom of movement continued to be obstructed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In January 2008, the Human Rights Council expressed grave concern about "the continued closures of and within the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the restriction of the freedom of movement of people and goods, including the repeated closure of the crossing points of the Gaza Strip, which created an extremely precarious humanitarian situation for the civilian population

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan: report of the Secretariat (A/61/INF.DOC./4), annex, para. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Political Affairs contribution to the report (2008).

and impaired the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people”.<sup>4</sup> In September 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported 630 obstacles blocking Palestinian movement, including 93 staffed checkpoints and 537 unstaffed obstacles in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup>

12. The conflict continued to negatively impact the Palestinian economy as restrictions were tightened in the West Bank and Gaza’s primary border crossings remained closed, thus constraining development projects.<sup>6</sup> The International Monetary Fund reported that the macroeconomic environment had been less favourable than envisaged, unemployment and poverty remained high, especially in Gaza, and real incomes in the West Bank and Gaza were reduced by the sharp rise in inflation.<sup>6</sup> The World Bank noted that as the Palestinian economy declined, the Occupied Palestinian Territory was steadily becoming more aid dependent.<sup>7</sup>

13. Based on the Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey for 2007, about 79 per cent of households in Gaza and 46 per cent in the West Bank lived below the poverty line.<sup>8</sup> In 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs found that previously self-reliant families progressively were falling into poverty owing to the deteriorating Palestinian livelihoods.<sup>9</sup> In fact, nearly two thirds (62.5 per cent) of female-headed households live in poverty.<sup>10</sup> To cope with poverty and food insecurity, many parents reduced their food intake to allow their children to eat.<sup>11</sup>

14. Poverty and the global rise in food prices greatly affect Palestinian living conditions.<sup>7</sup> Owing to inadequate income and employment, 80 per cent of households in Gaza (1.3 million people), and 33 per cent in the West Bank (0.7 million people), are dependent on international food assistance.<sup>12</sup> A joint FAO/WFP/UNRWA rapid survey on food security found that despite humanitarian aid, food insecurity was on the rise and almost two thirds of household income was spent on food only.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the study found that women and children continued to be disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Food insecurity was found in households where the percentage of female residents was 50 per cent or higher.<sup>11</sup> This was explained by unequal employment rates between men and women with almost equal education levels, and the lack of integration of women in the formal labour market.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>4</sup> See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 53 (A/63/53)*, chap. II.A, resolution 7/18, para. 3 (f).

<sup>5</sup> OCHA Closure Update: Main Findings and Analysis (30 April-11 September 2008), September 2008.

<sup>6</sup> International Monetary Fund, “Macroeconomic and Fiscal Framework for the West Bank and Gaza: Second Review of Progress”, 22 September 2008.

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, “Palestinian Economic Prospects: Aid, Access and Reform”, September 2008.

<sup>8</sup> UNRWA, “Prolonged Crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Socio-economic Developments in 2007”, 2008, chap. VI.

<sup>9</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor — Occupied Palestinian Territory*, No. 25 (May 2008).

<sup>10</sup> UNFPA Occupied Palestinian Territory Consolidated Appeals Process 2008.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations country team Occupied Palestinian Territory contribution to the report (2008).

<sup>12</sup> International Labour Organization, Report of the Director-General, on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> World Food Programme, *Food Security and Market Monitoring Report*, No. 19 (July 2008).

15. During the period under review, the employment and labour situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate. ILO reported a much degraded employment and labour situation owing to continuing impediments to the movement of persons and goods in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem. Only one in three persons of working age was employed; enterprises were either closing or operating well below their capacity and new investments were deferred.<sup>12</sup>

16. Women were more likely not to participate in the labour force than men. For the second quarter (April-June 2008), the labour participation rate of women was 16.0 per cent compared to 66.3 per cent for men.<sup>14</sup> Some 64.4 per cent of men with 13 or more years of schooling participated in the labour force, compared to 42.1 per cent of women with the same number of years of schooling.<sup>14</sup> For young women aged 15 to 19, the participation rate was 2.1 per cent compared to 25.4 per cent for young men of the same age group.<sup>15</sup>

17. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported that for the second quarter of 2008 (April-June), the percentage of women in agriculture, fishing and forestry was higher than that of men — 30.7 per cent of women and 11.0 per cent of men.<sup>16</sup> An ILO study found that 60 per cent of female workers and only 16 per cent of male workers were located in the informal economy.<sup>17</sup> The high percentage of women in informal employment was attributed to the lack of an adequate and affordable social infrastructure and services that placed the burden of caring for the young, elderly, and the sick on women, thus limiting their employment options and steering them into informal work arrangements often performed from home.<sup>17</sup>

18. Movement restrictions negatively affected women's health. In the period under review, 69 pregnant women were forced to give birth at Israeli military checkpoints. Thirty-nine babies and five women died as a result.<sup>18</sup> Since childbirth facilities are located in urban-based hospitals, some pregnant women moved to the homes of relatives living in towns a few weeks before the expected delivery (see A/HRC/7/44, para. 7 (d) and (e)). The attendance rate for newly pregnant women at maternal and child health-care clinics decreased from 4.8 visits per pregnant woman in 2005 to 3.7 visits per pregnant woman in 2006.<sup>19</sup> The Ministry of Health collaborated with international agencies, including UNICEF, to secure vaccines for newborn babies, children and mothers.<sup>20</sup>

19. WHO reported that the health conditions of female prisoners in general were extremely difficult and poor.<sup>21</sup> At the end of July 2008, it was reported that 77 Palestinian female security prisoners were held in Israeli prisons and detention centres.<sup>22</sup> Approximately 25 per cent of Palestinian female prisoners suffered from

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (April-June 2008) Round (Q2/2008), 15 September 2008, table 6.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., table 8.

<sup>16</sup> Palestinian Authority: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: Labour Force Survey (April-June 2008).

<sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization, *Unprotected Employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective*, Beirut, 2008, Executive Summary.

<sup>18</sup> World Health Organization, 2008, op. cit., para. 16.

<sup>19</sup> World Health Organization, 2008, op. cit., para. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, para. 63.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., para. 12.

<sup>22</sup> Mandela Institute for Human Rights, referenced in the UNIFEM executed project "Protection of Female Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers", as cited in United Nations country team contribution to the report (2008).

treatable illnesses, including excessive weight loss, general weakness, anaemia and iron deficiency owing to poor quality food and the lack of essential nutrients.<sup>23</sup> In addition, they were exposed to harsh treatment from male and female prison officers, with no regard for their condition or their special needs in pregnancy.<sup>21</sup>

20. Recent assessments of the psychosocial well-being of the Palestinian population showed that severe stress and other mental health problems had increased. The prolonged tension, lack of physical security, mobility restrictions and limited educational and leisure opportunities were identified as some of the causes of psychological strain for many Palestinians, especially women, children and adolescents.<sup>10</sup>

21. Incidents of violence against women, including domestic violence, continued during the period under review. Results of a UNFPA survey and a UNRWA qualitative study associated the increase of domestic violence rates with the rising political violence in 2007.<sup>11</sup> The UNRWA study also indicated that rates of domestic violence had risen since the commencement of the second intifada in September 2000, with men using women as outlets for their anger, frustration and powerlessness.<sup>11</sup> UNFPA found that the majority of married (61.7 per cent) and unmarried (53.3 per cent) women were exposed to psychological violence.<sup>10</sup> Poverty, low education levels, lack of decision-making power, violent childhoods, conflict in the community, drug abuse and lack of access to divorce were all viewed by refugee women as causes of domestic violence. A link was also made between little or no income in female-headed households and domestic and gender-based violence.<sup>11</sup>

22. The right to education continued to be seriously affected by the occupation.<sup>11</sup> Although girls outnumbered boys in primary and secondary enrolment for the academic year 2007/2008 (548,781 women versus 548,314 men), the female dropout rate continued to surpass the male dropout rate at the secondary level — 3.8 per cent versus 3 per cent.<sup>24</sup> The school dropouts were attributed to early marriage, the economic situation and travel restrictions.<sup>11</sup> In the period under review, UNICEF also reported that young Palestinian girls continued to have few opportunities for development, recreation and participation. There were few safe spaces for them to go, and most of the 300 youth clubs across the Occupied Palestinian Territory lacked funding and were poorly managed and equipped. UNICEF also indicated that adolescence was often compromised by household demands and early marriage of young women and girls.<sup>25</sup>

23. The percentage of women in decision-making remained low. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, women accounted for 12.6 per cent of the members of the Legislative Council; 7.4 per cent of ambassadors; 11.2 per cent of judges; and 12.1 per cent of general prosecutors.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Fact sheet “Medical neglect of Palestinian Women in Israeli prisons”, published by Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association, Mandela Institute for Human Rights and Palestinian Counseling Center, June 2008, within the Protection of Palestinian Female Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons and Detention Centers project, available at: [http://www.aseerat.ps/files/FactsheetJune2008\\_-\\_Neglect.pdf](http://www.aseerat.ps/files/FactsheetJune2008_-_Neglect.pdf) (in United Nations country team contribution).

<sup>24</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Palestine in Figures 2007”, May 2008, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF contribution to the report (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release, 6 March 2008.

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

24. The following section focuses on the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system. Based on contributions from United Nations entities, eight areas of support were identified: education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; humanitarian assistance; advocacy and information; and interagency coordination efforts, including gender mainstreaming.

#### A. Education and training

25. Several United Nations entities reported on initiatives to improve the access of women and girls to quality education opportunities and a gender-sensitive curriculum. During the 2006/2007 academic year, 241,183 girls (50.1 per cent of pupils) were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. Girls constituted 69.8 per cent of students benefiting from the UNRWA-administered scholarships. UNDP provided remedial literacy and English and computer training to 3,925 female dropout students.

26. As part of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) framework and in collaboration with UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNFPA, UNESCO commissioned a study on "Scaling up" girls' education in 2007. As a follow-up to the study, a Vocational Guidance and Counselling System was established within the Palestinian education system, supported by UNESCO. UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to, inter alia, provide math and science teaching kits to disadvantaged schools to improve the teaching and learning process in classrooms. UNICEF also supported the finalization of the five-year education plan aimed at providing equal and quality educational opportunities for girls and boys. Six young women were employed by UNIFEM to offer academic guidance to young girls in schools. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Education's efforts to increase access to gender-sensitive life-skills based sexual and reproductive health education in secondary schools.

27. Construction and/or rehabilitation of community buildings for schools and the provision of school supplies were reported by United Nations entities as key steps to support girls' access to education. For example, UNDP supported the construction of classrooms, libraries and laboratories in 16 schools, including all-girls schools. It supported the construction of three kindergartens that were managed by women's centres or local councils, and created six permanent jobs for women as teachers and administrators. UNICEF worked with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipal Water Utility to provide water to 120 schools, construct 10 sanitary units at Farabi Girls Primary School, and raise awareness on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation in schools and selected vulnerable communities.

28. Training programmes for women were provided in a wide range of areas related to vocational and professional development. UNRWA reported that 2,109 girls received technical and vocational training (36.3 per cent of total students). Some 53 per cent of the Agency's more than 18,000 teaching staff were women. Professional training opportunities were offered to 445 of the teaching staff, 49 per cent of whom were women. Through its Small and Microenterprise Training

Programme, customized for the needs of microentrepreneurs and small business owners in Gaza, the Agency offered 563 courses for more than 11,907 participants, 20 per cent of them women. UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture trained 25 Palestinian women in traditional arts and crafts. Within the UNESCO Architectural Competition for the Design of Public Spaces and Urban Facilities in the Old City of Nablus, 16 young women architects were assigned to professionals to develop their design concepts into executive designs. Four junior women architects benefited from “learning by doing” training associated with the Bethlehem Area Conservation and Management Plan.

29. Training programmes were also promoted as a means to enhance women’s leadership and increase their access to and benefits from information and communication technologies. For example, in 2007, UNESCO supported the project “Giving women a voice” to build capacity and campaigning skills of 20 young women community leaders in Hebron and the southern rural area of the West Bank. In 2008, UNESCO also supported the project “Women taking the lead”, in cooperation with the Arabic Media Internet Network, which provided a training and career development programme for 15 women journalists and 30 media managers in Gaza and West Bank.

30. In Gaza, UNDP established centres aimed at providing equal access to social and economic services for women and their families. In addition to developing women’s skills, the centres also offered women safe meeting and working spaces and informal psychosocial support. Some 219 training courses, seminars or workshops were held on an annual basis in the centres; 65 women benefited from permanent jobs created by the centres.

## **B. Health**

31. Several United Nations entities reported on activities to promote equal access to health care for Palestinian women. WHO facilitated health coordination meetings with health-care providers at district level, to formulate solutions to women’s and girls’ needs for preventive health services, including mammography tests. WHO collaborated with UNFPA in providing medicines and equipment for health services targeted to women of childbearing age.

32. In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, UNICEF provided 452 first aid kits, 13 emergency health kits, 10 midwifery kits, 16 obstetric surgical kits and 60 resuscitation kits to the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society.

33. UNRWA offered full immunization coverage of women against vaccine-preventable diseases. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health with the procurement of vaccines and related supplies for more than 100,000 women of childbearing age.

34. With support from UNIFEM, permits were obtained for 28 external doctors to enter prisons and examine female prisoners in need of specialized medical care.

35. Family planning and antenatal care were given priority by a number of entities to ensure safe deliveries for women in isolated areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Approximately 90,000 women received antenatal care in the five fields of UNRWA operation. More than 24,000 new female patients sought guidance on

family planning. WHO provided the Ministry of Health with recommendations aimed at improving pregnant women's access to health facilities. UNFPA supported 39 public clinics aimed at strengthening the integration of reproductive health services in primary health care, and promoted attention to gender-based violence in counselling services offered in primary health-care facilities. Qualified staff, including physicians, nurses and midwives, were retrained by UNFPA as obstetric care emergency staff in the West Bank and Gaza.

36. Various entities also provided psychosocial counselling to women. The UNRWA Community Mental Health Programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip provided psychosocial support to 6,321 Palestinian refugee women. Four UNFPA-supported women's health centres provided clinical, psychosocial, legal advice, outreach, physiotherapy, gymnastics and health education services to women living in underprivileged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UNIFEM continued to provide rural women in marginalized areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with legal and psychosocial group counselling sessions, one-on-one consultations and specialized treatment for mental health problems. During the period under review, UNIFEM trained 115 women leaders as community resource persons on mental health issues. One-on-one psychosocial consultation/counselling was provided to 150 women, and an additional 1,200 women benefited from group psychological counselling sessions.

37. UNDP organized workshops and provided psychosocial support to 500 women. Five women were employed to conduct counselling services and train other women on conflict resolution, self-confidence and communication skills. UNDP also conducted health-awareness sessions and provided free medical consultations for 6,270 women, and psychological and legal-awareness sessions for 12,620 women to help them to cope with stress. In partnership with UNIFEM, UNICEF reinforced its crisis intervention teams in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to increase their ability to deal more effectively with women needing psychosocial assistance.

38. Gender-sensitive health education and training programmes, including on HIV/AIDS, was provided. UNRWA promoted health education programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, including for its entire staff.

39. WHO supported the Ministry of Health in establishing and operating thematic groups on reproductive health, nutrition and mental health, to facilitate and coordinate activities of care providers, providing advice, recommending priorities and exchanging information.

### **C. Employment and entrepreneurship**

40. United Nations entities reported on efforts to create work for women to promote self-reliance and restore livelihoods that would contribute to longer-term food security. WFP prepared a package of job creation, income-generation, vocational training and livelihood support to assist poor farmers, unemployed workers and vulnerable women. Priority was given to female-headed households which comprise 33.6 per cent (2,850) of the beneficiaries assisted in the West Bank and 50.6 per cent (82,560) in Gaza.

41. Thirty per cent of the beneficiaries of the UNRWA Job Creation Programme, operating in the West Bank and Gaza, were women. Within this Programme,



UNRWA/Gaza Field Office developed a maternity policy that enabled pregnant contract holders to enjoy 42 days of unpaid maternity leave without losing their jobs. A gender-sensitive monitoring mechanism was created to ensure a decent work environment for women, including through the UNRWA Breastfeeding Policy.

42. Several United Nations entities provided grants and training to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. UNDP offered training to 18 low-income women in two women's centres in Jabalia and Nuseirat. Some 24 women benefited from the construction of the Jenin Vocational Training Centre and its courses on fashion design, computer and secretarial skills. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP trained 1,043 poor housewives on recycling household waste and manufacturing home decorations; conducted income-generation projects for five women organizations; and trained 30 women on starting and managing their own businesses. The UNDP programme also trained 60 women on civic education. In the West Bank, UNIFEM trained 250 poor women on managerial and technical skills to process local surplus of fruits and vegetables into healthy marketable products.

43. The ILO Regional Office in Beirut, together with the Palestinian firm Riyadh Consulting and Training, prepared a paper entitled "Situation and institutional assessment of business women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", which assessed the level of involvement of women in private sector institutions. In March 2008, ILO conducted a regional training of trainers on "Gender and entrepreneurship together", attended by four Palestinian representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business women associations and training centres, with the objective of assisting ILO partner organizations to promote enterprise development among poor women.

44. UNRWA and IFAD reported microcredit schemes for women as critical to poverty reduction and women's economic empowerment. UNRWA disbursed over 2,030 new group loans valued at almost US\$ 900,000 to women microentrepreneurs in the Gaza Strip. Through its direct and indirect lending schemes, the Agency extended 1,950 microcredit loans to Palestine refugees, 81 per cent of whom were women.

45. FAO completed the women's empowerment project on "Support to household food security and income generation through biointensive backyard agricultural production and cottage industry in the West Bank and Gaza Strip", which targets East Jerusalem, Hebron, Jenin and Gaza. Beehives and rabbits were distributed to 500 women for income generation and household consumption. FAO promoted a national exhibition for women's associations in Ramallah, which allowed them to market their crafts and their agricultural and food products. The FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools scheme was also launched to build livelihood and entrepreneurship skills of youth, including young women. The project liaises with 16 NGOs throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

46. UNCTAD reported on its two-year project (2006-2008) titled "Establishment of the Palestinian Shippers Council", which represents and protects the interests of Palestinian shippers and exporters. UNCTAD emphasized that the Council, which is chaired by a businesswoman, is committed to recruiting female members and encourages their full participation in all Council activities.

## D. Women's human rights

47. United Nations entities reported advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns on the human rights of women and girls. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2007, OHCHR implemented a three-day campaign in the West Bank aimed at promoting the protection of the rights of Palestinian women. UNDP conducted an awareness-raising campaign on violence against women, offered courses for 1,200 women and men on women's rights and trained 20 female lawyers on women's rights advocacy for women victims exposed to violence.

48. During the period under review, significant support was provided to capacity-building on women's human rights. OHCHR, in cooperation with the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development, organized an event for 30 men and women that focused on the challenges faced by women in the enjoyment of their human rights, best practices on legal investigations on violence against women and girls and ways to access the United Nations mechanisms for the protection of women's rights. UNIFEM supported the production of a gender-sensitive academic counselling manual and the provision of legal literacy sessions to nearly 1,500 women about the Palestinian legal system. A regional workshop for judges and parliamentarians on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was co-organized by the ESCWA Centre for Women and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women in Jordan in October 2007. Three Palestinian women attended the training, one member of the Palestinian Legislative Council and two judges.

49. Through its project "Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre" in Ramallah, UNESCO supported the development of the human and institutional capacities of governmental and non-governmental organizations related to women's rights. UNESCO and the Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting in the Gaza Strip, started collecting stories of discrimination against women to contribute to the UNIFEM initiative entitled "The CEDAW Stories". Seventy stories had been collected up to August 2008. UNESCO also commissioned a paper entitled "Listening to girls' stories: girls' education in conflict"; and produced a fact sheet on Palestinian women and education. The Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting conducted several trainings targeted at Government and NGOs. A total of 28 staff members from the legal department of the Palestinian Authority were also trained on analysing laws from a gender perspective. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were taught from a gender perspective to 42 trainees from departments in the Palestinian Authority by the Centre.

50. UNFPA collaborated with the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling, a Jerusalem-based Palestinian NGO, in the development of a manual for service providers on a gender-sensitive approach to psychosocial and legal counselling. The UNRWA Gaza Field Office launched the wide-reaching empowerment initiative, "Equality in action", focusing on achieving equality with regard to status, options and opportunities for women and men across the Gaza Strip. Through its 65 women's programme centres, the Agency supported evening classes and continued learning for 2,345 women, awareness sessions on women's rights for 11,952 women and youth-related activities for 19,529 girls. UNIFEM organized activities and workshops, including on the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 80 community centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

51. United Nations entities reported on efforts to promote the rights of young women. UNICEF Jordan promoted awareness-raising activities targeted at parents and community members on the rights of adolescents, particularly those of girls. These activities led to an increase in the participation of girls in developmental and learning activities in women's programme centres. UNIFEM continued supporting the Youth Rights Monitor project, implemented by a local NGO specialized on media and youth. A group of 98 youth role-model-activists (50 females and 48 males) was formed to promote awareness on rights and responsibilities among their peers and younger beneficiaries.

52. Women with special needs were also the focus of various initiatives promoted by United Nations entities. For example, OHCHR, in partnership with the Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disability, organized a high-level event entitled "Try the wheelchair", to sensitize participants about the reality of Palestinian women living with disabilities. In Rafah Governorate, UNDP established a special club for hearing-impaired women and men and provided activities for approximately 200 members, including art, handcraft and sports.

## **E. Violence against women**

53. United Nations entities continued to address violence against women as a serious violation of the human rights of women. For example, in December 2007, a one-week study tour for 14 representatives of local Palestinian NGOs from the West Bank was hosted by OHCHR in Geneva, to enhance the interaction of NGOs with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and to design strategies to combat violence against women. A national conference on combating gender-based violence was organized by UNFPA and the Ministry of Women's Affairs. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, field research on forced prostitution and women's trafficking was supported by UNIFEM and implemented by a local NGO. UNIFEM upgraded two toll-free help lines in Gaza and one in the West Bank for female victims of violence. More than 9,300 women received counselling and awareness-raising through this initiative.

54. United Nations entities undertook several initiatives aimed at training women to protect themselves from violence and enhancing the institutional capacity of NGO partners to prevent violence and support victims. For example, UNFPA and its NGO partners created community-based initiatives that enable women to protect themselves from gender-based violence. The Fund also helped to build the capacity of local institutions to integrate women's protection within the package of psychological support offered for women at risk; and promoted the collaboration of two NGOs in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip, to strengthen their awareness-raising capacity at the community level on violence against women.

55. Entities from the United Nations reported efforts to build alliances with strategic governmental organizations, as well as civic and civil society actors, to prevent violence against women. For example, UNFPA worked with civil society and faith-based organizations on the promotion of women's rights and the elimination of harmful practices, including female genital mutilation. In 2008, UNFPA and the Ministry of Social Affairs started a project to strengthen vocational

training for young women and to enhance the capacity of Ministry staff in the area of protection against and prevention of gender-based violence.

56. UNFPA also worked with national partners in their implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, through the creation of community-based initiatives that empower women to protect themselves from gender-based violence. These initiatives also helped to build the capacity of NGOs to improve services, particularly psychosocial support. UNIFEM continued its support of the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Palestinian-Israeli Peace.<sup>3</sup>

## **F. Humanitarian assistance**

57. United Nations entities continued to provide humanitarian assistance to Palestinian women living in refugee camps and disadvantaged villages. For example, UNRWA assisted the poorest registered refugees, mostly families headed by women. The Agency's special hardship assistance provided the families with a safety net that included food support, cash assistance, and preferential access to the Agency's vocational training centres.

58. Food security was addressed as a priority in several initiatives undertaken by United Nations entities. School feeding in the most insecure areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip aimed at encouraging parents to keep children in school and provided employment opportunities to the community. The WFP Food for Training Programme implemented in the West Bank targeted 9,200 women and focused on home gardening, handicrafts, food processing, animal raising, agriculture and beekeeping. Some 8,400 women benefited from life-skills training on health and nutrition. Through a cash-for-work scheme, the Programme also introduced school feeding to preschool and primary school children in the most food-insecure areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It provided part of the food commodities and salaries for 2,000 women in local bakeries and women's centres. The UNRWA food aid programme benefited 112,256 pregnant women and nursing mothers and 56,587 women were assisted with admission to hospitals. In the Gaza Strip, UNIFEM piloted a school feeding initiative benefiting 450 children in kindergartens in the Nuseirat refugee camp, involving 12 women workers. In Jordan, UNICEF assisted Palestinian refugee women with access to neonatal care and nutrition support.

59. The WFP institutional feeding programme also supported women residing in institutions such as orphanages, hospitals and homes for the elderly. Beneficiaries of the programme included 2,400 women in Gaza and 5,100 women in the West Bank. Under the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, launched in September 2007, WFP and the Ministry of Social Affairs worked to cover the food needs of destitute people, in particular widows, divorced and separated women, and elderly single women. Some 57 per cent (15,000) of the beneficiaries in the West Bank and 55 per cent (47,000) in Gaza were women.

60. United Nations entities reported initiatives to contribute to adequate housing. For example, UNRWA assisted 265 female-headed households with shelter reconstruction or rehabilitation; 11 per cent of refugees participating in infrastructural self-help projects were women. The Saudi Committee for the Palestinian People Relief pledged \$6.3 million to UN-Habitat for the project on "Establishment of a housing and income-generating programme for poor women in

Hebron, West Bank". The project includes the construction of 100 housing units and the establishment of small-scale income-generating activities targeted to poor women and their families.

## **G. Advocacy and information**

61. Several United Nations entities collected, analysed and disseminated information on the situation of Palestinian women and advocated for women's empowerment and gender equality. For example, WHO continued to collect information on the health implications of restricted mobility for women.

62. Media resources were used as advocacy tools to bring attention to the situation of women in the region. For example, through its publications programme, the Division for the Palestinian Rights within the Department of Political Affairs included information on the situation of Palestinian women in its monthly compilation entitled "Chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine", and the bimonthly newsletter "NGO Action News". UNFPA published a study entitled "Women in crisis and cultural preservation".

63. On the occasion of the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence Campaign 2007" (25 November-10 December 2007), UNFPA promoted actions to combat violence against women through posters, workshops, and television and radio spots, initiating a platform for discussion among a number of different actors. UNIFEM produced billboards and reserved radio time to advocate for women's rights. It also conducted advocacy and media campaigns on the conditions of women in prisons and detention centres. UNIFEM also screened a documentary entitled *Maria's Grotto*, on crimes committed in the name of honour, for over 600 women. In consultation with OHCHR, UNIFEM produced a DVD, *Women Capable of Making a Difference*, in Arabic with English subtitles, which sheds light on the situation of women in the Gaza Strip.

64. Initiatives on research and documentation on the situation of Palestinian women were supported by a number of United Nations entities. Under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Department of Political Affairs, addressed the issue of Palestinian women in discussions at international meetings and conferences. The ILO Regional Office produced the study, *Unprotected Employment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: A Gender Equality and Workers' Rights Perspective*, which was published in Arabic and English. The case study was presented during a Regional Expert Group Meeting on gender equality and workers' rights in the informal economies of Arab States, held in Tunis in July 2008.

65. The Advocacy and Research Unit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs increased efforts to collect sex-disaggregated data in its Protection of Civilians database and increasingly paid attention to gender equality issues in its publications *Humanitarian Monitor* and *Protection of Civilians Weekly Report*.

## H. Gender mainstreaming

66. Joint programming by United Nations entities is being promoted to enhance coordinated support to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including on gender mainstreaming initiatives. For example, the Department of Political Affairs reported that the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process oversaw six United Nations agencies' joint submission to the UNDP-Spain Millennium Development Global Achievement Fund in close collaboration with the Palestinian Authority. The United Nations country team reported that under the Fund, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNDP and FAO also developed a three-year joint programme on "Culture and development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and UNIFEM provided technical support to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated in the programme document.

67. UNDP took the initiative to build internal staff capacity on gender mainstreaming in order to provide effective support to Palestinian women. For example, training was provided to more than 40 operational and programme staff in the UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (PAPP), including on gender sensitization, gender analysis, and gender sensitive indicators in programmes. A UNDP/PAPP gender strategy was drafted. In August 2008, a senior Social Development and Gender Adviser was hired to offer technical support to UNDP/PAPP and other United Nations entities, NGOs and governmental partners.

68. In June 2008, UNIFEM conducted two training sessions on gender mainstreaming. The first was targeted at key programme staff from United Nations entities, including those participating in the joint Millennium Development Goals programmes, and the Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Women's Affairs. The second involved heads of agencies in discussions on gender mainstreaming within the context of the United Nations country team Performance Indicators for Gender Equality. UNIFEM and FAO conducted a one-day sector-specific gender workshop on "Mainstreaming gender in agricultural issues", to discuss the meaning and importance of integrating gender perspective into planning, implementation and monitoring of food security-related projects.

69. Other entities adopted policies and employed specialists to advance the gender mainstreaming strategy. UNFPA partnered with civil society organizations to build their capacity in advocating for gender mainstreaming in the health sector and planning and budgeting processes. In November 2007, the ESCWA Centre for Women and UNIFEM organized a joint regional workshop on gender-responsive budgeting in Amman, which aimed at highlighting the importance of gender-responsive budgeting for incorporating gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects. Two representatives from the national machinery on women of the Palestinian Authority attended the training.

70. Other United Nations entities adopted training as key for capacity-building for gender mainstreaming. ILO sponsored an official of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to participate in an intensive training course on participatory gender auditing in the ILO Training Centre in Turin, Italy, in May 2008, which resulted in the Ministry working on a strategy for implementing participatory gender audits within institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In September 2007, the ESCWA Centre for Women conducted an expert group meeting for the enhancement of the

work of national machineries for mainstreaming gender perspectives into policies, programmes and projects.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

**71. During the period under review, efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to bring about a peaceful settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through bilateral negotiations. Despite these efforts, the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued with negative social and economic impacts on the Palestinian people, including on women and girls.**

**72. The situation of Palestinian women was directly affected by continued poverty and unemployment and the decline in living standards and food security. The movement of women and girls continued to be restricted by closures, checkpoints and roadblocks, which limited their access to health-care services, employment and education. Pregnant women had difficulties accessing health services for antenatal care and safe delivery. Movement restrictions also contributed to school dropout rates among girls. Incidents of violence against women, including domestic violence, also continued during the period under review.**

**73. Improving the situation of and enhancing the impact of assistance to Palestinian women is linked to the achievement of a secure and lasting peace. Renewed efforts need to be taken by all relevant actors at the international, regional and national levels, including measures to ensure that women participate fully in all conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the region, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.**

**74. United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health, social welfare, employment and economic development. Enhanced efforts should also be made to increase women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels and ensure their economic empowerment.**

**75. A gender perspective should be fully integrated into all international assistance programmes, through, inter alia, gender analysis, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender-responsive budgeting processes. All studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations on the situation of the Palestinian people should incorporate specific attention to gender equality perspectives. Governments, international organizations, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions, should be encouraged to collaborate on qualitative and quantitative action-oriented research on the situation of Palestinian women and girls.**

**76. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women and girls and systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.**



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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

## Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women for the period from October 2008 to September 2009, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/14. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to, inter alia, education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women’s human rights; violence against women; and humanitarian assistance. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2010/1.





## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2009/14 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council, concerned about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation in order to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2009/5), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fourth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from October 2008 to September 2009 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations bodies or individuals that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Such bodies and individuals include the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

3. The report also reflects information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, ESCWA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

4. The following United Nations entities contributed to the present report through the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: FAO, ILO, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNICEF, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNRWA, WFP and WHO.

5. The report provides recommendations on improving the situation of Palestinian women, including through the continued assistance of the United Nations system.

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

6. The importance of a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine continued to be emphasized during diplomatic developments and events during the reporting period. The discontinuation of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations undertaken within the framework of the Annapolis process, a destructive conflict in Gaza and a deepening internal divide despite efforts towards Palestinian unity characterized the reporting period. Recent months, however, have witnessed renewed efforts by the international community to achieve the vision of two States living side by side in peace and security (see A/64/351-S/2009/464, para. 5).

7. During the Israeli military operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and January 2009, intense fighting, high numbers of civilian casualties and extensive damage to the civilian infrastructure in Gaza were witnessed (*ibid.*, para. 9). While figures from different sources vary, an estimated 1,300 Palestinians lost their lives and 5,300 were injured in the conflict, and 14 Israelis were killed and more than 530 injured. A majority of the casualties were reportedly civilians, particularly among Palestinians (*ibid.*, para. 13).

8. According to estimates by United Nations agencies, the three-week conflict in Gaza led to the destruction of 3,700 houses and 2 health-care centres and resulted in damage to 48,700 houses, 15 hospitals, 41 health-care centres and 273 schools (*ibid.*, para. 14). A survey of 2,020 households conducted in March 2009,<sup>1</sup> revealed that 40 per cent of women wanting pre- or post-natal care during operation Cast Lead were prevented from access to such care by the security situation.<sup>2</sup> The survey findings noted that a considerable proportion of the Gaza population reported symptoms of distress weeks after Israel had withdrawn its troops and discontinued the operation. A survey on the psychosocial consequences for women<sup>3</sup> showed that they continued to experience extreme fear, even after a truce had been declared and the hostilities had ended.

9. On 6 February 2009, at its forty-third session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed deep concern about the military engagement, which resulted in heavy civilian casualties and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Committee noted with deep concern that the human rights of women and children, in particular those relating to peace and security, free movement, livelihood and health, had been seriously violated. The Committee urged the parties to the conflict to involve women in the decision-making process on the promotion and maintenance of peace and security at all levels in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

<sup>1</sup> Fafo Institute for Applied International Studies, Norway (2009): information from a household sample survey on "Life on the Gaza Strip six weeks after the armed conflict" (December 2008-January 2009), conducted with support from UNFPA and cited in the contributions of UNFPA and the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>2</sup> Contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>3</sup> Culture and Free Thought Association (2009); information from a survey, commissioned by UNFPA on the "Gaza Crisis: psychosocial consequences for women", conducted by the Association, which is a non-governmental organization partner of UNFPA in Gaza, and cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

10. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the continuation of the blockade that was imposed by Israel in June 2007 has triggered a protracted crisis with humanitarian consequences. The living conditions of women and men in Gaza deteriorated as a result of the erosion of livelihoods and the gradual decline of infrastructure, including basic services for health, water and sanitation, and education.<sup>4</sup>

11. Although restrictions of movement affect both women and men, concerns over possible harassment at checkpoints have curtailed women's movement, reducing their access to education, economic participation and social inclusion. This had a particularly negative impact on the access of women heads of household to employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup> A World Bank study noted that the high transaction and financial costs of transport as a result of unpredictable and often protracted waiting times had a disproportionate impact on women.<sup>5</sup> Recent measures by the Government of Israel to ease restrictions in certain places in the West Bank are expected to have a significant impact on the freedom of movement and economic development of the Palestinians, if these measures are sustained and expanded (A/64/351-S/2009/464, para. 26).

12. House demolitions resulting from the requirement for building permits by the Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem and in some parts of the West Bank have continued in the past year. A total of 51,000 people in Gaza were internally displaced and are now living in makeshift shelters that provide minimal protection. Others fled to the homes of friends and relatives.<sup>6</sup> The negative impacts on families who are displaced include the significant deterioration of social and financial conditions, including long-term trauma, family separation, disruption of family life and education, as well as increased poverty.<sup>4</sup> Women are particularly affected by the displacement and the lack of security.

13. According to the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/64/339), women are particularly affected by the occupation and Israeli settlement policy. During its field mission to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, the Committee was presented with a number of cases illustrating that Palestinian women, as a result of fear of harassment at checkpoints or by settlers, increasingly felt unable to provide for their families or were afraid to move outside the boundaries of their communities.

14. The ongoing conflict continued to have a negative impact on the economic environment. In 2008, the consumer price index rose by 9.89 per cent on average in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and by 13.98 per cent in Gaza. At the same time, the average rise in food prices in the two areas was more than 17 per cent and 21 per cent, respectively. In early 2009, the rate of price increases slowed down, but prices remained

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<sup>4</sup> Contribution of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the present report.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, "Towards enhancing women's mobility in the West Bank", *West Bank and Gaza Update* (July 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Field Update from the Humanitarian Coordinator, 9 February 2009, and the Gaza Flash Appeal, 2 February 2009; Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, press release 6/2009 of 12 March 2009, cited in A/HRC/10/20, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, Richard Falk.

high.<sup>7</sup> Despite increases in the import of goods into Gaza since the military operation ended, the level of imports still remains at less than one fifth of what the volume was prior to the imposition of the comprehensive closure regime in May 2007, and imports are mainly food and sanitation items (A/64/351-S/2009/464, para. 16).

15. According to the most recent estimates, the poverty rate among households headed by women was 61.2 per cent, compared with 56.9 per cent for households headed by men in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2007. The poverty rate among female-headed households with seven or more children was 79.7 per cent, compared with 68.6 per cent for households with five or six children (A/64/77-E/2009/13).

16. Over half of the Palestinian population of working age is between 15 and 29 years of age. Those who have the possibility to complete secondary education face limited job prospects. Over half of those in the 15 to 29 age group do not have access to education or employment.<sup>8</sup> In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the rate of participation in the labour force for young women is estimated to be below 13.6 per cent, compared with 54 per cent for young men, for the first quarter of 2009.<sup>9</sup>

17. During the reporting period, the rates of women's participation in the labour force remained low at 15.4 per cent (16.5 per cent in the West Bank and 13.5 per cent in Gaza), compared with a participation rate for men of 66.9 per cent (68.5 per cent in the West Bank and 63.8 per cent in Gaza).<sup>9</sup> The majority of women in the labour force have little or no education, and their low participation rates can be attributed to sociocultural restrictions, high fertility rates, and a general low level of employment caused by the various constraints imposed by the ongoing occupation on the economy.<sup>2</sup> Women who are employed are concentrated in the farming, forestry, hunting and fishing sectors (34.8 per cent), followed by education (32.5 per cent) and health services (7.2 per cent).<sup>9</sup>

18. While there has been a continuing increase in the number of married women in the labour force over the past seven years, unmarried women comprise the majority of the female labour force. According to research conducted jointly by the Birzeit Women's Studies Institute and the World Bank, higher education is a major factor for employment among both married and unmarried women. During the reporting period, the probability that a woman would join the labour market increased 18 times if she had a high school degree and a full 37 times if she had a postgraduate degree.<sup>10</sup>

19. Nearly 90 per cent of women in the informal economy work in the agricultural sector.<sup>11</sup> According to FAO, women farmers face dwindling household incomes due to high input prices, and have to buy food at higher prices. Most small-holder

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, report of the Director-General to the International Labour Conference at its 98th session, appendix on the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories, para. 91.

<sup>8</sup> International Labour Organization, *op. cit.*, preface.

<sup>9</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (January-March 2009) Round (Q1/2009).

<sup>10</sup> Women's Studies Institute/World Bank (June 2009), "The impact of Israeli mobility restrictions and violence on gender in Palestinian society 2000-2007".

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization, report by the secretariat on the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan dated 7 May 2009 (A/62/24, annex, para. 5).

farmers also face obstacles in marketing their agricultural products owing to the inundation of Israeli imports into the Palestinian economy and the restrictions of movement and access to goods. Families in some areas face additional vulnerabilities owing to drought and the high price of tanked water. As a result of the loss of grazing lands owing to settlement expansion, the barrier and closed military zones, herding communities are particularly afflicted with high fodder prices.<sup>2</sup>

20. According to a World Bank assessment of restrictions on Palestinian water sector development, women surveyed in a small village in the West Bank in 2008-2009 complained about poor water quality. The proximity of many wells to sewage sources led to water-related health problems and increased work in treating water for household use.<sup>12</sup>

21. A total of 40.4 per cent of 3,767,126 Palestinians currently live with food insecurity.<sup>13</sup> The 2009 socio-economic and food security survey report on the West Bank found that 31 per cent of female-headed households were food insecure, compared with 24 per cent of male-headed households.<sup>14</sup> In the West Bank, the food insecurity prevalence among households with more than 50 per cent women is 29 per cent, compared with the 25 per cent West Bank average.<sup>2</sup> According to the World Bank, Palestinian families are forced to reduce their consumption and change their diets because of higher food prices.<sup>12</sup> Preliminary findings from a survey conducted in Gaza in May and June 2009 showed that 68 per cent of female-headed households were food insecure, compared with 60 per cent of male-headed households. Food insecurity in Gaza was estimated to have increased by 4 per cent from May 2008.<sup>2</sup> The survey also revealed that a higher number of women and girls in a household increases the likelihood of food insecurity in the household.

22. The rise in food insecurity and poverty in Gaza has resulted in an increased burden on women.<sup>2</sup> In the event of the death, disability or unemployment of the husband, women become the main breadwinners for the family. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported an increased number of single-parent households. Older women, women with disabilities, women heads of household and displaced women and girls faced continued hardship as a result of the ongoing blockade of Gaza.<sup>4</sup> Approximately 20 per cent of households claim that boys' needs are prioritized when there is a food shortage at home, while the least likely household members to receive priority during a food shortage are the elderly.<sup>2</sup>

23. Education is undermined as a result of the blockade, with the delivery of essential educational materials being delayed or denied entry at crossing points. Most educational facilities have not been repaired owing to the lack of building materials. Many schools are running on double shifts to accommodate the large number of students.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> World Bank (2009), Assessment of restrictions on Palestinian water sector development, Middle East and North Africa Region, Sustainable Development, Washington, D.C.

<sup>13</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Consolidated Appeals Process 2010 (forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> FAO, Socio-Economic and Food Security Survey Report on the West Bank, carried out jointly by FAO, WFP and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, August 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Gisha Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement, "Obstacle course: students denied exit from Gaza, July 2009, cited in the contribution of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to the report.

24. In the 2008/09 academic year, a total of 239,188 girls, 49.92 per cent of pupils, were enrolled in UNRWA elementary, preparatory and secondary schools. The drop-out rate for girls was 0.97 per cent, and 66.8 per cent of the students benefiting from UNRWA administered scholarships were girls.<sup>16</sup>

25. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, in 2008, 9.1 per cent of women 15 years and older were illiterate, compared with only 2.9 per cent of men.<sup>17</sup>

26. Recent data on education indicate that women constituted 45.2 per cent of those who had completed two years or more of higher education; 54 per cent of students at local universities; 57 per cent of students at university colleges; and 37 per cent at community colleges in 2007.<sup>18</sup> Tertiary students have limited postgraduate study options within Gaza and face great difficulties in arranging to study abroad at the postgraduate level.<sup>15</sup> This has hindered progress in improving girls' and women's education, thus limiting their potential to assume leadership positions at all levels.<sup>4</sup> Even though women accounted for 58 per cent of graduates from local universities, they represented only 16.6 per cent of academic teaching staff at universities.<sup>18</sup>

27. UNICEF reported that adolescent Palestinian girls continued to have limited opportunities for development, recreation and participation, with few safe spaces available to them. Youth clubs across the Occupied Palestinian Territory had insufficient funding and were poorly equipped and managed. Adolescent girls' opportunities were often compromised by the burden of unpaid domestic work or pressure to marry early.<sup>2</sup>

28. The closure regime, including the barrier, checkpoints, closures and earth mounds, restricts Palestinian women's access to adequate prenatal, natal and post-natal medical care.<sup>19</sup> During the operation Cast Lead, maternal and child health services at primary health-care centres were disrupted. Despite the critical conditions, maternity assistance for normal deliveries continued to be provided, as was specialized health care for obstetric and neonatal complications. In many cases, however, such services were provided in improvised settings within health facilities whose maternity wards and operating theatres had been transformed into trauma units. Findings from a UNFPA assessment in February 2009 suggest that there was a 31 per cent increase in the number in miscarriages at four hospitals surveyed and a 50 per cent increase in neonatal mortality at one of the hospitals in Gaza City.<sup>20</sup>

29. The sixty-second World Health Assembly expressed deep concern at the serious implications for pregnant women and patients arising from the restriction of movement imposed by Israel on the movement of Palestinian ambulances and medical personnel, and demanded that Israel, the occupying power, improve the

<sup>16</sup> Contribution of UNRWA to the present report.

<sup>17</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "On the Eve of International Population Day", 11 July 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

<sup>19</sup> See A/HRC/10/35, report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the issue of Palestinian pregnant women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints.

<sup>20</sup> See UNFPA, Gaza crisis: impact on reproductive health and obstetric care, February 2009, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

living and medical conditions of Palestinian detainees, in particular children and women patients.<sup>21</sup>

30. A UNIFEM study<sup>22</sup> highlighted a high prevalence of domestic violence and violence against children, with displaced women being identified at increased risk of gender-based violence.<sup>23</sup> Although precise figures of violent crimes committed against women, including so-called “honour killings”, are not available, organizations that provide protection services for victims of violence continued to report such cases in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. During the period from January to August 2009, at least 10 women were reported to have been killed as a consequence of so-called “honour” crimes.<sup>24</sup> Perpetrators enjoy relative impunity for those crimes and are often sentenced to less than three years of imprisonment and serve about two years of the sentence.

31. According to the UNIFEM study,<sup>22</sup> domestic violence was cited as the primary safety problem facing women and girls, while public and political violence was the main safety and security problem facing men and boys. The highest reported rise in domestic violence against women was among households displaced by the conflict and in the southern Gaza Strip, which also had the highest reporting of increased domestic violence against children. The study further highlighted that violence against men was more likely to be treated as a public crime, while violence against women was often treated as a private family problem. Men were 10 times more likely to report the crime to the police than women. Limited legal and public mechanisms were available to men and women victims of social and political violence in Gaza, and there was distrust of the available mechanisms.

32. The Palestinian Authority has taken measures to increase women’s participation in all aspects of public and political life.<sup>22</sup> However, women are rarely present in decision-making positions in peace negotiations, either at the national or international level. As a result of the quota established in 2004, women’s political participation increased to 12.7 per cent in the Legislative Council and to 18 per cent in the local and municipal councils.<sup>25</sup>

33. According to the Palestinian Authority, women comprised 37 per cent of the employees in the Government sector and 15 per cent of senior employees in Government departments. Out of 15 ministers 5 are women, and they constitute 4.3 per cent of deputy ministers, 5.4 per cent of ambassadors, 10 per cent of judges and 16.9 per cent of lawyers.<sup>2</sup>

34. The Palestinian Authority endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 9 March 2009. It is expected that gender equality legislation will be prepared to ensure the implementation of the Convention.<sup>25</sup> In June 2009, the Palestinian Authority, through its Council of Ministers, issued a decision requesting all governmental departments to prepare gender-sensitive annual budgets.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See WHA62/2009/REC/1, World Health Organization, Report of the Sixty-Second World Health Assembly, Geneva.

<sup>22</sup> UNIFEM, *Voicing the Needs of Women and Men in Gaza: Beyond the Aftermath of the 23-Day Israeli Military Operations* (2009).

<sup>23</sup> The study was based on a household survey of 1,100 adult men and women conducted across the Gaza Strip in the first week of March 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, member of the World Organization against Torture SOS-Torture Network, August 2009, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>25</sup> Contribution of the Palestinian Authority to the Beijing+15 review.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

35. The present section focuses on the assistance provided to Palestinian women by entities of the United Nations system. Based on contributions from United Nations entities, seven areas of support were identified: education and training; health; employment and entrepreneurship; women's human rights; violence against women; humanitarian assistance; and gender mainstreaming.

#### **A. Education and training**

36. Women's and girls' access to education and the availability of career guidance, training and recreational opportunities are key elements to their economic empowerment and well-being. UNICEF and UNESCO supported the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour, as well as non-governmental organizations within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, to enhance access to and quality of girls' education and to provide career guidance. UNICEF increased the number of centres in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that provide adolescent-friendly services and education to girls from 69 in 2008 to 133 in 2009. In total, around 60,000 adolescent girls and boys have participated in activities and services provided at those centres, with girls' participation reaching 53 per cent. UNESCO proposed policy options for the development of a comprehensive and holistic career guidance system, based on its report entitled "Career Guidance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Mapping the Field and Ways Forward".

37. Evidence has shown that girls' access to education may be dependent on the available infrastructure. WHO constructed sanitary units and instituted hygiene campaigns at 20 girls schools in the West Bank for about 9,000 students. UNIFEM and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education created a "healthy canteen" pilot project in 61 different schools throughout the West Bank that provided healthy snacks, with the aim of improving the health and nutritional status of schoolchildren.

38. Technical and vocational education remains a critical factor in women's access to the labour market. Training programmes for women were provided in a wide range of areas related to vocational and professional development. The UNRWA Department of Education continued to assist Palestinian refugees in acquiring professional skills. During the reporting period, a total of 2,670 girls benefited from the UNRWA Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme. UN-Habitat, through its Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People, is in the process of establishing a technical and vocational training centre in Hebron for underprivileged women.

#### **B. Health**

39. United Nations entities supported improved access to health services, including reproductive health, psychological counselling, health education and prevention programmes. WHO monitored restrictions that prevent women from accessing health services outside the Gaza Strip. Information was collected on women who were denied the right to leave Gaza and related deaths. According to



WHO, 51 women and girls died during the period from October 2007 and August 2009 while waiting to receive medical treatment that was only available outside Gaza. WHO assisted UNFPA in providing clearances for medicines and equipment in order to provide services for women of childbearing age.

40. Several United Nations entities provided capacity-building on improving the provision of health care. WHO provided technical support to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society Maternity Hospital and the Makassed Hospital, the largest specialized hospitals providing obstetric care for Palestinian women. UNFPA targeted all Ministry of Health maternity workers in a capacity-building programme.

41. The provision of reproductive and maternal health care was supported by United Nations entities. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided antenatal care to approximately 102,000 pregnant women, post-natal care to more than 89,000 women and family planning services to about 133,000 clients in five fields of operation. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health through providing essential equipment for newborns and basic obstetric equipment for 4,000 high-risk newborns and 7,500 pregnant women in 13 neonatal units. In partnership with non-governmental organizations working on health issues, UNFPA supplied 20 remote communities in the West Bank with basic reproductive health and obstetric care as well as health education programmes. Over a six-month period, UNICEF provided micronutrients and fortified biscuits for 80,000 children and 40,000 pregnant women.

42. A number of United Nations entities provided psychosocial counselling to women. WHO introduced a community approach to improving the situation of mental health workers, their clients and the family members of the mentally ill. The UNRWA Community Mental Health Programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip offered essential psychosocial support for Palestine refugees, including women and girls. Psychosocial support was provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs through individual and group counselling to family members of female prisoners held in Israeli jails and to former prisoners in support of their reintegration in the society.

43. Disease prevention through immunizations, mammograms and healthy lifestyle guides was the focus of a number of United Nations entities. UNRWA continued to provide full immunization coverage of women and children against vaccine-preventable diseases, provided pre-conception folic acid, and iron and folic acid supplements for women throughout pregnancy. Health education programmes on the prevention of tobacco use and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases were established. UNFPA supported four women's health centres, which provided clinical, psychosocial and legal support, physiotherapy and health education to women living in the most populated and underprivileged areas of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. WHO and WFP instituted programmes to improve nutritional and health behaviours.

### **C. Employment and entrepreneurship**

44. Access to job opportunities supports women's self-reliance and ensures their livelihoods. In August 2009, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNDP and FAO began implementation of the joint programme on "Culture and Development in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", a three-year programme which promotes

institutional development through policies and practices for safeguarding cultural heritage, and socio-economic development through ecotourism and arts and crafts. To improve women's access to opportunities in the labour market, UNRWA recruited women as teachers, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, field workers, administrative staff, site engineers, school cleaners and agricultural labourers. In collaboration with Palestinian non-governmental organizations, skills training was provided to more than 10,000 women in areas such as computer literacy, hairdressing, sewing, traditional Palestinian handicrafts and embroidery. Through its emergency job creation programme, UNRWA continued to offer short-term employment opportunities to families without a breadwinner in a range of skilled, unskilled and professional positions. UN-Habitat completed the design and initial documents for a project for a housing and income-generating programme for poor women in Hebron, which aims to improve the living conditions of poor women and their families through the construction of 100 housing units and the establishment of small-scale enterprise activities for generating income in Hebron.

45. Credit to women microentrepreneurs constitutes a fundamental source of capital that enables them to meet the needs of their families for food, clothing, health care and education. Several United Nations entities provided grants and training to enhance Palestinian women's entrepreneurship. IFAD provided assistance to Palestinian women through credit and savings schemes in its Rehabilitation and Development Project Phase II, benefiting 8,200 households. The Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme of UNDP focused on capacity-building and economic empowerment by supporting 2,210 poor entrepreneurs to develop their own business enterprises. Nearly half of those entrepreneurs are women who did not qualify for commercial loans. By July 2009, the UNRWA Microfinance and Microenterprise Programme had made loans to small-scale enterprises in Gaza and the West Bank, to women in Gaza through a solidarity group lending product, to microenterprises in Gaza and the West Bank and to workers and low-paid professionals. The UNRWA Small and Microenterprise Training Programme provided short-term training customized for the needs of microentrepreneurs and small business owners in the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, more than 618 courses and 18 workshops were conducted for over 13,453 participants, almost 20 per cent of whom were women.

46. Efforts were made to enhance the role of Palestinian women in the improvement of national food security and agricultural production. UNDP organized tailored vocational training and business courses for women and provided women with assets such as livestock, home gardens and greenhouses to produce goods for their own consumption or for sale on the local market. Agricultural projects supported by FAO targeted women in income-generating and capacity-building activities through backyard production and home gardening, mainly in areas affected by drought or conflict and/or in Bedouin communities. A total of 650 female-headed households currently receive assistance in Nablus, Dorah, Tulkarem and Gaza. The WFP Food For Training and Food For Work programmes involved 14,376 women (49 per cent of beneficiaries) in home gardening, handicrafts, food processing, animal raising, beekeeping, agricultural awareness, soap making, and embroidery in the West Bank. UNDP supported the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees to provide economic assistance to more than 5,000 members of a women's cooperative in the West Bank. The initiative is now run in 132 locations in the West Bank and Gaza.

47. A 2008/09 School Snacks project run by WFP focused on the empowerment and capacity-building of women, with approximately 140 of them receiving cash for work and monthly rations of wheat flour for the production of snacks. UNIFEM piloted a school feeding initiative with the Nusseirat Women's Programme Centre targeting 450 children in kindergartens in the Nusseirat refugee camp.

48. ILO participated in the review of the Palestinian National Development Plan to promote a longer-term perspective on achieving decent work and social justice for both women and men.

49. Efforts were made to increase women's equal access to and knowledge of communications and information technologies. UNESCO implemented a two-year project on Strengthening Palestinian Participatory Democracy and Public Dialogue, financed by the United Nations Democracy Fund, which aimed to increase women's participation in democratic decision-making, public debate and media through strengthening the outreach and advocacy capacities of women's organizations and women journalists.

#### **D. Women's human rights**

50. Capacity-building efforts also focused on the promotion of women's rights. In December 2008, OHCHR, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority's Independent Commission for Human Rights, organized a training course on "Rights of women and juveniles in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice". The activity targeted 14 Palestinian prosecutors from the West Bank, focusing on the role of prosecutors in the protection of women's and juveniles' rights in the process of administration of justice. In the Gaza Strip, OHCHR provided training to a group of female lawyers on protecting human rights as part of its training-of-trainers programme. The training aimed at developing human rights expertise and training capacities. OHCHR conducted a workshop on basic human rights and the rights of people with disabilities in the Gaza Strip for a group of mothers of children with disabilities. During the reporting period, OHCHR held several meetings with Palestinian institutions on the issue of so-called "honour killings".

51. A number of awareness-raising campaigns on the human rights of women and girls were organized by United Nations entities. OHCHR, ESCWA and UNRWA conducted training sessions and workshops on awareness-raising on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. ESCWA held its second regional workshop on implementation of the Convention for parliamentarians in Beirut in November 2008. On the occasion of International Women's Day 2009, OHCHR organized an event for 24 representatives of local women's rights non-governmental organizations in the West Bank, addressing the United Nations protection mechanisms and women's rights in international law and under Palestinian legislation. The discussion focused on the main causes of violence against women and the role of men in protecting women's rights.

52. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs conducted advocacy and media campaigns to raise the awareness of the general public, key individuals and organizations at the international level of the conditions of female prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centres. UNIFEM provided legal and social support to Palestinian female prisoners and detainees in Israeli prisons. In particular, prisoners whose family members were unable to visit them have received monthly visits from

lawyers. Two support groups for released female prisoners were established in the West Bank. A three-day summer camp was held for former prisoners and for relatives and children of current and former prisoners. In the Gaza Strip, a training course on “Oral history documentation skills” targeting former female prisoners was conducted with the goal to collect stories about their imprisonment.

53. In an effort to engage youth, UNIFEM continued to support the Youth Rights Monitor project, implemented by a local non-governmental organization, is specialized in media and youth. The project, targeting young people between the ages of 14 and 25, institutionalizes the participation of Palestinian youth in national public policy dialogue and debate, with a special focus on the rights of youth, including women’s rights.

54. UNRWA partnered with 103 Palestinian community-based organizations, including 65 women’s programme centres, to develop capacity for the implementation of social services for vulnerable people, including women. Programmes focused on increasing women’s economic self-reliance; expanding women’s role in managing community-based organizations; and promoting refugee women’s knowledge of human rights.

55. In support of the sixtieth anniversary of UNRWA, the Department of Public Information assisted with the translation and printing of public information materials on issues affecting the women refugee population. More than 300,000 visitors to United Nations Headquarters saw the exhibit on the theme “The Palestinians — 60 years of struggle and enduring hope”, which was on display from November 2008 to January 2009 and portrayed Palestinian life, including several dozen images of women and their daily life, under occupation.

## **E. Violence against women**

56. Within the framework of the Secretary-General’s multi-year campaign on the theme “UNite to End Violence against Women”, UNIFEM led the Combating Violence Against Women festival in Ramallah during the annual campaign, “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence”, which took place from 25 November to 10 December 2009. The event was supported by eight United Nations entities, the Ministries of Women’s Affairs, Social Affairs and the Interior as well as Al Muntada, a coalition of 15 local non-governmental organizations committed to ending violence against women. The festival highlighted the collaborative work performed by United Nations entities, local non-governmental organizations and the Ministries to end violence against women, with a focus on youth groups.

57. Several United Nations entities were instrumental in increasing services to survivors of domestic violence. UNIFEM supported the upgrading of an existing toll-free helpline for women and children victims of violence. The helpline expanded its working hours, provided a social worker in the Gaza Strip to directly follow up with people requesting help and provided funding for a physician to respond to medical queries. UNFPA, in cooperation with the Nablus, Jenin and Jericho municipalities, continued to provide psychosocial counselling to women and worked with local non-governmental organizations to improve measures for women to access services that address gender-based violence. The UNRWA Gaza and West Bank field offices continued to hold individual and group counselling sessions for

victims of gender-based violence who are in need of therapeutic services through the Community Mental Health Programme. During the reporting period, 6,321 women benefited from counselling through the programme.

58. UNIFEM worked with the Ministry of Interior to strengthen the Palestinian institutional capacity to combat violence against women through developing guidelines and procedures for security forces, including police officers assigned to Family Protection Units. Through a local non-governmental organization, UNIFEM supported two intensive training courses targeting 40 security force members (men and women) from the West Bank as part of efforts to promote community responses to working with survivors of gender-based violence.

59. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs, UNIFEM continued to work with the Mehwar Centre, an anti-violence institution in the Occupied Palestinian Territory that provides multiple services to survivors of gender-based violence. This pilot institution works with the community on prevention of violence and the protection and empowerment of women and children victims. It lobbies for the adoption of relevant national policies and laws. During the reporting period, the Mehwar Centre sheltered 62 women and 8 child victims of violence. Four new cases per month, on average, were received. The Centre provided a variety of services, including counselling, psychological support, legal advice and representation, and, in coordination with other local organizations, health care, vocational training, and educational and job opportunities.

60. United Nations entities participated in advocacy activities and efforts to raise awareness about violence against women. UNIFEM promoted an event to increase the sensitivity and the commitment of youth to decreasing incidences of domestic violence through the medium of hip hop music. UNRWA organized awareness-raising sessions on the theme “Women and men united to end violence against women and girls”. The sessions were attended by 782 members of the community and 213 staff and addressed topics such as sex education, equality of men and women in the family, and violence against women and children.

## **F. Humanitarian assistance**

61. A number of United Nations entities responded to the destructive military conflict of December 2008 and January 2009 with emergency assistance, in addition to their ongoing humanitarian assistance. In January 2009, WFP launched an emergency operation to provide assistance to households headed by women, widows, and divorced or separated women, among other vulnerable groups. Female-headed households comprised approximately half of the total beneficiaries assisted by WFP in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNRWA sheltered more than 50,000 persons in 50 of its schools across Gaza, where they received food, water, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits and medical care from the Agency and from local and international non-governmental organizations. UNHCR provided non-food items for 3,200 families (around 18,000 persons) to be distributed by UNRWA to the population in Gaza. UNDP disbursed \$20 million through its emergency cash assistance programme to people who had suffered partial or total damage to personal property during the offensive, 952 of which beneficiaries (7 per cent) were women.

62. In the West Bank, United Nations entities continued to provide emergency assistance programmes, including food aid, to around 70,000 refugee families

during 2009. UNHCR supplied non-food items, such as plastic sheeting, sanitary napkins, diapers, blankets and logistical equipment.

63. In August 2009, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs issued its Special Focus report detailing the humanitarian impact of two years of blockade on the Gaza Strip, including a section on the effects of operation Cast Lead on women in Gaza. Based on a large-scale public opinion survey of 1,815 households in Gaza, a UNDP report entitled “Inside Gaza: attitudes and perceptions of the Gaza Strip residents in the aftermath of the Israeli military operations” (March 2009) provides data disaggregated by sex on the impact of the crisis on women and men.

64. In accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the Inter-Agency Gender Task Force of the United Nations country team, led by UNIFEM and the Gender Standby Capacity Project Adviser, issued the report entitled, “Voicing the needs of women and men in Gaza: beyond the 23-day Israeli military operation” in April 2009. Based on a gender needs assessment, the report provided information on gender equality issues addressed in humanitarian/early recovery assistance, during and after the Israeli military operation.

65. UNIFEM and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs developed a guidebook for the humanitarian sector in Gaza that provides standards for the integration of gender equality issues from the outset of complex emergencies. The guidebook aims to enable humanitarian service providers to reach their target audience with the maximum positive effect while minimizing exacerbation or inadvertent exposure to risk.

## **G. Gender mainstreaming**

66. A number of United Nations entities initiated activities to strengthen gender mainstreaming in policies and programmes. In 2008, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNIFEM jointly deployed a Gender Standby Capacity Project Adviser to provide technical support on gender mainstreaming within humanitarian action, in particular with regard to five sectors: water and sanitation; health; protection; job creation; and cash assistance. As a result, the 2009 Consolidated Appeals Process projects showed an increase in commitment and technical capacity from individual United Nations agencies and members of an umbrella organization of international NGOs regarding the incorporation of gender equality perspectives into programmes. In addition, the United Nations Inter-Agency Gender Task Force strengthened its terms of reference and its participation in sector coordination. The visibility of gender issues increased in sectoral responses.

67. In May 2009, UNIFEM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA and ILO began implementation of a joint programme under the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund on “Gender equality and women’s empowerment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”. This three-year joint programme promotes Palestinian women’s social, economic and political empowerment and aims to reduce gender-based violence, increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies, increase the adoption of policies and laws on gender equality issues in decision-making bodies, and enhance opportunities for women’s economic empowerment.

68. ESCWA provided technical cooperation and advisory services to the Palestinian Ministry for Women's Affairs on gender mainstreaming and strategic planning. Institutions of the Palestinian Authority participated in meetings and workshops aimed at building the capacity of Palestinian national mechanisms for gender equality.

69. ILO and UNDP contributed to the development of the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza (2009-2010), prepared by the Palestinian Authority. This report highlighted that women and men in Gaza do not face challenges in the same way but have different capacities and access to support systems through which to manage situations of stress.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

70. **During the period under review, despite some positive developments, the overall humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continued to deteriorate in most areas. The rise in food insecurity and poverty has resulted in an increased burden on women to maintain household food security. The continued closures, checkpoints and roadblocks limited the access of Palestinian women and girls to health-care services, education and employment. Pregnant women had difficulties accessing health services for antenatal care and safe delivery.**

71. **Improving the situation of and enhancing the impact of assistance to Palestinian women is linked to the achievement of a secure and lasting peace. Renewed efforts need to be made by the international community to seek an end to the violent confrontations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Women should be fully involved in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives to be undertaken in the region, in accordance with the Beijing Platform for Action and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security.**

72. **United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health, social welfare, employment and women's economic empowerment. Attention should be paid, however, to ensure that assistance programmes and projects do not inadvertently reinforce conventional divisions of labour according to gender and gender stereotypes. Enhanced efforts should be made to achieve women's full participation in political and economic decision-making processes at all levels. Concrete actions are needed to increase the participation of Palestinian women, in particular young women, in the labour force. Attention should be given to increasing access by Palestinian women to safe and affordable means of transport.**

73. **Food security should be made a high priority. Strong, comprehensive measures, including safety nets, are needed to ensure that women have access to safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food, and to increase the access by women small-holder farmers to technologies, credit and markets.**

74. **Enhanced efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against Palestinian women and girls and to protect and promote their human rights,**

including through the systematic and effective implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Incidents of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including so-called “honour killings”, should be strongly condemned. Perpetrators of all forms of violence against women should be prosecuted, and any climate of impunity surrounding such offences should be eliminated. Renewed efforts by all relevant actors are needed at the international, regional and national levels to prevent sexual violence against women, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

75. A gender perspective should be fully integrated into international assistance programmes, through, inter alia, gender analysis and the collection of sex-disaggregated data. All studies and reports undertaken by the United Nations, including the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, should systematically incorporate information on the situation of women and girls.

76. Governments, academic institutions, international organizations and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, should be encouraged to collaborate on qualitative and quantitative action-oriented research on the situation of women and girls.

77. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to Palestinian women and girls and systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern, and further actions and initiatives**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

##### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between 1 September 2009 and 30 September 2010, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2010/6. It reviews the situation of Palestinian women and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional arrangements. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2011/1.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 2010/6 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation in order to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those set out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2010/4), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2009 to 30 September 2010 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations entities or individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA, the United Nations country team for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. In this regard, the United Nations country team has coordinated contributions to the report by the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, now part of UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

## **II. Situation of Palestinian women**

4. The reporting period was characterized by efforts to resume negotiations between the parties on all permanent status issues, a volatile situation on the ground throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the deepening divide between Gaza and the West Bank (see A/65/35, para. 4). Systematic engagement by the United States of America and other members of the Quartet with the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships and other stakeholders in the region led to the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians on 2 September 2010. That had been preceded by several rounds of proximity talks assisted by the United States. The League of Arab States also engaged actively within the framework of the Arab Peace Initiative, including meetings with the Quartet (*ibid.*, para. 5).

5. The consequences of years of occupation and conflict and multiple political and economic crises in 2009, particularly in Gaza where the Israeli military operation “Cast Lead” undermined social services, infrastructure and homes, continued to be felt.<sup>1</sup> While initial estimates indicate that economic growth accelerated in 2009 and real growth in the West Bank and Gaza was about 6.7 per cent, conditions in the Gaza Strip remained difficult.<sup>2</sup> Changes in Israeli policy regarding entry of material — from a “positive” list of goods allowed into Gaza to a “negative” list of items that would be prohibited or restricted from entry — brought some relief to the population, but remained insufficient to address the full range of socio-economic needs.<sup>3</sup>

6. The expansion of Israeli settlements continued in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (see A/65/35, para. 5). A total of 230 cases of house demolitions and evictions were documented through August 2010 in East Jerusalem and “Area C”.<sup>3</sup> As of July 2010, approximately 61 per cent of the barrier had been completed. In contradiction to the 9 July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the barrier continues to deviate significantly from the 1967 Green Line into Occupied Palestinian Territory in the West Bank. When completed, approximately 85 per cent of the barrier will run inside the West Bank (see A/65/35, para. 34). Free movement in the West Bank continued to be obstructed by Israel even though the number of checkpoints was reduced (*ibid.*, para. 7) during the reporting period, contributing to greater freedom of movement between Palestinian urban centres, East Jerusalem excluded.<sup>3</sup> As at the end of August 2010, there were some 500 closure obstacles throughout the West Bank<sup>4</sup> (compared with 618 in August 2009; see A/65/380, para. 19), where there were continued restrictions preventing Palestinians from using key roads and accessing East Jerusalem as well as other areas isolated by the barrier. Furthermore, there was no improvement regarding access of Palestinians to farming and grazing areas, as well as water resources, located in Area C.<sup>3</sup> The humanitarian needs were becoming more acute due to inadequate water quality. In East Jerusalem and the West Bank water sources were closed off to establish settlements and military zones.<sup>1</sup> Due to its high salinity, 80 per cent of the water supply in Gaza is not fit for human consumption.<sup>1</sup>

7. The divide among major Palestinian factions continued to affect the lives of ordinary Palestinians, especially in Gaza, and prevented Palestinians from uniting in support of the Palestinian Authority (see A/65/35, para. 8). The Gaza Strip remained under the *de facto* control of Hamas (see A/65/380, para. 26).

8. Although the political situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, related both to the Israeli occupation and to the divide among major Palestinian factions, affects all individuals, women and girls are affected in distinct ways.

9. At the end of 2009, formal labour force participation of women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was among the lowest levels globally: 15.2 per cent

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action Report 2010*.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank, *Brief on West Bank and Gaza* (March 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>4</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor* (August 2010).

in the West Bank, down from 15.8 per cent in the first two quarters of 2009,<sup>5</sup> and 9.1 per cent in the Gaza strip.<sup>6</sup> According to a study conducted by UNESCO and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics on market factors that discourage women from joining the labour market, some 60 per cent of women in the formal labour force are employed in education, textiles, clerical work, farming and agriculture. ESCWA reports that the Palestinian National Authority and UNRWA continued to be the two main employers of women.

10. While no legal barriers prevent women from entering into businesses or economic-related contracts, engaging in autonomous economic activity has meant increased mobility for some women. Most must carefully navigate social norms in order to avoid family conflict since women must often obtain the permission of brothers and husbands to work.<sup>7</sup> Few women occupy high-level positions, and wage gaps between women and men persist. Men are given priority in hiring processes, and young women wait four times as long as young men to find work.<sup>7</sup>

11. A survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics suggests that the majority of women who are out of the labour force are mostly young (15-34 years of age) married women without children. Some 45 per cent of these women have given up seeking employment (31 per cent in the West Bank and 63 per cent in the Gaza Strip) due to previous unsuccessful job search.<sup>8</sup> However, in the absence of male income security, following high levels of unemployment among men (38.6 per cent in May 2010),<sup>3</sup> additional burdens have been placed on women to earn an income in order to meet the basic needs of their families.

12. Many women, in particular middle-aged women and women with low levels of education, turn to a range of informal activities, from petty trading in Gaza, to grocery shopkeeping, sewing, agriculture and livestock production. Many informal activities have benefited from microcredit schemes introduced by aid agencies, however, with mixed results. In some cases, women borrowed money to support their husbands' economic activities, and in other cases they were constrained by the strict repayment policies of the lender. Lack of raw materials or goods mobility, in combination with a massive decline in people's purchasing power, has imposed challenges on those projects and their success.<sup>7</sup>

13. Imposed movement restrictions and the lack of a means of transport constituted crucial barriers to employment for women. According to case studies conducted in the West Bank and Gaza, public transport covers more than 70 per cent of the transport needs of women.<sup>9</sup> However, the combination of movement restriction and gender stereotypes, schedules that do not meet women's needs and public (verbal or physical) harassments have resulted in restricted access to transport for women. Additionally, a lack of fare integration has led to higher

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour Force Survey (October-December 2009): Round (Q4/2009)", cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>6</sup> UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, "MDG attainment in the Palestinian context" (2010).

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, Brief on checkpoints and barriers (2010).

<sup>8</sup> According to a Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics study cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, "Gender and transport in MENA: case studies from West Bank, Gaza and Yemen", MENA Knowledge and Learning Quick Notes Series, No. 21, March 2010.

transport costs for women (approximately 15 to 20 per cent higher than for men) and for poor people living at the outskirts of towns since they are forced to take multiple means of transportation to reach their destinations.<sup>9</sup>

14. High unemployment levels among women do not only impose economic hardship on women but also tend to lead to high levels of food insecurity. Other factors include large families, higher proportions of women and children and low levels of education. As a result, food insecurity affects 61 per cent of Gaza Strip households and 25 per cent of West Bank households, with higher rates of food insecurity among female-headed households than male-headed households in both the Gaza Strip (68 and 60 per cent) and the West Bank (27 and 22 per cent), respectively. Age is an important factor in the level of food insecurity among female-headed households since older women are less likely to find employment than younger ones. For example, the average age of women heads of food-insecure households is 62 and 56 years in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively.<sup>10</sup>

15. Access to education, training and recreational activities remained critical for the economic empowerment and well-being of women. Available data show that while the overall quality of education available to women is variable, access to and participation in education by women is increasing.<sup>11</sup> The Occupied Palestinian Territory ranked in the medium range (76 out of 128) of the Education for All Development Index,<sup>12</sup> and the enrolment rate and performance of girls has improved. In the 2009/2010 academic year, girls represented 47.9 per cent of the total student population in UNRWA-run schools in the Gaza Strip and 57.5 per cent in the West Bank.<sup>13</sup> Approximately 62 per cent of all teachers in basic education were women.<sup>3</sup> The ongoing conflict, insecurity and movement restrictions, however, continued to pose serious challenges to women's and girls' access to education, training and recreational activities.

16. Gender stereotypes continued to constrain women's access to education and training and have an impact on the choice of education and training courses with concentrations of females and males in distinct fields of study. Curricula, especially in secondary schools, contributed to the portrayal of stereotypical roles for women and men.<sup>3</sup> Girls are also encouraged by their parents to pursue education paths that are in line with their perceived future roles as mothers and caregivers.<sup>3</sup> Dropout rates were higher for boys at the primary level (1.3 per cent, compared with 0.5 per cent for girls), and higher for girls at the secondary level (3.8 per cent, compared with 3.0 per cent for boys).<sup>11</sup> Concerns remained regarding the linkage between the rate of girl dropouts at the secondary level of education and at early marriage.<sup>3</sup>

17. Illiteracy remained a serious obstacle hindering women's economic and political empowerment. While only 1 per cent of youth (15-24 years) was illiterate, illiteracy among adults was much higher, with 75.6 per cent of all illiterate adults

<sup>10</sup> Socio-economic and food security survey conducted by FAO/WFP on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, cited in the contribution received from the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>11</sup> ESCWA, "Social and economic situation of Palestinian women: 2006-2009" (E/ESCWA/ECW/2009/Technical Paper.1) (May 2009).

<sup>12</sup> The Education for All Development Index provides a composite measure of progress, encompassing access, equity and quality; see UNESCO *Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalized* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> UNRWA, "UNRWA in figures" as of 1 January 2010.

being women.<sup>14</sup> Illiteracy rates among food-insecure heads of households were notably high, with 64 per cent in the West Bank and 34 per cent in the Gaza Strip.<sup>10</sup>

18. Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are closely linked to the socio-economic consequences of the occupation. Acute and chronic forms of malnutrition continued to pose major problems, in particular in the Gaza Strip. Post-traumatic stress and other psychological and behavioural disorders are an emerging health priority.<sup>15</sup>

19. Significant concerns persisted with regard to maternal and child health due to mobility constraints and insufficient infrastructure. Many pregnant women were unable to reach UNRWA health centres on time because of movement restrictions.<sup>15</sup> According to UNIFEM, difficulties in accessing medical facilities were more acute for rural women, given the number of checkpoints between villages and the lack of hospitals in rural areas (see A/HRC/13/68/Rev.1, para. 10).

20. Due to a shortage of delivery beds, inadequate conditions and space in delivery rooms, and inadequate basic facilities, most women were being discharged one to two hours after normal delivery.<sup>3</sup> While the United Nations does not maintain a specific monitoring mechanism on the issue of Palestinian women giving birth at Israeli checkpoints, no births at checkpoints have been reported by the Palestinian Authority and Israel since January 2009 (see A/HRC/13/68/Rev.1, paras. 7-9).

21. The political and economic conditions affected women's and girls' health and nutrition, particularly in the Gaza Strip. Food insecurity contributed to micronutrient deficiency and high levels of anaemia in infants and pregnant women.<sup>16</sup> In herding communities in Area C, stunting reached up to 38 per cent of children aged 6 to 17 months. Of the surveyed girls, 7.8 per cent suffered from acute malnutrition, compared with 4.8 per cent of boys; 16.7 per cent girls compared with 14.1 per cent boys were acutely underweight.<sup>17</sup> The prevalence of anaemia increased among 9-12-month old infants, from 49 per cent in 2008 to 57 per cent in 2009.<sup>18</sup>

22. Mental health issues affected women both as primary caregivers and as patients. In families with mentally ill members, women bore the brunt of the care. Women made up the majority of professional mental health providers who worked often under substandard conditions.<sup>18</sup> Some 30 per cent of children screened at UNRWA schools were reported to have mental health problems (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1282). Several reports emphasized that poverty and movement constraints left women unable to care for their children and relatives leading to anxiety, panic attacks, disturbed sleep and eating patterns, and depression (A/HRC/12/48, para. 1280).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> UNESCO, *Global Education Digest 2010: Comparing Education Statistics Across the World* (Montreal, Canada, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010). Available from [http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2010/GED\\_2010\\_EN.pdf](http://www.uis.unesco.org/template/pdf/ged/2010/GED_2010_EN.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> WHO, "Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including east Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan" (Sixty-third World Health Assembly (A63/INF.DOC./6), 2010).

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, "Humanitarian action 2010: mid-year review: Occupied Palestinian Territory".

<sup>17</sup> "Food security and nutrition survey of herding communities in Area C", joint UNRWA/UNICEF/WFP household survey, April 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Health, nutrition surveillance system (2009).

<sup>19</sup> See also UNIFEM, *Voicing the Needs of Women and Men in Gaza: Beyond the Aftermath of the 23-Day Israeli Military Operations* (2009).

23. Palestinian women continued to be exposed to different forms of violence, including those related to the ongoing Israeli occupation and factional tensions, as well as domestic violence, so-called “honour” killings and trafficking. During the reporting period, out of a total of 68 Palestinians killed by Israeli forces and settlers one was a woman, and among 215 injured persons 90 were women.<sup>20</sup> Fear of Israeli violence, as well as the Palestinian factional conflict, is a daily source of stress and insecurity for the entire population.<sup>21</sup>

24. Data on violence against women remains scarce. Women and girls are reluctant to resort to women’s and human rights organizations, the police and courts for a number of reasons, including the lack of awareness of the availability of assistance mechanisms and the strong stigma attached to reporting abuse. According to non-governmental organizations, forensic clinic data confirmed 499 cases of rape; 13 women had been killed in so-called “honour” killings in 2009 (nine in the West Bank and four in Gaza); and 126 women had left their homes due to sexual harassment, rape or physical abuse by a family member.<sup>22</sup>

25. The current legal framework in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is a significant obstacle to gender equality.<sup>21</sup> While the Palestinian Basic Law, which is the main source of legislation, establishes that Palestinians shall be equal before the law and the judiciary without distinction based upon sex,<sup>23</sup> gender-based discrimination persists in law in a range of areas, including the penal code and laws on marriage, divorce, custody of children and inheritance. For example, in the West Bank, the law provides for a reduced sentence with respect to an offence in a “state of great fury”.<sup>24</sup> Laws in force in both the West Bank<sup>25</sup> and the Gaza Strip<sup>26</sup> relieve rapists who marry their victim of any criminal responsibility. None of the existing laws cover marital rape.<sup>21</sup> In addition, weaknesses in the judicial systems have led to an increase in the use of customary law, at times to the detriment of women’s rights.<sup>21</sup>

26. A draft national strategy to combat violence against women has been developed, but not yet finalized. It promotes a legal framework and institutional mechanisms to protect women from violence and also promotes improved social protection and health services for women victims of violence. In the field of law enforcement, the Palestinian Cabinet requested in February 2010 that the President suspend legal provisions on “family honour”.<sup>3</sup>

27. There is growing support among Palestinians for women’s rights and gender equality. A UNDP survey revealed that Palestinian attitudes towards women’s rights

<sup>20</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Protection of civilians” database, 1 October 2009-24 August 2010, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>21</sup> UNDP, “MDG attainment in the Palestinian context” (see footnote 6).

<sup>22</sup> Numbers and figures presented by the Al-Muntada Coalition of Palestinian non-governmental organizations at the violence against women workshop, January 2010; cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>23</sup> Article 9 of the Amended Basic Law (promulgated 18 March 2003), published in the *Palestine Official Gazette Special* issue No. 2 (19 March 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 (1960), article 98, cited in UNDP, “MDG attainment in the Palestinian context”.

<sup>25</sup> Jordanian Penal Code No. 16 (1960), article 308, cited in UNDP, “MDG attainment in the Palestinian context”.

<sup>26</sup> Egyptian Penal Law No. 58 (1936), article 291, “MDG attainment in the Palestinian context”.

exhibited strong support for a revision of the legal code in order to boost women's equality: 70-80 per cent of survey respondents stated that women should be equal to men before the court, the law, at home and at work.<sup>27</sup> Based on a joint study by UNESCO and the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Palestinian political representatives are gradually recognizing their responsibility for gender equality issues and starting to take actions towards the advancement of women.<sup>28</sup> In addition, a regional initiative between the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, and non-governmental organizations in February 2010 discussed amendments of the Personal Law (marriage age, child custody, legal status for women, shared budget and divorce).<sup>3</sup>

28. Palestinian women participate in both formal and informal realms of political life. In 2009, women represented 20 per cent of the ministers of the Palestinian Authority.<sup>29</sup> Women's informal participation in political parties has been significant, at least in terms of visibility and effectiveness, if not in terms of numbers. With the factional split and the freeze of the Palestinian Legislative Council in 2006, efforts to promote women's political participation drastically decreased, including with regard to women's active role in peacebuilding and negotiation. Though women were in leadership roles within the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authority, they were often excluded from strategic meetings and decision-making processes, absent from the internal political reconciliation process<sup>30</sup> and did not participate in permanent status negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

29. A cornerstone of Palestinian social, economic and political activity has been the multifaceted volunteer work done by women's associations, which have not only organized to promote peace and political change but also implemented practical projects targeted to support communities to meet their daily needs. These associations have undertaken diverse work, including establishing nursery schools and kindergartens in an attempt to facilitate women's integration into the public sphere and to improve parenting practices and childcare; offering legal advice; challenging patriarchal assumptions about women's capacities and rights including through popular education campaigns; organizing protests and building strategic partnerships with Israeli women in the peace movement.<sup>32</sup> According to data made available by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, representation by

<sup>27</sup> UNDP, "Palestinian perception toward the human security situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

<sup>28</sup> UNESCO/Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Center, descriptive report on the main survey regarding knowledge, perceptions and practices of Palestinian Legislative Council members towards gender (June 2010), cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>29</sup> Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations, UNIFEM and UNDP, *Women Count for Peace: the 2010 Open Days on Women, Peace and Security* (September 2010).

<sup>31</sup> ESCWA, joint study on the theme "Status of Arab women: means to strengthen the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding" (December 2009).

<sup>32</sup> See Manal A. Jamal, "Gender and human security: Palestine revisited", Working Paper Series, No. 08-09 (Dubai, Dubai School of Government, 2008); Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (London, Zed Books, 2007), cited in the UNDP publication *Human Development Report 2009/10: Investing in Human Security for a Future State* (2010).



Palestinian women in decision-making positions such as boards of trustees and board members of non-governmental organizations was approximately 30 per cent.

30. According to information made available by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in April 2010, 34 women were held by Israel in detention centres and prisons, where they were reportedly deprived of medical treatment (see A/65/35, para. 35). As of August 2010 there were 23 Palestinian women held in Palestinian prisons in the West Bank where access to basic material needs and respect for the rule of law were limited.<sup>33</sup> The gendered effects of detention are manifold given women's and men's different roles and responsibilities in dealing with the effects of imprisonment of family members. Women shoulder the responsibility of maintaining households and raising children when male family members are detained.<sup>34</sup>

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

31. The overall environment of occupation and conflict, movement restrictions and violence continued to be cross-cutting issues that permeated every aspect of Palestinian women's lives. Despite some positive developments, the overall humanitarian needs in parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained acute. Limits to women's movement affect their access to health care, education and socio-economic opportunities and their ability to participate in decision-making processes as well as their caregiving and domestic work.

32. Such conditions have to be considered in terms of the assistance provided to Palestinian women by United Nations entities. Section III sets out six key areas: education and training, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods, violence against women, power and decision-making and institutional arrangements.

#### A. Education and training

33. United Nations entities continued to develop and implement a range of initiatives to improve access of women and girls to education, training and recreational activities, including provision of scholarships for universities and vocational education and training to strengthen women's participation in the economy and labour force. In 2009/2010, through the UNRWA Department of Education, 533 female students benefited from technical and vocational education and training at the Ramallah Women Training Centre and 357 benefited in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA promoted women's rights and gender equality as universal human rights values through its human rights curricula for grades 1 to 9. UNIFEM offered educational services at community-based women's centres in remote areas of the West Bank and provided 100 young girls and women in the localities of Auja and Fasayel in the Jordan Valley with literacy classes, computer training and English language courses.

<sup>33</sup> UNIFEM project on protection of Palestinian female prisoners and detainees in Palestinian prisons, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>34</sup> Institute of Women's Studies, Birzeit University, "The impact of Israeli mobility restrictions and violence on gender relations in Palestinian society: 2000-2007", cited in the UNDP publication *Human Development Report 2009/10: Investing in Human Security for a Future State* (2010).

34. The United Nations Children's Fund supported 4,000 female students with life skills education, such as conflict management and team skills, and provided recreational activities for 300 low-performing schools, targeting more than 11,000 female students in grades 2 to 6. Through its 100 adolescent-friendly centres, UNICEF offered educational and recreational activities to more than 20,000 young women. During the reporting period a total of 12,931 women accessed the UNRWA project on social and recreational spaces for women and girls in the Gaza Strip, where they engaged in discussion forums in and classes in such areas as the arts, sports, skills-building, computers and literacy. UNRWA ran its fourth Summer Games programme, providing over 250,000 children in the Gaza Strip with sports and arts activities, raising awareness within the community of the importance of physical exercise for girls and providing girls with spaces (e.g., swimming) they are not ordinarily able to access.<sup>3</sup> On two occasions, facilities of the Summer Games were attacked by armed and masked men, but UNRWA ensured the successful continuation of the Games.

## **B. Health**

35. UNRWA continued to be the main comprehensive primary health-care provider for Palestinian refugees and continued to promote a comprehensive life cycle approach to health with a strong focus on primary health care and prevention. A number of United Nations entities supported improved access to health services in the area of reproductive health.

36. Building on a pilot project aimed at improving the quality of maternal and newborn health in two hospitals in the Gaza Strip in 2010, WHO expanded the project activities to another six hospitals in the Gaza Strip. An estimated 24,000 mothers have benefited from the project activities since the launch of the pilot phase in April 2009. The project managed to increase the mother's stay at the hospital from one hour to up to six hours. Medical checkups were performed for mothers and newborns, early initiation of breastfeeding was encouraged, and basic health education messages were provided for both the health of mothers and newborns.

37. In terms of direct services, UNICEF delivered micronutrient supplementation to more than 50,000 pregnant women and 55,000 children. UNRWA delivered food aid to 7,838 pregnant women and nursing mothers. Maternal health-care services were provided to refugees in 20 primary health-care centres across the Gaza Strip. Additionally, family planning services were provided to about 23,141 clients.

38. The United Nations Children's Fund, WHO and UNFPA worked on improving infrastructure, processes and skills among maternal care providers, in direct cooperation with the Ministry of Health. With the support of UNICEF, the Ministry developed a reproductive health handbook and equipped six neonatal units targeting 10,000 high-risk newborns.<sup>3</sup> Female health workers were trained on the integrated management of childhood illnesses as well as on breastfeeding practices and nutrition protocols for severe acute malnutrition. Activities were also undertaken to raise women's awareness of breast cancer and to promote self-examination. From March to July 2010, over 6,000 women were screened for breast cancer. In that context, WHO presented the first Palestinian 3-D animated movie based on a true story about Fatenah, a breast cancer survivor. More than 200 training sessions were held for more than 3,000 doctors and nurses (three quarters of whom were women).

In order to break the professional isolation of Gaza Strip health professionals, WHO supported training for doctors and nurses in modern practices in maternal and neonatal health care in cooperation with the Al Makased Hospital in East Jerusalem. In cooperation with the Directorate of Hospitals, UNFPA organized training in emergency obstetric care protocols for all Ministry of Health maternity workers in the West Bank and in two maternity wards in Gaza (see A/65/77-E/2010/56, para. 37). UNFPA also continued to provide equipment, medications, and supplies to isolated communities.

39. In regard to other areas of health, UNFPA provided clinical and psychosocial services and health education to 30,000 women in the most underprivileged areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip through support provided to four women's health centres. The UNRWA community mental health programme in the West Bank included group, individual and peer-to-peer counselling. A total of 37,668 beneficiaries (of which 71 per cent were women and girls) participated in group activities, and 109,612 beneficiaries (of which 61 per cent were women and girls) in individual counselling from January to September 2010. UNICEF provided psychosocial support to more than 16,000 women and 10,000 girls. The work of UNDP on HIV/AIDS continued under the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

40. Assistance by United Nations entities concentrated on covering basic livelihood needs and job creation and on enhancing women's access to entrepreneurship, particularly in rural areas and agriculture. UNRWA and FAO focused on households with female or no breadwinners. Female-headed households accounted for approximately 50 per cent of beneficiaries of the WFP Social Hardship Cases General Food Distribution programme. In addition, WFP provided daily supplementary food items to 63,312 and 92,454 students in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively. In the West Bank, WFP worked with women's centres that prepared the school snacks in exchange for cash and WFP food baskets.

41. As one of the largest employers in the area, UNRWA employed more than 10,000 staff members in its operations across the Gaza Strip. In addition, 35 per cent of all beneficiaries of the UNRWA emergency job creation programme were women, who were trained in embroidery, recycling and honey production, and who were recruited as skilled and unskilled labourers. UNIFEM and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education carried out the second phase of the women community-based school canteen project, which provided healthy school snacks. It targeted 230 schools and involved 28 women's organizations in 12 districts. The programme highlights the economic contributions of women and women's centres, while improving the health of schoolchildren.

42. To enhance women's economic opportunities, support was also directed towards women's entrepreneurship and access to credit. During the reporting period, the UNRWA Microfinance and Microenterprise Department in the Gaza Strip disbursed 1,126 loans to female entrepreneurs (out of a total of 3,080 loans). Women received more loans than men in the agricultural and industrial sectors, and represented more than one third of participants (585 out of 1,609) in microenterprise

trainings. UNRWA also provided 12 grants to women to enable them to begin income-generating projects.

43. The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Palestinian Occupied Territory (MDG-F)<sup>35</sup> launched a gender equality employment strategy. A series of measures were implemented, including three needs assessments for vocational education centres and women cooperatives, and the training of 27 women leaders and 15 gender audit certified trainers. A training workshop on gender and international labour standards was held, focusing on gender equality in the workplace.

44. A number of programmes implemented during the reporting period specifically addressed the role of Palestinian women in agriculture. For example, FAO focused on boosting fruit and vegetable cultivation and on improving water management and income-generation for female-headed households. Livelihood skills for youth were enhanced through the FAO Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools project, which were implemented in 26 schools throughout the West Bank and Gaza, benefiting 1,200 girls and boys by teaching both agricultural and life skills (see A/65/77-E/2010/56, para. 51). UNIFEM provided rural women with business counselling/training to enable them to better manage their own small income-generating projects.

#### **D. Violence against women**

45. With assistance from United Nations entities, 50 social workers of the Ministry of Social Affairs were trained in ways to combat violence against women, an existing helpline was upgraded and a coalition of women's and human rights organizations was established (Amal Coalition to Combat Violence against Women in the Gaza Strip). Additionally, staff of the Palestinian Legislative Council were trained on the collection and analysis of data of violence against women.

46. As a result of a conference on so-called "honour" crimes organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in March 2010, a task force was established comprising representatives from the Palestinian Authority, United Nations entities and civil society organizations. The task force is to address the issue throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Within the framework of the global campaign entitled "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", and as part of the campaign of the Secretary-General entitled "UNiTe to End Violence against Women", UNIFEM organized in Ramallah in December 2009 the second festival to combat violence against women, which was attended by more than 800 people and supported by 10 United Nations agencies. In that context, MDG-F organized the joint campaign entitled "Women and Men are a Nation: Together to End Violence against Women" in the Gaza Strip, which included a festival, radio spots, a mural painting and a study day.

47. With regard to assistance for survivors, UNIFEM continued to support the Mehwar Centre in Bethlehem, a multi-purpose service structure addressing violence

<sup>35</sup> UNIFEM, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA and ILO established the joint Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F) Joint Programme, "Gender equality and women's empowerment in the Palestinian Occupied Territory". Unless otherwise indicated in the present report, "MDG-F" refers to that programme.

against women in a holistic way. During the reporting period, a total of 93 cases of “at-risk” women, women survivors of domestic violence and 17 children were sheltered and received psychosocial, legal, health, vocational and socio-educational counselling. UNFPA continued to provide outreach psychosocial support through trained social workers in Nablus, Jenin and Jericho municipalities (*ibid.*, para. 50).

48. Implementation of a UNFPA project continued in five selected areas of the West Bank, enhancing the capacity of 20 staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the area of violence against women. In a separate initiative under MDG-F, UNFPA provided training to 120 rural women on such issues as gender equality and gender-based violence, facilitating 1,400 regional awareness sessions. UNRWA organized a gender-based violence-training for the staff of Women’s Programme Centres, educated 360 teachers on early marriage and conducted separate group discussions for women, men, girls and families from April to September 2010 serving 1,000 participants. A workshop organized by UNRWA, on the theme “Community of practice in building referral systems for women victims of violence”, brought together best practice examples in this area.

49. With the support of the Palestinian non-governmental organization Sawa, UNIFEM issued a report entitled “Trafficking and forced prostitution of Palestinian women and girls: forms of modern day slavery”, the first of its kind on the issue of trafficking and forced prostitution of Palestinian women and girls.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

50. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of the participation of Palestinian women in decision-making. The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process emphasized the importance of women’s involvement in peace negotiations, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts in an op-ed article in the Israeli and Palestinian press and delivered a speech to a committee of the Israeli Knesset. As part of the “Global open day for women, peace and security”, held in the context of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), the United Nations Special Coordinator Office for the Middle East Peace Process, UNIFEM and UNFPA met with a number of women peace activists in the Gaza Strip to discuss women’s concerns regarding peace and security within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants identified four key priorities of Palestinian women, namely: supporting women’s political participation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; addressing the increase in domestic violence and all forms of violence against women; supporting the economic empowerment of women; and raising awareness of the humanitarian impact of the occupation and blockade on women and girls.<sup>36</sup> The outcomes of the event were communicated to the Security Council in October 2010.

51. With support of the Government of Spain, UNIFEM and the International Women’s Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace hosted a conference on advancing women’s leadership for sustainable peace in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and worldwide, in Madrid on 1 and 2 June 2010.

<sup>36</sup> United Nations, UNIFEM and UNDP (see footnote 30).

52. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia provided training for the Ministry of Women's Affairs on how to draft a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and launched its biennial flagship publication *Status of Arab Women: Means to Strengthen the Role of Women in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding*, which addressed the situation of Palestinian women and changes within traditional gender roles as women have taken on new responsibilities within their families and communities.

53. To strengthen institutional development in the area of women's rights, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council participated in two workshops organized by ESCWA and other partners on the roles of parliamentarians in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

## **F. Institutional arrangements**

54. Several initiatives were undertaken to support institutional development by the Palestinian Authority and by United Nations entities. These included mainstreaming gender perspectives in cross-sectoral as well as sector-specific plans and programmes in agriculture, justice, culture and humanitarian assistance. Activities focused on capacity-building, awareness-raising and tracking the use of resources.

55. In March 2010, the Palestinian Cabinet endorsed the cross-sectoral national gender strategy within the framework of the Palestinian Development Plan for 2011-2013. The gender strategy, developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, focuses on the gaps and challenges in all sectors and proposes interventions through the collective action of various Palestinian Authority ministries, women's organizations and civil society organizations.

56. The United Nations Development Fund for Women assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development in elaborating the national gender strategy and action plan, as well as in developing national gender indicators related to the strategy's priority policy areas.

57. In the agricultural sector, UNIFEM with the cooperation of FAO assisted the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Agriculture to undertake a gender analysis of the agriculture sector strategy, within the framework of the Palestinian Development Plan. FAO continued to work actively with the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Women's Affairs to strengthen responses to the needs of women in agriculture, and involved stakeholders in the dissemination of good practices.

58. United Nations entities supported Palestinian authorities in strengthening capacity on gender mainstreaming. UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People facilitated a forum among Palestinian Authority ministries, United Nations entities and civil society organizations to discuss gender justice, the promotion of international conventions and instruments on gender equality, and relevant legislation applicable to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Ministries of Women's Affairs and of Labour participated in a training workshop organized by ESCWA on mainstreaming gender in the plans and programmes of the Ministry of Labour. The Ministry of Women's Affairs participated in an expert group meeting on the revision of guidelines to increase the effectiveness of national women's machineries in the ESCWA region.

59. In the area of culture, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, in coordination with programme partners of the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund programme on culture and development, organized a workshop on gender mainstreaming and culture to train staff members from several ministries on concepts related to culture and gender mainstreaming, and ways to use such concepts in the development of gender-sensitive cultural policies.

60. In order to track the use of resources to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs supported the roll-out of a gender marker — a tool that measures whether or not the design of a humanitarian project ensures and advances gender equality — in the 2011 consolidated appeals process. Through the process, all clusters of humanitarian response received specific guidance on how to mainstream gender equality within sectors. Preliminary data suggested that compared with the baseline of the 2010 consolidated appeals process, there was a significant increase in gender-responsive projects in the 2011 process. Under the leadership of UNSCO, several meetings were held with members of the donor community to ensure harmonization in development aid effectiveness and meeting commitments on gender equality. In that regard, United Nations entities in partnership with relevant line ministries took initiatives that would allow for tracking of internal and external resource allocations for gender equality priorities and women's needs at the local level.

61. Efforts were also under way to mainstream gender perspectives within the work of United Nations entities. The UNRWA gender action plan mainstreams gender into each of the agency's programme areas. In 2010, UNRWA developed a new approach to the development, design and location of community and public facilities in Gaza, incorporating gender dimensions.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

62. During the period under review, the overall humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained challenging. Despite improvements in education for women, there was little positive evidence of their social, economic and legal empowerment. The continued closures, checkpoints and roadblocks limited the access of Palestinian women and girls to health-care services, employment and other opportunities. The recent relaxation of movement restrictions should be continued.

63. Efforts continued at the national, regional and international levels to bring about a just and lasting negotiated agreement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including through direct negotiations. The tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) highlighted the need for more systematic efforts by all parties to ensure women's full participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives in the region, including in the permanent status negotiations.

64. United Nations entities should continue to provide assistance to women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and refugee camps, particularly in areas such as education, health and employment. Special efforts should be made to support the Palestinian Development Plan for 2011-2013, including its cross-sectoral national gender strategy. Enhanced efforts should be made to achieve

women's full participation in decision-making processes at all levels, including in the political and economic spheres.

65. In order to support women's and girls' economic and political empowerment and well-being, increased attention and continued support is needed to improve access to quality education and training that translate into employment opportunities. Strengthened efforts are needed to address stereotypical attitudes that have an impact upon educational and training choices, including through revisions of school curricula and textbooks, and through targeted efforts to combat harmful practices such as early marriage, which may contribute to girls dropping out of school.

66. When supporting employment for women, attention should be paid to ensure that assistance programmes and projects do not reinforce traditional gender divisions of labour, which limit job opportunities for both women and men. Concrete actions are required to increase the participation of Palestinian women, in particular young women, in the labour force. Assistance provided by United Nations entities should not only focus on expanding women's labour force participation into non-traditional sectors but also assist women in better seizing the full benefits and profits from their economic activities. The issue of women's economic empowerment needs to address engagement by women in the full range of activities involved in bringing a good or service to the final consumer, in order to enable them to reach beyond the local market to national and international markets. United Nations partners need to systematically address the bottlenecks preventing women's advancement in those areas, including women's lack of access to productive resources and opportunities; women's limited access to effective transportation of goods; and lack of capacity, resulting from limited education and training opportunities.

67. In order to facilitate the mobility of Palestinian women for personal or employment-related reasons, attention should also be given to increasing their access to safe and affordable means of transport, including public transport to semi-urban and rural areas. The public transportation system could be reviewed and analysed in order to ensure that schedules and connections are supportive of both women's and men's transport needs.

68. Food security continued to be a high priority. Access of women and men to employment often contributes to successful strategies to address food insecurity. Strong, comprehensive measures, including safety nets, employment and/or other income-generating activities are therefore needed to ensure that women have access to safe, adequate, nutritious and affordable food, and to increase the access to technologies, credit and markets by women smallholder farmers.

69. Enhanced efforts are needed to eliminate all forms of violence against Palestinian women and girls. In addition to establishing provisions for penalizing and punishing perpetrators, legal frameworks on violence against women should mandate support for victims and survivors, prevention measures and training for relevant officials. Ending impunity for violence against women requires awareness-raising, training for law enforcement officials and gender-sensitive procedures and processes. The Palestinian authorities and United Nations entities should collaborate to provide support and services for women and girl victims and survivors of violence. The legal framework needs to be harmonized with the provisions of the



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and measures for its effective implementation need to be implemented.

70. The Palestinian Authority and some United Nations entities have taken measures to mainstream gender perspectives into their work, including through gender-sensitive strategies and programmes. Further efforts are needed to fully integrate a gender perspective into all international assistance programmes through gender analysis, the collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of gender-responsive budgeting processes. Additional coordinated efforts are needed to assess the impact of assistance and the extent to which it addresses and matches women's needs. Member States, entities of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders should intensify their efforts to provide financial and technical assistance to benefit Palestinian women and girls and should systematically assess and report on the impact of those efforts.

71. Some progress has been made in recent years in addressing gender equality and the empowerment of women in United Nations studies and reports on the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Such publications should systematically focus specific attention on gender equality perspectives and incorporate information on the situation of women and girls, including in reports by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, as well as in other relevant reports of the Secretary-General.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report summarizes the situation of Palestinian women between 1 September 2010 and 30 September 2011, in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2011/18, and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2012/1.

## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 2011/18 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2011/6), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-sixth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 September 2010 to 30 September 2011 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations entities or individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA, the United Nations country team for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The United Nations country team has coordinated contributions to the report by the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/ Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

## **II. Situation of Palestinian women**

4. During the reporting period, little progress was made in the efforts to reach a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinians on all core issues which would end the conflict and the occupation that began in 1967. Progress was hampered by continuing low levels of confidence between the parties and in the political process. Direct peace talks began on 2 September 2010 but stalled the following month and have not resumed since. International efforts, in particular through the Middle East Quartet, have continued to encourage the parties to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct bilateral negotiations without preconditions, expecting them to come forward with comprehensive proposals on security and territory. The Secretary-General has called upon both parties to refrain from provocation and to work with the Quartet towards serious proposals on borders

and security in the context of a shared commitment to resume direct negotiations that would lead to an agreement on all final status issues.

5. Amid these developments, the Palestinian Authority continued its efforts to strengthen the State institutions of a future Palestinian State and resumed its efforts towards reuniting the West Bank and Gaza. However, little progress was accomplished in implementing the reconciliation accord of 4 May 2011 between the Palestinian factions, and the internal Palestinian divide continued to restrict the ability of the Palestinian Authority to extend its State-building work to Gaza (see A/66/80-E/2011/111, para. 10).

6. At the beginning of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, in 2011 the Palestinian leadership applied for full membership in the United Nations and called upon Member States to recognize a Palestinian State within the 1967 borderlines. The Government of Israel expressed its strong opposition to such Palestinian action (see A/66/367-S/2011/585, para. 13). At the time of the drafting of the present report, the Palestinian application for United Nations membership was before the Security Council. While women have played important roles in promoting peace in the region, few women have been directly involved in the negotiations since the start of the conflict and have also largely remained absent from official discussions on statehood and related actions in the United Nations.<sup>1</sup>

7. On the ground, the overall socio-economic, political and humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained challenging and continued to adversely affect the situation of Palestinian women. In Gaza, Israel's June 2010 policy decision to ease the closure and further measures taken since brought some limited relief to the population. However, owing to the pivotal nature of the remaining restrictions and the magnitude of the existing challenges, overall, these measures remained ineffective in achieving a genuine improvement in the humanitarian situation.<sup>2</sup> The population of the Gaza Strip remained severely affected by sporadic upsurges of violent conflict between armed Palestinian militants and the Israel Defense Forces, in addition to the continuing closures that penetrate every aspect of socio-economic life. It is estimated that approximately 20,000 girls and boys remain displaced in the aftermath of the 2009 military operation on Gaza, while 80 per cent of households have at least one member suffering from psychosocial symptoms.<sup>1</sup> The West Bank continues to face a protracted crisis resulting from the ongoing confiscation and annexation of Palestinian land, settlement construction, demolitions of houses and livelihood structures, forced evictions, the revocation of residency rights and obstructed access to land, markets and essential services.<sup>1</sup>

8. During the reporting period, there was an increase in settlement construction, house demolition and evictions of Palestinian families. A total of 544 structures in Area C of the West Bank and East Jerusalem were demolished, marking a significant increase from the previous year. Among the structures demolished were 180 residences, resulting in over 980 people displaced, including approximately 525 children. Overall a total of 14,636 people have been affected by the demolitions. Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in some 70 per cent of

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<sup>1</sup> Contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Special Focus: Easing the Blockade: Assessing the Humanitarian Impact on the Population of the Gaza Strip* (March 2011).

Area C, in areas that have been confiscated for use by Israeli settlements or the Israel Defense Forces. In the remaining 30 per cent of Area C where Palestinian construction is not prohibited, there are a range of other restrictions that greatly reduce the possibility of obtaining a building permit. As a result, Palestinians needing to build in Area C are often left with no other choice than to build without a permit and risk the demolition of their structures.<sup>3</sup>

9. Palestinian women continued to be victims of violence resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Reports indicate that there was an increase in the indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other munitions on Israel by Hamas and other militant groups as well as in the frequency of Israeli strikes in Gaza, resulting in civilian deaths and injuries (see A/66/80-E/2011/111, para. 13). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Israeli forces killed three Palestinian women, two in the Gaza Strip and another in the West Bank, and injured 151 others, including 17 in the Gaza Strip and 134 in the West Bank, where there were also 23 women injured by Israeli settlers. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, women sustained injuries, mainly during weekly demonstrations against actions by the Israeli military, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in East Jerusalem and in search-and-arrest operations.<sup>1</sup> This marks an increase in casualties and injuries of women compared to last year during which one Palestinian woman was killed in Gaza (none in the West Bank) and another 86 were injured by Israeli forces and 13 others were injured by Israeli settlers.<sup>4</sup>

10. In the Gaza Strip, OHCHR received information on the increasing intervention by the de facto authorities in the restriction of civil rights and freedoms, including the right to peaceful assembly, and further restrictions on the access to leisure places, including the closure of some of them, under the pretext of mixing of the sexes and non-compliance with the Islamic customs. On 15 and 16 March 2011, two demonstrations in favour of national unity took place in Gaza City. De facto security forces forcibly dispersed the demonstrations, reportedly beating the participants. Over 50 women were beaten by the security forces, including 8 girls, who were briefly detained, beaten with sticks and verbally insulted by approximately 10 security personnel in civilian clothes and police uniforms.<sup>5</sup>

11. As of May 2011, there were still 29 Palestinian women<sup>6</sup> held in detention and prison by the Government of Israel outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory in violation of international humanitarian law obligations. The overall living conditions of Palestinian women in Israeli prisons were reported as unchanged. The conditions in penal institutions in which women were detained, including the poor quality of food, limited fresh air and sunlight, dirty overcrowded cells, were said to contribute to the weakening of the physical and psychological condition of women. Released women prisoners continue to face reintegration problems.<sup>1</sup>

12. Poverty, unemployment and food insecurity rates have remained high. In Gaza, the unemployment rates were at 47.8 per cent for women and 36.2 per cent for

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., *Special Focus: Displacement and insecurity in Area C of the West Bank* (August 2011).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Protection of Civilians: Casualties Database, 1 September 2010-1 August 2011.

<sup>5</sup> OHCHR closely monitored the demonstration.

<sup>6</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Monthly Humanitarian Monitor* (June 2011).

men.<sup>7</sup> In the period from November 2010 to April 2011, export volumes reached only 5 per cent of the pre-June 2007 levels and no exports have been transferred out of Gaza since May 2011.<sup>8</sup> The exhaustion of commercial opportunities and subsequent devastation of the Gazan economy has meant that many households have lost their incomes, and it is estimated that 38 per cent of Gazans are living in poverty and that 75 per cent of Gazan households are dependent on humanitarian assistance.<sup>9</sup> In the West Bank, the total poverty rate is 18 per cent, of which 9 per cent are considered deeply poor.<sup>10</sup> There is a decrease in real wages by 6.4 per cent, comparing the first half of 2009 to the first half of 2010,<sup>11</sup> while the purchasing power decreased, as the inflation rate increased by 2.98 per cent between the average prices of July 2010 versus July 2011.<sup>12</sup>

13. Even if there was a slight improvement in overall food security, 2010 estimates show that 36 per cent of female-headed households and 33 per cent of male-headed households in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were food insecure. Most of these are chronically food insecure. In the Gaza Strip, the prevalence of food insecurity among both female- and male-headed households was higher, at 48 and 52 per cent, respectively. However, in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, households with a higher number of female adult members are more likely to be food insecure, owing to limited access to job opportunities and lower salaries for women. Overall, female-headed households typically have a lower food consumption score, with 38 per cent having a poor or borderline dietary intake compared to 28 per cent among male-headed households.<sup>13</sup>

14. A significant number of Palestinian women were outside of the formal labour force, engaged in unpaid domestic work, or were working within the informal sector. It is estimated that 38.3 per cent of women working in the informal sector in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are unpaid family members, compared to 9.2 per cent of men.<sup>14</sup> Recent research by UN-Women on the Gaza Strip shows that women

<sup>7</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour Force Survey, 2011", Ramallah, 2011, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>8</sup> WFP, *World Food Programme, Occupied Palestinian Territory Situation Report*, May-June 2011, available from [www.ldf.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT\\_ID=4251](http://www.ldf.ps/documentsShow.aspx?ATT_ID=4251).

<sup>9</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Fact sheet, humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip (July 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Poverty and living conditions in the Palestinian Territory, 2009-2010", Ramallah, 2010, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>11</sup> UNRWA, "West Bank labour market: a briefing on the first-half 2010".

<sup>12</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Monthly consumer price index numbers by major groups for the months of January-December 2010 and per cent changes from January-December 2009", available from [www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/cpi/dd634faf-669e-448b-a96a-3a64cb824f9a.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/cpi/dd634faf-669e-448b-a96a-3a64cb824f9a.htm); and "Monthly consumer price index numbers by major groups of expenditure for the months of January-July 2011 and per cent changes from December 2010", available from [www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/cpi/9013200f-427b-464c-a3fe-462ae224a527.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/cpi/9013200f-427b-464c-a3fe-462ae224a527.htm), cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>13</sup> FAO, WFP and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "2010 Socio-economic and food security survey, West Bank and Gaza Strip, Occupied Palestinian Territory" (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Informal sector and informal employment survey, October-December 2008: main findings", Ramallah, 2011, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

play critical roles in securing their households' livelihoods after a decline in income of the male breadwinner. However, the economic burden of the protracted crisis tends to impoverish women even more. Women's contributions to sustain the family's livelihood, such as heavy work on the family's agricultural holdings and liquidating personal assets, such as gold or inherited land, have not strengthened women's status in the community, but have contributed instead to their marginalization.<sup>15</sup> Women's entrepreneurship continues to be constrained by the lack of access to local and international markets. Rural women, especially younger women, of which many live in Area C, face a number of obstacles owing to their isolation and lack of mobility.<sup>16</sup> According to FAO, in 2010, the work of an estimated 40 per cent of rural Palestinian women of working age (15-64 years) was unpaid and unaccounted for in national accounts.<sup>17</sup>

15. Women's health remains another area of concern. The persistence of disease and illness is exacerbated, both directly and indirectly, by persistent obstacles to Palestinian movement, including checkpoints and access to health and other services, such as water and sanitation. The impact of the occupation and the overall insecure situation have contributed to psychological trauma and increased stress among women, men and children. The poor quality of water continues to cause problems of parasites, diarrhoea and skin diseases and it is estimated that over 90 per cent of water in Gaza is unfit for human consumption owing to increased levels of chlorides and nitrates.<sup>18</sup> In the West Bank, over 113 communities, including more than 150,000 women, are not connected to water networks, while those that are connected face frequent severe water shortages owing to depleted springs and wells.<sup>1</sup> In Gaza, hospitals and clinics continue to be affected by severe shortages in medical supplies, power cuts, delays in shipments, overcrowding and insufficient doctor-patient time.<sup>1</sup>

16. Few official health statistics are sex-disaggregated and most are limited to basic morbidity and mortality figures, reproductive health indicators and cancer statistics. According to WHO, chronic diseases such as cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases and cancer, with only slight differences between males and females, were the main causes of death, with breast cancer being the leading cause of cancer morbidity among women. Fertility rates in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in particular in the Gaza Strip, remain high, resulting in the need and demand for related health-care services. Micronutrient deficiencies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continue to be a major concern, with high rates of anaemia among pregnant women and children. Results of the 2010 Family Survey indicated that more than one quarter of pregnant women were anaemic (26.7 per cent of pregnant women aged 15-49: 39.1 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 15.4 per cent in the West Bank).<sup>19</sup> Access to proper and timely health care can enhance early detection and treatment of disease and improve mother and child health. For example, the

<sup>15</sup> UN-Women, "Who answers to Gazan women? An economic security and rights research" (2011).

<sup>16</sup> Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

<sup>17</sup> FAO, *Palestinian Women's Associations and Agricultural Value Chains, Rural Employment, Case Studies Series # 2* (Rome, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA, "Promoting long and healthy lives in Gaza" (2011), available from [www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011031723858.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2011031723858.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Family Survey", Ramallah, 2010, cited in the contribution of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

identified causes of maternal and infant deaths suggest that many of them could have been prevented by more effective antenatal, childbirth and early postnatal health care.<sup>20</sup>

17. Although the overall quality of education available to women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remains variable, access to and participation in education by women and girls has continued to increase. At present, the Occupied Palestinian Territory ranks in the medium range (76 out of 128) of the Education for all Development Index.<sup>21</sup> During the 2010/11 academic year, girls represented 51 per cent of the total student population. In the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, 31,352 girls (58.2 per cent) and 105,015 girls (48 per cent), respectively were enrolled in UNRWA elementary and preparatory education. However, many challenges remain. In the Gaza Strip, the limited reconstruction of schools damaged in 2009 continues to prevent thousands of boys and girls from accessing basic education. According to UNICEF, overcrowded schools operate on a double-shift basis, stretching their capacity to its limits. The number of adolescents (both boys and girls) falling below their grade level and dropping out of school is on the rise, and only 75 per cent of students continue into secondary school.<sup>1</sup>

18. In Area C, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 18 schools had outstanding demolition orders in August 2011, as a result of the lack of building permits.<sup>22</sup> Access to education is further hampered by Israeli settler violence as well as by restrictions on Palestinian access and movement. An additional factor for remote communities is the high cost of transport to educational facilities. Some families living in isolated locations pay up to NIS 100 per child per month on school transport. Families with several children of schooling age are often forced to choose only one or two, frequently boys, to complete their education, while the others are withdrawn from the system after the primary years. Such factors have led to high dropout rates, particularly among girls.<sup>3</sup> In East Jerusalem, a shortage of over 1,000 classrooms leaves approximately 12,000 children out of the education system. According to UNICEF, many schools in the West Bank suffer from water shortages and lack separate or suitable toilets for girls and boys, a situation that is usually affecting school attendance for girls, especially in secondary school. Progress made with regard to girls' and women's access to and participation in education has not necessarily translated into decent employment opportunities for women. For those with higher education, women's unemployment is significantly higher than men's. In 2011, 39.2 per cent of women with 13 or more years of education were unemployed, compared to 13.1 per cent for men.<sup>23</sup>

19. Although women have played numerous roles within the Palestinian political system and served in key decision-making positions, their formal participation and representation in decision-making, including in governance and legislative bodies, has overall been limited. In the current Government, women represent 20 per cent of

<sup>20</sup> WHO, Health conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan, report by the Secretariat (A/64/27) of 16 May 2011.

<sup>21</sup> UNESCO, *Education For All Global Monitoring Report: The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Humanitarian Fact Sheet on Area C of the West Bank*, July 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour Force Survey, April-June 2011", Ramallah, 2011. Press release available from [www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/LabourForce\\_q2e.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/LabourForce_q2e.pdf).



the ministers and 6 per cent of the deputy ministers and they account for 12.9 per cent of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Within all ministries, women comprise 30.6 per cent of the staff. In the ministries of women's affairs and of social affairs, women are the majority, comprising 68.1 per cent and 56 per cent of all staff, respectively. Additionally, women account for 11 per cent of all judges, 12 per cent of all prosecutors, and 11 per cent of all lawyers.<sup>24</sup> In 2010, the first Palestinian woman governor was appointed to serve as Governor of the Ramallah and al-Bireh Governorate. Despite many shared concerns and priorities, the political situation and the split between political factions has contributed to divisions among women and made coordination more challenging, including in terms of formulating common positions by women's groups from the West Bank and Gaza in issues related to the State-building process. On the ground, however, women's organizations have continued to support women and girls from all walks of life, including by providing direct services and empowering women through livelihoods projects; serving as charitable organizations, providing training to the police and security forces to be more sensitive to survivors of violence; and undertaking research and advocating for women's rights and legal reform.<sup>16</sup>

20. The disadvantaged situation of Palestinian women has been exacerbated by weak rule of law and gender-based discrimination that remains embedded in legislation, regulations and policies. The situation is further complicated by the existence of two legal systems in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and the lack of access to legal protection for Palestinian women in East Jerusalem. In addition, the prevailing gender stereotypes and norms continue to limit women's freedom of movement, access to employment, health care and education and the exercise of other human rights.<sup>1</sup>

21. High levels of poverty, unemployment and related frustration have contributed to an increase in tension, and ultimately violence, within families. According to data collected by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the level of domestic violence against women and girls in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is high.<sup>25</sup> At present, there is no specific law on domestic violence in place, and there continues to be a critical lack of systems capable of preventing violence, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators. In addition, the fear of stigma, social exclusion and retribution, including in the form of more harm, risk of divorce and separation from children, prevent many women from speaking out about abuse.<sup>1</sup>

22. Some positive steps have been taken. On 11 January 2011, the Palestinian Cabinet endorsed the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019). The strategy, which includes inputs from a range of sources, including women's organizations, civil society, community organizations, the private sector, ministries and women refugees, takes a cross-sector approach, recognizing violence against women as a development issue affecting the social, economic and political systems of Palestinian society. Efforts have also been made to address crimes against women committed under the guise of so-called "family honour", which still continue to occur. On 15 May 2011, in response to one such case in the Hebron area,

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<sup>24</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Women and men in Palestine, 2010" (2011). Ramallah cited in the contribution by the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

<sup>25</sup> Contributions of ESCWA and of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory to the present report.

the Palestinian Authority President signed a presidential decree removing provisions within the Penal Code that provided for leniency with regard to murder in the name of “family honour”, which will come into effect once it is published in the Palestinian Official Gazette.<sup>1</sup>

23. The Palestinian Cabinet, together with the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, tasked the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to develop a cross-sectoral national gender strategy for the period 2011-2013, with the purpose of placing gender equality and women’s empowerment at the core of the 2011-2013 Palestinian National Plan. The three-year Strategy,<sup>26</sup> which was endorsed by the Council of Ministers in January 2011, highlights multiple challenges Palestinian women face and serves as a reference for developing gender-responsive policies that would positively influence the socio-economic and political conditions of both women and men.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

24. The political and socio-economic insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continues to have a severe humanitarian impact. Despite some recent macroeconomic improvements, the humanitarian, economic and development needs remain significant. The needs and related priorities, including of women and girls, are reflected in several documents, including the Consolidated Appeals Process for 2011, which set out a strategy budgeted at \$575 million, the UNRWA medium-term strategy for 2010-2011, which was estimated at \$675 million, excluding emergency relief interventions, and the Palestinian National Development Plan 2011-2013, which outlined priority development needs worth \$4.161 billion (see A/66/80-E/2011/111, para. 3). The inclusion of a gender marker in the Consolidated Appeals Process for 2011 and the deployment of an Inter-Agency Standing Committee Gender Standby Capacity Adviser during its development period resulted in significantly higher levels of information related to gender equality in project documents than in the Consolidated Appeals Process for 2010.<sup>1</sup>

25. The present section provides information on efforts made by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the needs and priorities of women and girls. It provides information on assistance provided in six key areas: education and training, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods, rule of law and violence against women, power and decision-making and institutional development.

#### **A. Education and training**

26. United Nations entities continued to implement a wide range of initiatives to improve the access of women and girls to quality education and training. These actions include the provision of free basic education, transportation to and from school, scholarships, vocational and literacy training, as well as measures to support a better transition from education and training to women’s economic empowerment and job opportunities. In the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, Palestinian girls

<sup>26</sup> Available from [www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/UN-Women-oPt-Booklet-Palestinian-Gender-Strategy-2011-en.pdf](http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/UN-Women-oPt-Booklet-Palestinian-Gender-Strategy-2011-en.pdf).

continued to benefit from basic education provided free of charge by UNRWA with strong achievements in terms of gender parity and girls' performance. A total of 24 female students benefited from UNRWA-administered scholarships for universities in the West Bank and 755 female students benefited from technical and vocational training at the Ramallah Women's Training Centre. The UNRWA Gender Initiative provided adult literacy training in Arabic and English to 7,925 women and information technology training to 1,773 women in the Gaza Strip. It also provided mobile literacy support to reach women living in remote areas. Increased efforts were taken to provide graduates of the Gender Initiative with the necessary skills and experience to enter the job market. In the Gaza Strip, the UNRWA relief and social services programme offered work experience and skills training to 1,092 women through women's programme centres, where vocational trainings in areas such as sewing, hairdressing, handicrafts, and information technology literacy were taught.

27. UNICEF increased learning opportunities for at least 100 girls in remote communities in Area C through the rehabilitation of school classrooms. In addition, UNICEF offered after-school learning and recreational activities in adolescent-friendly centres to 6,000 adolescent girls in marginalized areas in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. OHCHR, together with UNICEF, the Education and Protection clusters and with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education worked to improve girls' access to education by providing school transportation for isolated Bedouin communities in the Bethlehem and Hebron governorates, thus reducing the dropout rate and allowing the safe access of female students to education.

## **B. Health**

28. The United Nations system continued to provide a wide range of health services to Palestinian women and girls. In its effort to increase access to health care across the West Bank, UNRWA established five mobile clinics, which provided regular preventative and curative health care for 13,000 Palestinian patients facing restrictions on their mobility, 66 per cent of whom were women and children. UNFPA continued to support two multi-purpose women's health centres providing a holistic range of services, including clinical services, legal advice, counselling services on gender-based violence, psychosocial support, physiotherapy, gymnastics, and health education to 20,000 female beneficiaries living in heavily populated and underprivileged areas in Gaza (Jabalia, Bureij) and the West Bank (Hebron).

29. UNRWA, WHO and UNICEF implemented various measures aiming at improving maternal and child health. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided antenatal care to 7,893 pregnant women, post-natal care to 5,593 women and family planning services to 23,731 women during the first two quarters of 2011. In the same period 9,453 women were referred to hospitals where they received advanced treatment. In the Gaza Strip, the number of pregnant women receiving antenatal care reached 24,750 and all 8,187 deliveries over the first half of 2011 received post-natal care. Pregnant women and nursing mothers living in isolated rural communities in the Gaza Strip, including Bedouins, benefited from home medical visits provided by UNRWA. Following the expansion of a WHO project to ensure quality maternal and newborn health in the six hospitals in the Gaza Strip, the rate of early discharge for

mothers was reduced, thereby improving post-natal care and reducing risk to women and newborn babies. Additionally, WHO has begun piloting a programme to increase the midwifery capacity among health-care professionals. To address rising micronutrient deficiencies among women and children, UNICEF launched the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative to promote infant feeding practices among mothers. Additionally, UNICEF is supporting a national micronutrient survey to accurately monitor the micronutritional status of women and children.

30. A range of psychosocial services were also provided. For example, from October 2010 to June 2011, a total of 29,281 beneficiaries, of whom 62 per cent were female and 37 per cent below the age of 18, received counselling through the UNRWA community mental health programme. Over that same period, 86,937 refugees, of whom 58 per cent were female and 50 per cent were below the age of 18, benefited from community-based group activities and awareness sessions in the area of mental health. In December 2010, WHO held a workshop on the topic “Child and maternal mental health in the Gaza Strip”, which brought together local academics and mental health professionals to address ways of integrating mental health into existing services, with a particular focus on the impact of military attacks on the mental health of women and children. Each month, approximately 2,000 girls and 1,000 mothers benefited from protection and psychosocial services in 20 family centres supported by UNICEF across the Gaza Strip, aimed at strengthening their coping skills. In addition, group and individual counselling benefited hundreds of children and their caregivers in affected communities in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

31. UNICEF provided approximately 28,000 girls in 40 primary schools in the Gaza Strip with improved access to safe drinking water through water tankers. The rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities in 27 schools is expected to improve access to safe water and sanitation for roughly 14,000 girls and 550 female teachers. The continued rehabilitation of water networks in the south of the West Bank resulted in 3,000 women and girls and their families having access to safe drinking water through water networks for the first time.

32. Within the framework of a five-year HIV joint programme implemented in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN-Women presented the research on the topic “Exploring dynamics and vulnerabilities of HIV transmission among sex workers in the Palestinian context” at the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on AIDS, held in New York in June 2011.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

33. Socio-economic indicators confirm the continuing need to invest in economic empowerment, livelihood and food security. Assistance by United Nations entities in this area includes different forms of financial assistance, capacity-building, emergency job creation as well as direct food assistance. Female-headed households continued to be a specific target group for many entities.

34. UNRWA remains one of the main employers of women, particularly in the extremely limited labour market of the Gaza Strip. In addition, UNRWA offers women short-term employment opportunities through its emergency job-creation programme. Between 1 September 2010 and 31 July 2011, a total of 17,424 women in the West Bank received work through the programme. Tools, materials and

equipment, such as sewing machines, fabrics and thread for the production of embroidery items were provided to participating women's centres all over the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, as of mid-August 2011, women held 6,840 out of a total of 24,317 positions created through the programme. Through the "women-run school canteens" project, funded by Norway and in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, UN-Women has been able to continue to provide women's centres with a sustainable income. By preparing the meals for the school canteens, 26 women's centres have become financially independent, are providing an income for the women working with them and are also providing healthy meals to the schoolchildren.

35. To provide short-term poverty alleviation, UNRWA continued its efforts to offer relief to special hardship cases in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, including through cash assistance. A high number of the beneficiaries were female. In addition, UNRWA provided emergency cash assistance for shelter repair to female-headed households in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. UNRWA also implemented various measures to support longer-term livelihood strategies, including through the provision of financial services. From 1 September 2010 to 31 July 2011, 14 per cent of the loans in the West Bank were given to women clients. During the same period in Gaza, UNRWA disbursed a total of 1,071 business loans to female beneficiaries, amounting to \$1,379,700 and a total of 167 non-business loans valued at \$574,100 to support the housing and consumer needs of female-headed households. With a special emphasis on women-headed households, UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People strengthened activities under the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme, which works to improve the living conditions and economically empower the most deprived Palestinian families, through accessing a package of financial and non-financial services. It is estimated that 1,400 women benefit from the 35 per cent of projects run by women under the Programme.

36. ILO, UNDP, UNESCO and UN-Women provided various forms of capacity-building, technical and other support to promote the economic empowerment of women. ILO, in cooperation with the Union of Cooperative Associations for Savings and Credit, provided members of 40 women-only cooperatives across the West Bank with grants, training and technical assistance. ILO also piloted a capacity-building programme targeting over 200 Palestinian women microentrepreneurs to introduce and showcase the ILO Gender and Entrepreneurship Together (GET Ahead) training methodology. In addition to enhancing employment opportunities for women, this ILO initiative served the broader purpose of building the capacities of business development service institutions to provide gender-responsive services. Through the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, run by the Millennium Development Goals Fund, UNESCO, UNDP and UN-Women have supported initiatives such as the community-based production and marketing of arts and crafts by women artisans and women's involvement in ecotourism.

37. FAO has continued its work to improve food and economic security through projects targeting female-headed households. Activities include home gardens, livestock units, aquaculture, food processing, marketing, improving water management and support to women associations. Approximately one third of FAO beneficiaries in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are women. Women and food-insecure female-headed households are a primary target group of the FAO three-year

Plan of Action (2011-2013) for the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Female-headed households are also an explicit target group for WFP in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip and are prioritized throughout all food distribution programmes. Some 35,651 women had a ration card from WFP in the reporting period. In most cases, they are also targeted by complementary interventions such as cash assistance. Food assistance provided by UNRWA reached 10,244 female-headed households in the West Bank and 7,650 in the Gaza Strip.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

38. During the reporting period, United Nations entities continued to promote women's access to justice and implement a range of measures to address violence against women. Through its Rule of Law and Access to Justice Programme, UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People supported civil society organizations providing Palestinian women with legal aid and assistance, including in divorce cases, and, in conjunction with the Palestinian Bar Association, supported the establishment of a network of female lawyers. Additionally, women going through divorce benefited from a financial assistance programme administered through the Palestinian Maintenance Fund. UNRWA provided legal advice and support to 3,341 women through legal advice bureaux based in women's programme centres. A range of awareness-raising classes on cultural, health and social issues were also provided at these centres. OHCHR undertook many activities to promote women's rights in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including public information and awareness-raising activities and training on relevant standards of international human rights law and international human rights procedures for staff of women's rights organizations.

39. The United Nations Office for Projects Services designed and constructed a gender-sensitive prison and detention facility in the West Bank, allowing female inmates full movement and use of facilities, while providing privacy and separation from male prisoners. This marked significant progress in the care and rehabilitation of female inmates in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UN-Women provided a full support package of regular weekly social, psychological and legal assistance to women inmates in the three Palestinian reform and rehabilitation centres, which included primary need goods to female inmates with newborn babies. In conjunction with the Independent Commission for Human Rights, UN-Women helped to ensure the reporting of violations against female inmates, improved monitoring of inmate conditions and the filing of complaints or requests for actions to the relevant authorities.

40. On behalf of several donors and the Ministry of the Interior, the United Nations Office for Projects Services also implemented the expansion of a police training centre in the West Bank, which has resulted in a comprehensive and modern training facility for almost 600 cadets, including both male and female students. Special consideration has been given to the gender perspective in all new buildings, with a particular emphasis on dormitory buildings, the learning centre and the gymnasium to ensure the equal participation and education of female cadets.

41. Various entities, including OHCHR, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNRWA and UN-Women, continued to implement various initiatives to raise awareness and enhance capacity among practitioners to prevent and respond to violence against

women. UNFPA developed guidance and provided training to social workers and health-care providers on ways of responding to the needs of victims of violence and implemented awareness-raising initiatives targeted at groups such as rural women and religious leaders. UNRWA organized capacity-building workshops for their health-care staff to help them to identify and address cases of domestic violence in their health centres. Capacity-building workshops on the prevention of domestic violence were also held for community members in refugee camps and for community-based organizations. UN-Women supported a public awareness campaign that included daily radio features, and awareness-raising workshops reaching 2,051 people in the Gaza Strip. Within the framework of the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence” global campaign, United Nations entities supported the organization of festivals to combat violence against women in Ramallah and in the Gaza Strip, attracting more than 600 and 700 people, respectively.

42. A range of initiatives aimed to increase the access to services for women and girls survivors of violence. For example, acting under the umbrella of the Ministry of Social Affairs, UN-Women continued to support the Mehwar Centre in Bethlehem, the first multiservice centre providing shelter, psychosocial counselling, health, legal aid and empowerment opportunities. Building on this experience, a new multi-purpose centre — the Hayat Centre — was established in the Gaza Strip. UN-Women also continued to support the Sawa Helpline for survivors of violence against women. UNRWA established family and child protection committees in nine refugee camps in the West Bank to bring community representatives, leaders and organizations together with the UNRWA health, education and social services departments to lead the implementation of a comprehensive multisectoral approach to combating violence against women. Efforts are also under way to develop referral systems for women victims of violence. UNRWA established five one-stop centres providing health services, legal advice and psychosocial counselling to survivors of violence and UNRWA frontline staff are being trained to refer and counsel survivors of violence. UNFPA continued to support three community-based coalitions that provide psychosocial counselling and help in establishing various community-based initiatives focusing on women’s empowerment.

43. A number of entities provided institutional support to efforts to address violence against women, including domestic violence. This included support by UN-Women to the development of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) and support by UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and UNFPA to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to implement the 2011 Palestinian Domestic Violence Survey, which will provide key baseline information for policy, planning and tracking of progress in addressing domestic violence. UNESCO organized a series of training workshops for approximately 400 women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including parliamentarians, on analysing data and statistics on violence against women, which resulted in the development of an action plan by participants linked to the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019). ILO contracted the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and the Birzeit University Institute of Women’s Studies to jointly conduct a study on the gender dimensions of violence in the world of work.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

44. A number of United Nations entities implemented activities such as workshops, trainings and awareness-raising initiatives to promote women's participation in decision-making and leadership. UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People organized a two-day workshop in July 2011 to support dialogue on the kind of State that would best deliver to women, which linked together women from all over the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The aim of the workshop was to give Palestinian women a space to voice their concerns and opinions on a future Palestinian State, to learn from experiences of women in State-building efforts in other transitional societies, and to propose approaches that women could take in the coming months to ensure that their opinions are reflected in public debates. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP provided training in leadership, empowerment and entrepreneurship to 52 women leaders of the administrative committees of community-based organizations. UN-Women, in partnership with the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, organized awareness-raising activities on women's political participation and leadership for 1,136 participants representing a cross-section of civil society groups.

## **F. Institutional development**

45. A number of United Nations entities, including ILO, FAO, UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNESCO, UNFPA and UN-Women have continued to support various ministries, such as the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Agriculture, Social Affairs, Labour, Culture and Youth and Sports, to mainstream gender perspectives into their areas of work and improve the monitoring of progress in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, including through sector-specific technical support, the secondment of gender equality experts in ministries and efforts to improve capacities for gender-based analysis and data collection. As part of the roll out of the implementation of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for 2011-2013, UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the organization of its first ever international donor meeting with the aim of seeking support for the implementation of the three-year strategy.

46. ILO organized rounds of training and extensive participatory gender audits, after which the creation of a national audit team was announced by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The team will continue to work through action plans, developed in consultation between ILO and its tripartite constituents, thereby effectively addressing the gender gaps detected in the audits.

47. ILO also assisted in the establishment of a national women's employment committee. The committee, which was endorsed by the Minister of Labour on 24 March 2011, will assist the Ministry of Labour and social partners in implementing specific measures to promote women's employment and their protection in the workplace. In July 2011, ILO met with the Minister of Labour to follow up on a study entitled "Review of labour laws to promote women's labour force: a legal analysis and recommendations for promoting gender equality", conducted in 2010 in consultation with the Ministry of Labour and the national women's employment committee. The study puts forward suggestions for future revisions of the Palestinian Labour Law.



48. Both UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People and UNFPA supported enhanced attention to gender equality and youth priorities and the engagement of young women in decision-making. UNDP/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People worked closely with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and local civil society organizations to support the drafting of the Palestinian Youth Sector Strategy 2011-2013 Document, including by ensuring the active participation of young women and men from the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip in the process.

49. The UNESCO Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre provided training to women leaders of organizations in developing indicators to measure organizational effectiveness and supported the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Culture in the development of gender-sensitive indicators. In addition, 21 participants from the gender units of different ministries were provided training in gender issues as well as management, planning, advocacy, monitoring and evaluation.

50. Initiatives targeted at the United Nations system were also implemented. For example, the UNRWA Gaza Women's Committee has provided services and training to women employees to improve their day-to-day work life and assist them in exploring future opportunities to develop themselves professionally. UN-Women continued to provide technical assistance and gender training to other United Nations entities working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on ways to mainstream gender equality perspectives at all stages of programming and policy formation.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

**51. The overall political, humanitarian, security and socio-economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained challenging. The stalled peace process, escalation in tensions between the parties, increased settlement activity, the internal Palestinian divide and continued outbreaks of violence are causes of serious concern. Improving the situation of Palestinian women remains closely linked to efforts to find lasting peace. It is critical to ensure Palestinian women's full and equal participation in conflict-resolution and mediation efforts as well as in the statehood dialogue, so that they, along with men, shape the future direction of their society in accordance with the global commitments set out in instruments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010).**

**52. During the reporting period, United Nations entities continued to assist Palestinian women and girls in a multitude of ways, including by providing education and health, improving access to safe water, creating employment opportunities, including emergency employment, supporting their longer-term livelihood and economic empowerment through financial and other measures, such as training and capacity-building, and by improving food security. Female-headed households continued to be a main target group for many entities. The United Nations system has also assisted in efforts to strengthen institutional and policy development and the rule of law and, in particular, to improve the prevention and response to violence against women. Access to basic**

services, however, is still inadequate for all Palestinians, in particular women and girls, and high levels of unemployment, poverty and insecurity persist. Continued support and increased investment across all these areas remain a critical need.

53. Over the past year, important achievements have been made in policy development. The launch of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for 2011-2013 and the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) and the initial steps taken to implement them are encouraging. These strategies serve as important tools to address the urgent needs and priorities of women and girls, to tackle gender-based discrimination in law and in practice, to prevent all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, and to protect women and girls from such violence. Promising work was also undertaken to bring more attention to gender equality issues in the development of the 2011-2013 Palestinian Youth Sector Strategy Document and in discussions regarding revisions of the Palestinian Labour Law. The effective implementation of these strategies requires sustained political commitment, technical support and financial resources.

54. Socio-economic indicators reveal that there is a serious need to continue to invest in women's economic empowerment, livelihood and food security. Women's economic empowerment is a necessity for women's political empowerment but also for the overall development and growth of the Palestinian economy and society. The Palestinian Authority, United Nations entities and other stakeholders should continue to develop and implement measures in support of women's access to and control over resources, training and the creation of employment opportunities for women.

55. Enhanced efforts should be taken to systematically incorporate information on the situation of women and girls in studies, reports and briefings by the United Nations system and by independent experts related to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and this information should also be brought to the attention of the relevant intergovernmental bodies. It is also essential to continue efforts to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to incorporate gender equality perspectives into the planning and implementation of assistance programmes to ensure that the different needs, priorities, capacities and contributions of women, men, boys and girls are fully recognized and addressed and the entities continue to provide targeted assistance to women and girls.



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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2012/25, highlights the situation of Palestinian women between 1 October 2011 and 30 September 2012 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution 2012/25 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2012/6) and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-seventh session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA, the United Nations country team for the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. The United Nations country team has coordinated the contributions to the report of the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

## **II. Situation of Palestinian women**

4. During the reporting period, the political, social and economic conditions on the ground remained challenging. While these conditions have an impact on all Palestinians, women and girls experience them differently because of gender-based inequalities and discrimination. Despite efforts by the United Nations, the Quartet and individual Member States to provide facilitation and some initial diplomatic progress in early 2012, peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians remained at an impasse, with confidence in the political process eroding. The continuation of the political and geographical divide between the Gaza Strip and the

West Bank and limited progress in reconciliation, ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and closure of the Gaza Strip, continued to give rise to a difficult social and economic situation for Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At the same time, the Palestinians' State-building programme progressed further, increasing both the depth and the breadth of institutional readiness for Statehood. The sustainability of these achievements, however, whether in the economic or the security fields, is at increased risk. The growing tension and escalation in violence are of grave concern. The United Nations and Quartet partners have, as outlined in recent reports by the Secretary-General, continuously urged both sides to avoid provocations which would be detrimental to the prospects of peace (see A/67/84-E/2012/68 and A/67/364-S/2012/701).

5. Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory continue to face serious obstacles to freedom of movement and access. Inadequate zoning and planning on the part of Israeli authorities, residency policies and practices,<sup>1</sup> expropriations of buildings and allocation of land, the barrier, checkpoints, the permit and access regime, and bureaucratic constraints constitute a multifaceted system which impeded movement into the Gaza Strip, between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, within the West Bank, and into East Jerusalem from the remainder of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The barrier and the restrictions have a gender-specific impact and continue to present particular risks for expectant mothers, such as lack of access to specialized maternal care for high-risk births. The restrictions have a significant impact on overall economic development and on the capacity of local and international organizations to provide humanitarian and other assistance.<sup>2</sup>

6. Continued settlement activity has resulted in the forced eviction and displacement of Palestinians, causing direct physical insecurity, disruption of livelihoods and basic services, a decreased standard of living and increasing dependence on humanitarian aid. As outlined in recent reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the impact on women's and families' psychosocial well-being can be devastating.<sup>3</sup>

7. Tensions, violent incidents and attacks linked to the conflict and the occupation continued throughout the reporting period, resulting in civilian deaths and injury. There was a reported increase in settler-related violence in the West Bank. Israel faced increased indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other munitions from Gaza, which spiked during several dangerous rounds of escalation. Gazans suffered from militant activity as well as operations of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), which conducted an increased number of air strikes (see A/67/84-E/2012/68 and E/67/364-S/2012/701). According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,<sup>4</sup> in the West Bank 5 Palestinian civilians (4 men and 1 boy) were killed and 2,372 injured (including 1,986 men, 75 women, 288 boys and

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "The humanitarian impact of the Barrier", fact sheet (July 2012).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Fragmented lives: humanitarian overview 2011" (May 2012).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Demolitions and forced displacement in the Occupied West Bank" (January 2012); and "Settlements in Palestinian residential areas in East Jerusalem" (April 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Figures cover the period from 1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012; data collected by the United Nations.

16 girls) by IDF, while 112 men, 21 women and 40 children were injured by settlers. Forty Israeli settlers (36 men, 1 woman, 2 boys and 1 girl) were injured by Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip, 11 Palestinian civilians (7 men, 1 woman and 3 boys) were killed and 153 injured (including 84 men, 25 women, 33 boys and 3 girls) during Israeli air strikes. Twelve Israeli civilians (11 men and 1 woman) were injured by Palestinian rockets launched into southern Israel. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, available information indicates that violent acts by members of IDF or by settlers are rarely subject to independent or impartial investigations and that violations are often perpetrated with impunity.

8. Women in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip remained vulnerable to arbitrary restrictions on their right to freedom of expression and assembly. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that women continued to be exposed to violence and danger during peaceful demonstrations, where, on separate occasions, both Israeli and Palestinian Authority security forces (in the West Bank), as well as the de facto authorities (in the Gaza Strip), used excessive force in policing the demonstrations.

9. As of 31 August 2012, 6 women were held in Israeli prisons outside of the Occupied Palestinian Territory in contravention of international law, representing a decrease, from 29 women, during the previous reporting period. However, reports indicate that Palestinian women continue to live in poor conditions in these prisons and face reintegration problems upon release owing to lack of social support.<sup>5</sup>

10. The reporting period saw an increase in gross domestic product (GDP) figures, lower inflation and better employment indicators. Yet, poverty and unemployment rates remained high, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The poverty level was 25.8 per cent in 2011, ranging from 17.8 per cent in the West Bank to 38.8 per cent in Gaza.<sup>6</sup> Palestinian women living in refugee camps tend to be the most vulnerable to poverty.<sup>7</sup> A report recently released by the United Nations country team concluded that the continued restrictions on imports to and exports from the Gaza Strip substantially impacted the prospects for economic development and growth.<sup>8</sup> An estimated 80 per cent of the population was dependent on humanitarian assistance.<sup>9</sup>

11. Some 1.3 million Palestinians were living in food insecurity in 2011. In a joint assessment on socioeconomic and food security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip carried out by FAO, UNRWA, WFP and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics,<sup>10</sup> the food insecurity levels among female-headed households in the West

<sup>5</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>6</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Levels of living and poverty in the Palestinian territory, 2011".

<sup>7</sup> Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations country team, "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?" (Jerusalem, Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), August 2012).

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "Five years of blockade: the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip", fact sheet (June 2012).

<sup>10</sup> FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socio-economic and food security survey: West Bank and Gaza Strip, occupied Palestinian territory — 2011" (May 2012). Available from [www.wfp.org/content/occupied-palestinian-territory-socio-economic-and-food-security-survey-may-2012](http://www.wfp.org/content/occupied-palestinian-territory-socio-economic-and-food-security-survey-may-2012) (accessed November 2012).

Bank were found to be 7 per cent higher than among male-headed households. In Gaza, 44 per cent of all households were food-insecure, compared with 17 per cent in the West Bank. Food insecurity levels among female-headed households in area C of the West Bank had reached 39 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

12. Available data show that women's unemployment rates during the second quarter of 2012 remained high, at 47.2 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 21.4 per cent in the West Bank. Women's participation rates in the labour force stood only at 14.9 per cent (compared with 65.9 per cent for males) in Gaza and at 18.6 per cent (compared with 71.5 per cent for males) in the West Bank. The majority of formally employed Palestinian women worked in part-time positions, in fields such as education and teaching, clerical work and services. Refugee women are more affected by unemployment than non-refugee women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>12</sup> Real public sector wages showed significant disparities between men and women, the average daily wages earned by women amounting to only 84 per cent of those earned by men in 2011.<sup>13</sup> The absence of a social security law has resulted in discrimination against women and workers with family responsibilities.<sup>14</sup> According to an ILO gender legal review, Palestinian society still perceives women's presence in the labour market as a threat to men's work opportunities, and as being more expensive to the employer than the presence of men, because of the perceived high costs of their employment owing to marital status and maternity leave.<sup>15</sup>

13. Women's health continued to be an area of concern, with women in vulnerable communities having limited access to essential health care. Restrictions on movement and on access continued to impede access to health care, more particularly for women in area C,<sup>16</sup> in the seam zone<sup>17</sup> and in the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, according to the consolidated appeals process 2012, about 186 communities (approximately 151,000 women and girls) had limited access to essential health care, while 249 communities (279,000 women and girls) had no adequate access to emergency care. Micronutrient deficiencies remain a concern, with high levels of anaemia, as well as vitamin A and D deficiencies, recorded for girls, boys and pregnant women. Anaemia levels were at 57 per cent among children 9 to 12 months of age, and 26.8 per cent among pregnant women. An estimated 45 per cent of pregnant women in the Gaza Strip suffered from anaemia. Other prevalent disorders during pregnancy included hypertension, diabetes and

<sup>11</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>12</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour force survey: second quarter" (2012).

<sup>13</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Performance of the Palestinian Economy, 2011".

<sup>14</sup> ILO, "Review of labour laws to promote women's labour force participation: a legal analysis and recommendations for promoting gender equality" (Geneva, 2011).

<sup>15</sup> ILO, MDG Achievement Fund, "Mainstreaming gender equality concerns in Palestinian cooperatives", policy brief No. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Area C is the portion of the West Bank under full Israeli civil and security control and covers over 60 per cent of the West Bank.

<sup>17</sup> The "seam zone" is the closed area between the Green Line and the separation barrier in which about 11,000 Palestinians currently reside. See United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "West Bank movement and access update" (September 2012).

psychological problems.<sup>18</sup> In 2011, the Ministry of Health reported that the maternal mortality ratio was 28/100,000 live births in the OPT and total fertility rates were 4.9 for the Gaza Strip and 3.8 for the West Bank.<sup>19</sup> The main cause of morbidity among Palestinians is chronic non-communicable disorders, while diabetes had an incidence rate of 154.4 per 100,000 in the West Bank in 2011. Ministry of Health statistics for the West Bank show that breast cancer was the most common malignant disease for women (11.8 per cent).<sup>20</sup>

14. The situation in relation to water and sanitation remains critical, especially in Gaza, where 90 per cent of water from the aquifer is not safe for drinking without treatment. Availability of clean water is thus limited, with average consumption of 70-90 litres a day, below the global WHO standard of 100 litres per day.<sup>21</sup> According to UNICEF, about 83 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip is dependent upon private water vendors for their supplies of drinking water. This water risks being polluted by the time it reaches the consumer, owing to an absence of regulation, and puts a financial strain on the most vulnerable families. In the West Bank, lack of adequate water has placed over 50,000 people in 151 communities in a vulnerable position. Eleven out of the 19 refugee camps in the West Bank have official sewerage networks that are connected to municipal main sewerage systems. The lack of sewerage systems in the remaining camps has affected Palestinian refugees negatively, and is linked with issues such as clean water and underground water contamination as well as water-borne diseases. As a result of the lack of safe drinking water and sanitation services, the health of women and children in particular is being adversely affected. In addition, water shortages and sanitation problems cause particularly acute problems for women, insofar as managing with low water supplies imposes heavier domestic work burdens and confronting a higher incidence of water-borne diseases among family members entails heavier care responsibilities; moreover, these problems produce additional strains on household income. UNICEF reports that inadequacies in water and sanitation facilities in schools have led to poor hygiene among children in a large number of government schools. Lack of adequate and separate toilets for boys and girls (in mixed schools) has affected learning achievements.<sup>22</sup>

15. Education indicators for enrolment showed significant progress. The net enrolment rate for basic education is 92 per cent, with more girls enrolled (95 per cent) than boys (90 per cent).<sup>23</sup> Female students constitute about 50.2 per cent of children enrolled, increasing from 49.4 per cent in basic education to 54.1 per cent in secondary education and to 57 per cent in higher education.<sup>24</sup> In the Gaza Strip, over 450,000 children, half of them girls, were attending schools during the 2010/11 academic year.<sup>25</sup> Still, the education system is characterized by inequitable access and an overall decline in the quality of education. Access to basic education is

<sup>18</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Health, "Annual report" (2011).

<sup>20</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>21</sup> "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?".

<sup>22</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Education, "Annual report" (2011).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> "Gaza in 2020: a liveable place?".



affected by high school fees and the significant costs of transportation throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with many families in East Jerusalem having to send their children to private schools owing to limited space in public schools. In the West Bank, threat of harassment by Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces on the way to school, and fear of harm and humiliation at checkpoints, create stress and fear among children and their families.<sup>26</sup> According to UNICEF, in the Gaza Strip, over 5,000 girls began the 2011/12 school year attending classes in tents, caravans or tin shacks with minimal protection from the heat. The fuel shortage in the Gaza Strip, which intensified in February 2012, resulted in scheduled blackouts for 6-18 hours per day and random unscheduled cuts,<sup>27</sup> and has had an impact on the functioning of schools. With regard to the Gaza Strip, literacy rates were positive, with a 96 per cent literacy rate according to official figures (93 per cent for women and 98 per cent for men).<sup>28</sup> As noted during the last reporting period, advances in the educational levels of girls at secondary school and university levels are yet to be translated into gains in the labour market: women's unemployment rates remain significantly higher than men's among women with 13 or more years of education.<sup>29</sup>

16. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in political life and hold various positions within the Palestinian political system and institutions, they remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies. Women constitute 21 per cent of the total number of current ministers (five ministers) and 6.3 per cent of deputy ministers. As of 2010, women constituted 13.2 per cent of the Palestinian Legislative Council and 18 per cent of local councils.<sup>30</sup> These results were linked to the implementation of a quota system in the Palestinian Legislative Council and local councils. In the justice sector, women account for 11 per cent of all judges, 5 per cent of prosecutors and 15 per cent of all lawyers.<sup>31</sup> There is one female governor for the West Bank (Ramallah). The Palestinian Authority employs about 88,500 staff, of whom 41.1 per cent are women, with 36.5 per cent of ministry staff being women. However, women tend to remain at the lower levels of decision-making.<sup>32</sup> According to UNRWA, in refugee camps, women also tend to be underrepresented at the level of camp governance. Women's organizations and coalitions continued to raise awareness and advocate on women's rights, on gender equality and on combating violence against women. However, movement restrictions and the divide between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, continue to contribute to difficulties in coordinating between the different groups.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>26</sup> UNICEF, "My right to education", fact sheet (September 2012).

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs occupied Palestinian territory, "The humanitarian impact of Gaza's electricity and fuel crisis" (March 2012).

<sup>28</sup> "Gaza in 2020, a liveable place?".

<sup>29</sup> Contribution of ESCWA to the present report.

<sup>30</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

<sup>31</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Women and Men in Palestine: issues and statistics, 2010" (2010).

<sup>32</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Women and Men in Palestine: issues and statistics, 2011" (December 2011).

<sup>33</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

17. The Occupied Palestinian Territory continues to be characterized by differing legal frameworks and a weak rule of law. The existing legal frameworks in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip contain laws that are outdated and discriminate against women, particularly in matters of divorce, custody of children, inheritance and violence against women. Little progress in legal reform was observed during the reporting period, as the Palestinian Legislative Council has not been convened since 2007. A UNDP study in the West Bank shows that women face significant challenges to accessing justice, including a lack of legal literacy, a lack of legal assistance, and the insensitivity of justice and security institutions to their needs.<sup>34</sup>

18. A 2011 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics survey throughout the West Bank and the Gaza Strip found that approximately 37 per cent of married Palestinian women had experienced physical or sexual violence by their husbands in the past 12 months.<sup>35</sup> Of these, 58.6 per cent reported experiencing psychological violence, 55.1 per cent economic deprivation, 54.8 per cent forced social isolation, 23.5 per cent physical violence and 11.8 per cent sexual violence.<sup>36</sup> In response to this violence, 30.2 per cent sought refuge with family, while 65.3 per cent kept silent. Only 0.7 per cent of those women who had experienced violence sought refuge in shelters. With regard to children, 51 per cent of those surveyed reported having been exposed to violence inside the household by at least one member of the household. Of these, 69 per cent were exposed to psychological violence by their parents and 34.4 per cent to physical violence. According to police family protection unit annual records, the units had received more than 2,500 reports of family violence and handled a total of 1,755 complaints in 2011.<sup>37</sup>

19. The informal justice system continues to deal with matters traditionally considered private issues, even those that are considered crimes by the Penal Code, such as, *inter alia*, femicide, so-called honour crimes and violence against women and children. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, partner non-governmental organizations documented four cases of honour killings in the Gaza Strip during the reporting period, and eight cases in the West Bank since 1 January 2012. In 2011, the President signed a presidential decree that amended articles of the Penal Code by removing provisions for leniency with regard to murder in the name of so-called family honour. The presidential decree has still not been published in the official gazette and is therefore not effective.<sup>38</sup>

20. During the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority and civil society partners undertook a number of steps additional to those reported in the last reporting period to address violence against women. Following a rise in reported violent attacks against women in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority announced the formation of a committee to study personal status laws to protect women. Police family protection units mandated to deal with cases of domestic

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<sup>34</sup> UNDP, "Public perceptions of Palestinian justice and security institutions" (December 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Violence survey in Palestinian communities" (December 2011).

<sup>36</sup> The survey sampled 5,811 households in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2011.

<sup>37</sup> UN-Women, "Policing for women's security and justice in the occupied Palestinian territory: A comprehensive background analysis, and recommendations for strengthening the Palestinian Civil Police and Family Protection Unit" (forthcoming in 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

violence in the West Bank were further strengthened, and an additional unit was inaugurated in Jericho, bringing the total number in operation to eight.<sup>39</sup>

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

21. The present section provides information on efforts made by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. It contains updates on assistance provided in the following areas: education and training, health, economic empowerment and livelihoods, rule of law and violence against women, power and decision-making and institutional development. Many initiatives were implemented through the United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and the Joint Programme on Culture and Development, funded by the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F). The first seeks specifically to promote Palestinian women's social, economic and political empowerment and reduce gender-based violence by encouraging their political voice, increasing their opportunities to obtain decent and productive work, and improving their access to protection and justice.

#### **A. Education and training**

22. United Nations organizations continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training. In the 2011/12 academic year, 30,657 girls were enrolled in elementary and preparatory education in UNRWA schools in the West Bank (58.2 per cent of students), and 104,983 girls in the Gaza Strip (48.2 per cent of students). In the West Bank, 48 female students benefited from UNRWA administered scholarships for universities and 1,074 female students benefited from technical and vocational training (22 technical specializations and 4 trade specializations), as well as career counselling. An estimated 64 per cent of the 2011 female student graduates (out of a total of 376) from UNRWA vocational training centres found work within one year. In the West Bank, ILO partnered with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and UNRWA in developing the technical and vocational training (TVET) module "Women gain employment skills in photography". Trained in entrepreneurial and technical skills, 17 women from the photography course graduated successfully. In the Gaza Strip, ILO, in partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza, initiated a project for skills development of women engineers in the construction sector in Gaza. This project was based on the "Construction skills deficit in Gaza" assessment which identified a gap between demand and supply, in addition to the fact that most women engineers in the construction sector were unemployed owing to social acceptance-related factors. Thirty-six women engineers successfully graduated and completed the on-the-job training placements. The Palestinian contractors union offered 10 women engineers a full-time paid job after the completion of the programme. The FAO "Junior farmer field and life schools project", implemented in 22 schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, provided training to 330 girls and 22 teachers in vocational agricultural skills.

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<sup>39</sup> Contribution to the present report of the United Nations country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

23. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 23 schools, including the construction of 10 new classrooms. During the reporting period, more than 40,000 children (50 per cent of them girls) received learning materials, and protective access to learning was improved for 5,400 children (2,700 girls), including through provision of school vehicles. Opportunities for safe play and learning benefited 550 students (50 per cent of them girls) in East Jerusalem and 3,500 children (1,700 of them girls) in the Gaza Strip. After-school activities in adolescent-friendly services centres reached 6,514 adolescents (3,252 girls) in 56 such centres (15 in the Gaza Strip and 41 in the West Bank, including 10 in East Jerusalem), with active learning, recreational activities and life skills-based education, creative thinking, active research, social initiatives, forum theatre skills and peers education support. To promote access to quality education for all Palestinian children, nine United Nations organizations supported the Ministry of Education in developing an education package designed to improve capacities on early childhood development and promote inclusive and child-friendly education. Activities linked to the package have been piloted in 46 schools (32 in the West Bank and 14 in the Gaza Strip).

## **B. Health**

24. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to facilitate access to health care for women living in isolated and marginalized communities. Through six mobile health clinics, UNRWA provided outreach of primary preventive and curative health care to 58 communities that lack health services and have access difficulties, and where many women and children face a threat of violence or harassment because of the current security situation. In addition, UNRWA health centres in the West Bank treated over 20,000 female patients for diabetes and/or hypertension. UNFPA rehabilitated and equipped 6 maternity hospitals and 14 primary health-care centres in the Gaza Strip, carried out capacity development efforts targeting health-care providers in primary and secondary health-care settings, and conducted outreach to 40 isolated communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, helping them to access key reproductive health services in isolated areas affected by the separation barrier, settlements and checkpoints. To improve access of women in vulnerable communities to an essential package of health services, UNICEF procured small-scale medical equipment for the functioning of mobile clinics in area C; supported essential-care outreach services to 28 Bedouin communities in the Jordan Valley; and procured essential drugs in the Gaza Strip.

25. UNRWA, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO continued to provide a range of services targeting maternal and child health. From September 2011 to July 2012, the UNRWA West Bank Health Department provided antenatal care to 12,699 women, postnatal care to 10,065 women and family planning services to about 24,611 clients in the West Bank. Some 15,970 women were also referred to hospitals and assisted with hospitalization. A total of 1,570 women were newly enrolled in pre-conception care and 320 men were involved in accompanying their wives to pre-conception care counselling and for family planning in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, during the reporting period, there were 10,332 new acceptors of family planning and 6,027 women who were accessing pre-conception care at UNRWA clinics. In the Gaza Strip, the number of pregnant women under antenatal care was 32,181, with 94 per cent participating in four or more antenatal care visits. Postnatal care was

provided to 36,330 women (100 per cent for all deliveries during the reporting period). UNFPA contributed to the development and implementation of behaviour-change communication campaigns and activities within Palestinian communities addressing reproductive health issues. As part of the humanitarian response in the Gaza Strip, practitioners from primary health-care centres were trained on providing safe delivery within the clinic or at the community level. UNICEF also trained 15 midwives on providing care to mothers and newborns. A total of 912 mothers and their newborns were visited at least once from January to May 2012 with 2.0 per cent of newborns and 2.2 per cent of mothers referred to health centres for additional examinations and care. UNICEF procured micronutrient supplements for the benefit of about 210,000 children and 110,000 women. UNICEF continued to support the implementation of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative in nine hospitals (six in the West Bank and three in the Gaza Strip). UNICEF support to World Breastfeeding Week celebrations involved working closely with religious counsellors to enhance advocacy initiatives for young mothers. In addition, the community component of the programme targeted all mothers of childbearing age in the Gaza Strip. The programme upgraded skills of midwives and gynaecologists (more than 50 were sent for training in East Jerusalem), improved health information and supervision systems in maternity units and promoted safe childbirth practices in Gaza communities through health workers and women's organizations.

26. United Nations entities also continued to provide a range of psychosocial services. UNICEF provided direct psychosocial support to 12,512 children (at least 6,000 girls) and about 11,000 caregivers (91 per cent of them female) in the Gaza Strip. UNICEF support to the child protection networks continued with three additional networks established in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, 14 girls and 11 boys were referred by child protection networks for specialized services and case management; in the West Bank, 98 girls and 62 boys were referred. Psychosocial counselling was offered in 21 UNRWA health centres and 15 relief and social services offices across the Gaza Strip. During the reporting period, 6,407 women accessed counselling services, the majority in UNRWA health centres.

27. During the reporting period, UNICEF supported a range of initiatives with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene. This included the extension of water networks in underserved communities in the south West Bank, benefiting 300 families, and the installation of household water filters, allowing 300 vulnerable families in the Gaza Strip to access adequate water for drinking and domestic purposes. UNICEF is also working on improving household-level water storage capacity and safe sanitation facilities in area C of the West Bank and in the buffer zone<sup>40</sup> of the Gaza Strip. To minimize groundwater pollution and sewage flooding in Rafah, UNICEF supported wastewater network improvement, benefiting 1,161 women and girls with adequate sanitation. In addition, UNICEF continued to support the construction or rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 68 schools (29 in the West Bank and 39 in Gaza), benefiting 48,896 students (22,117 girls) with access to safe and adequate water and sanitation. UNICEF also supported water tanking to 151 schools in Gaza for February-June 2012, thereby providing safe drinking water to 70,000 students (37,237 girls), at 0.7-1 litre per day per student.

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<sup>40</sup> The buffer zone is the zone inside Palestinian territory along the northern and eastern border of the Gaza Strip with Israel, to which Israel restricts access, citing security concerns.

### C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

28. Microfinance support continued to be a source of short-term poverty alleviation in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, with women representing a high number of beneficiaries. From September 2011 to July 2012, the UNRWA Microfinance Department provided 3,439 loans (34 per cent of total loans), amounting to \$3.5 million, to Palestinian refugee and non-refugee women in the West Bank. In parallel, 171 individual loans, amounting to a total of \$102,600, were provided to poor and vulnerable Palestinian refugee women through the relief and social services programme community managed fund. In the Gaza Strip, the UNRWA Microfinance Department disbursed 3,567 loans valued at \$5.7 million. Women received 1,325 loans (37 per cent of the total) and \$1.48 million (26 per cent) in business and non-business loans to enhance entrepreneurship and access to credit.

29. UNRWA has continued to provide relief to special hardship cases, including providing grants to 18 income-generating projects across 15 community-based organizations in the refugee camps in the West Bank. This contributed to the employment of 42 women, training of 339 women and volunteer opportunities for 77 women. In the Gaza Strip, the programme has provided grants to 10 income-generating projects established at women's programme centres and community-based rehabilitation centres, employing 86 women in microenterprises such as sewing, food, embroidery and hairdressing. In the West Bank, the UNRWA humanitarian job creation programme offered short-term employment opportunities to 10,560 Palestinian refugee women (42 per cent of total beneficiaries). The humanitarian job creation programme provided a monthly cash-for-work subsidy of \$420 to female beneficiaries, and procured and distributed tools, materials and equipment to 30 women's centres.

30. Since the start of the United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women three years ago, ILO and UNRWA have provided various forms of capacity-building and income-generating projects for women. ILO provided members of 43 women-only cooperatives with grants, training and technical assistance, and piloted a capacity-building programme focused on business management and marketing skills, targeting 300 Palestinian women microentrepreneurs across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. ILO also assisted in the formation of the National Women's Economic Council, with the mandate to formulate and adopt a conceptual policy framework through which to reinforce the economic participation of women, end discrimination and inequality, provide support to the Ministry of Labour and influence national policies so as to increase opportunities for women.

31. FAO, WFP and UN-Women continued interventions to enhance women's economic empowerment and food security. FAO provided agriculture inputs and training on food processing, marketing and bookkeeping to women associations in rural areas, benefiting 2,000 women-headed households in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2011. WFP provided assistance through food distribution and voucher programmes, which reached 245,101 women. Female-headed households in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were targeted, receiving, in most cases, complementary interventions including cash assistance. During the reporting period, UN-Women supported 32 women's centres running canteens that became financially independent and provided meals for 22,572 children. The programme generated

employment opportunities for 110 women, many of whom were working for the first time in their lives.

32. Through the Gaza gender initiative, UNRWA implemented the young women leaders programme aiming to close the skills gap between the labour market and the educated labour force, through ensuring that young women graduates develop skills required by the labour market. During the reporting period, the programme reached 723 female graduates. As part of the same initiative, UNRWA ran an empowerment programme for female-headed households, offering targeted skills-building related to financial literacy, household management and microbusiness. Three hundred female heads of household benefited from the programme.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

33. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance capacity to prevent and respond to violence against women. The UNDP Rule of Law programme supported about 10 organizations that provide legal aid to women by representing them in cases involving family law and other matters such as labour rights, gender-based violence and family reunification before the sharia courts, in both the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. The programme supported 275 women with legal representation and provided legal advice to 1,519 women and psychosocial support services to 444 women. In addition, 5,710 women participated in legal awareness-raising workshops. Gender-related training was provided to 240 female lawyers and 110 female law students. In the Gaza Strip, 3,645 women received legal advice and psychosocial assistance through legal aid units and from psychosocial counsellors working in the women's programme centres supported by UNRWA. UN-Women supported the formation of a group of specialized lawyers, under the auspices of the Palestinian Bar Association, to provide legal aid and representation to women victims of violence. The development of a capacity development programme designed to train lawyers specializing in defending women victims of violence was supported as well. UN-Women also provided technical assistance to the Independent Commission for Human Rights in developing a database for monitoring women's access to justice.

34. UN-Women supported the Palestinian Civil Police in developing the first strategy and action plan, standard operating procedures, job descriptions and minimum standard guidelines for family protection units, as well as a capacity development programme for its staff. UN-Women also supported the development of a media campaign to inform the public of the Palestinian Authority's commitment to ending domestic violence and promoted strengthening of coordination between prosecutors and specialized police in dealing with cases of women victims of violence.

35. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Office for Project Services and UN-Women continued to implement initiatives in support of the strengthening of the management of the Palestinian penitentiary system and the rehabilitation of inmates in reform and rehabilitation centres administered by the Palestinian Authority. UN-Women supported the establishment and implementation of rehabilitation programmes for female inmates in these centres (with a monthly

range of 30 female inmates), providing them with legal aid and representation services.

36. During the reporting period, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime supported the implementation of a four-year project entitled “Forensic human resource and governance development assistance for the Palestinian Authority”, which aims to ensure that sexual and family violence cases are investigated and prosecuted with the necessary sensitivity by law enforcement and the judiciary. It also aims to guarantee that there are sufficient numbers of knowledgeable, skilled and competent female specialist forensic physicians, doctors, nurses and forensic scientists for the anticipated enhanced capability in clinical forensic services as applied to crimes, sexual assault, child abuse and domestic violence.

37. A number of entities, including UN-Women, UNRWA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNFPA, supported various activities aimed at raising awareness on violence against women. Advocacy and public education initiatives included festivals to combat violence against women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, a public event organized by women victims of violence to enable them to speak about their experiences and training for different stakeholders. Between December 2011 and June 2012, UNRWA delivered basic and specialized training for staff, community-based organizations and community representatives on identification, intervention and referral in respect of gender-based violence cases, violence against women, family protection and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>41</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights continued to engage in awareness-raising activities regarding women’s rights, and to work closely with women’s rights organizations to strengthen their capacity in utilizing international human rights procedures.

38. United Nations entities continued to support the development and expansion of services targeted at women survivors of violence. UN-Women continued to support the Mehwar Centre, the first multi-service centre in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which throughout the reporting period sheltered an average of 20 women on any given day and continued to provide a range of social and legal services, as well as to economically empower women and to reintegrate them in society. UN-Women, in collaboration with UNDP, also continued to support the Hayat multipurpose centre for the empowerment of women and families, in the Gaza Strip, at which 30 women benefited from psychological, social and legal services during the period. In the West Bank, UNRWA developed an internal referral mechanism for survivors of gender-based violence in nine refugee camps and is currently expanding the mechanism to an additional seven camps, one village and one city in the north of the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip, the gender-based violence referral system, established to provide coordinated responses to gender-based violence across its service programmes in the health, social services and mental health sectors, was further expanded to include 18 one-stop centres. During the reporting period, 651 cases of gender-based violence were detected and referred through the new system, with the majority of victims and survivors having been subjected to physical violence and emotional abuse perpetrated by their husband. A comprehensive and confidential gender-based violence information management system was also designed and launched. Building on initiatives reported in the last

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1249, No. 20378.



reporting period, entities such as UN-Women, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNESCO and ILO continued to support Palestinian institutions in building capacity to prevent and respond to violence against women, including through the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) and efforts to improve data collection and analysis in this area.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

39. During 2012, UNDP supported the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy designed to enhance the capacities of 40 young Palestinian women leaders across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and strengthen their networks. As a result, 85 per cent of the trainees participated as observers in monitoring the local elections held in October 2012. In addition, four participants ran for elections in the list of their political party. UN-Women, in partnership with the Women's Affairs Technical Committee, provided training and awareness-raising on women's political participation and leadership to over 1,300 women and men, including local council members and youth. Through this programme, two local councils revised their strategies and workplans to ensure that gender was mainstreamed and the reactivation of the national committee for women's political participation was achieved. The Women's Affairs Technical Committee reported that over 20 women had submitted applications for membership in the General Union of Palestinian Women.

## **F. Institutional development**

40. As part of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, UNDP advanced gender awareness and expertise among civil servants working at the local governance units and at different community levels, undertaking capacity development interventions in partnership with Birzeit University. Some 370 public servants (38 per cent of them women) were equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to integrate gender in district development planning and gender-sensitive budgeting.

41. UNDP and UN-Women signed an agreement with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to establish a monitoring and evaluation unit and to conduct a capacity-building development plan for its staff. This unit complements other existing monitoring and evaluation units at the Ministry of Planning, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other line institutions in respect of monitoring gender equality and the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women and the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy.

42. UNDP seconded a gender expert to the Ministry of Justice, who assisted the Ministry in establishing a gender justice unit. The gender expert worked with the Ministry to develop a gender action plan based on relevant national strategies. The strengthening of this gender unit is currently being supported by the United Nations Office for Project Services at the technical and operational levels through the Sharaka project.

43. During the reporting period, a number of ministries made progress in mainstreaming gender in their policies, programmes and strategies. The Ministry of Agriculture amended its recruitment policy to ensure that 25 per cent of all newly

recruited staff at middle and senior management levels are women. The Ministry of Culture mainstreamed gender into the culture sector strategy and documented promising practices for integrating gender into achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Ministry of Education adopted the school canteens scheme as a national business model for women. The Ministry of the Interior/Palestinian civil police reform and rehabilitation centres recognized the right of women inmates to work during detention and approved economic empowerment opportunities for women inmates. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs oversaw the Mehwar Centre and increased the quality and number of employment opportunities for women living in the shelter.

44. ILO supported the Palestinian Authority in establishing a national minimum wage to protect low-wage workers and help marginalized and vulnerable groups, provided technical assistance with respect to the review of labour and employment-related legislation, and undertook a gender legal review in collaboration with the National Women's Employment Committee. A range of amendments, primarily to the labour law of 2000, were proposed based on the review. ILO also provided technical assistance in the development of an integrated social security system, and continued to provide training and technical assistance on the conduct of gender audits to ministries and other institutions.

45. UNFPA assisted the Ministry of Health in developing a national programme for family planning services and the national reproductive health strategy for the years 2013-2016. UNFPA also assisted in the development of curricula focusing on gender-based violence-related issues, and conducted capacity-building initiatives focused on religious and community leaders. UNFPA supported the Ministry of Social Affairs in producing a life skills curriculum for the use of counsellors dealing with marginalized young girls and boys. WHO conducted training workshops for Ministry of Health staff to develop capacity to undertake analysis and address the differential impact of health policies on women and men.

46. UNESCO continued to support the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity-building, research, advocacy and documentation activities. The UNESCO capacity development programme helped various community-based and non-governmental and governmental organizations to run programmes, conduct research and analyse policies from a gender perspective, and communicate effectively in respect of the issues affecting the situation and status of Palestinian women. UNESCO also implemented a coaching programme for gender units in line ministries.

47. As in the previous reporting period, a number of initiatives were also undertaken to enhance gender mainstreaming within the United Nations system. UN-Women recently completed a gender review of the medium-term response plan 2011-2013<sup>42</sup> with the purpose of setting clear outcomes, outputs and indicators which would contribute to and measure progress in terms of gender equality. UN-Women also undertook pilot gender mainstreaming efforts with UNRWA and FAO. UN-Women engaged with FAO, in a full assessment of their operations and programmes, whose recommendations are now being applied by the FAO office. The

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<sup>42</sup> The medium-term response plan of the United Nations country team is a strategic planning tool aimed at structuring the joint work of the United Nations organizations operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs continued to implement a budget gender marker and directed efforts in particular towards integrating sex-disaggregated data and analysis in the 2012 consolidated appeals process.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

48. **The continued lack of progress in the peace process, growing tensions and an escalation in violence and related displacement during the reporting period are of great concern. Restrictive residency, planning and zoning, and movement policies, together with continued settlement expansion, and the closure of the Gaza Strip have created a challenging humanitarian situation impacting negatively on the lives of many Palestinian women and their families. While there has been progress on some development indicators, the volatility of the context renders progress fragile and prone to regression. High levels of unemployment, poverty and insecurity persist and many Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation. Insecurity and poverty can exacerbate gender-based discrimination and abuse, and this has been experienced by Palestinian women in the form of elevated levels of violence in the public and private spheres, as well as discrimination in the workplace.**

49. **Operating in a volatile and complex environment, United Nations organizations continued to respond to such challenges and carried out extensive activities to address the needs of women and girls. There were notable achievements in policy and institutional development during 2011 and 2012. Initial steps to implement the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy for 2011-2013 and the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) have been encouraging. The effective implementation of these strategies, however, requires sustained political commitment, technical support and financial resources. Over the reporting period, the Palestinian Authority continued to take steps to address violence against women, including through strengthening police family protection units, taking more institutional ownership of shelters, and announcing the formation of a committee to study personal status laws to protect women. It is critical to build on, support and expand such initiatives.**

50. **The United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and the Joint Programme on Culture and Development provided the opportunity for United Nations organizations and national and local partners to work in partnership and enhance national ownership mechanisms. It is highly recommended that the United Nations system build on the achievements of these Programmes and work towards the continued implementation of joint programmes in partnership with national and local partners.**

51. **Improving the situation of Palestinian women remains inextricably linked to efforts to achieve lasting peace and women's ability to participate in decision-making processes related to peace and security. Efforts to involve both Palestinian and Israeli women in a revitalized peace process need to be enhanced and supported in accordance with the spirit of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Mechanisms for enhancing accountability and**

**monitoring progress in the implementation of that resolution and related commitments on women and peace and security should be established.**

**52. In view of recent political changes in the region and Arab women's growing participation in political life and decision-making processes, it is important to continue to promote and support the right of Palestinian women to effective political participation and leadership. Special attention should be given to on-the-job coaching for women newly elected to office. Support for women at the various stages of electoral processes should be provided and strategic partnerships with significant stakeholders — political parties, the media, State institutions and the civil society — should be further developed.**

**53. It is critical to continue to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on a range of issues impacting the lives of Palestinians and to ensure that this information is incorporated systematically in reports and briefings by the United Nations system to relevant intergovernmental bodies.**

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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

## Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2013/17](#), highlights the situation of Palestinian women between 1 October 2012 and 30 September 2013 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* [E/CN.6/2014/1](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2013/17](#) on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2013/6](#)), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-eighth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from the United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the State of Palestine. In accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Palestine in the United Nations dated 8 March 2013 ([A/67/738](#)), the designation “State of Palestine” is now used in all documents of the United Nations, notwithstanding the use in parallel of the term used in previous reports, “Occupied Palestinian Territory”.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA. The United Nations country team coordinated the contributions to the present report from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/68/76-E/2013/65](#), [A/68/77-E/2013/13](#), [A/67/13](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. On 29 November 2012, the General Assembly, in its resolution [67/19](#), accorded the State of Palestine the status of non-member Observer State in the United Nations. On the same day, the Secretary-General stated that the vote underlined the urgency of a resumption of meaningful negotiations to ensure that an

independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine lives side by side with a secure State of Israel. Efforts to achieve a peaceful comprehensive settlement on all final status issues intensified during the reporting period. Under the auspices of the United States, direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resumed on 29 July 2013, and a number of meetings have been held since in Israel and Palestine. The United Nations Secretary-General travelled to the region — Jordan, Palestine and Israel — on 15 and 16 August to extend United Nations support and his appreciation for the courageous decision of both leaders to resume negotiations. The position of the Secretary-General remains that direct negotiations are the only credible way towards the long-overdue two-State solution. Prospects for peace were renewed against a tense situation on the ground, and all parties are called upon to sustain an environment conducive for forward movement in the peace process.

5. In Gaza and southern Israel, a dangerous escalation of violence occurred in November 2012, which triggered serious concerns with regard to the respect by all parties for international humanitarian and human rights law in their conduct of the hostilities.<sup>1</sup> The Secretary-General visited Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Occupied Palestinian Territory during the hostilities and engaged in an intense diplomatic effort that culminated in the announcement of a ceasefire agreement welcomed by the Security Council which called for a reciprocal cessation of hostilities. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, eight days of fighting resulted in an estimated 174 Palestinians killed, including 101 civilians (55 men, 13 women, 25 boys and 8 girls), and some 1,046 Palestinians were reportedly injured, including 446 children and 105 women, while 6 Israelis, including 4 civilians, were reported killed by Palestinian rocket fire and 239 Israelis were injured, the vast majority of them civilians, from indiscriminate firing of rockets, mortars and other projectiles from Gaza. In the West Bank, during the period covered in the present report, 19 Palestinian civilians (15 men, 1 woman and 3 boys) were killed — almost quadruple the number of the previous year — and 4,156 were injured (2,811 men, 87 women, 1,238 boys and 20 girls) by Israeli Security Forces — a significant increase from 2,372 civilians injured during the previous reporting period. During the current reporting period, 156 Palestinians (105 men, 12 women, 33 boys and 6 girls) were injured by settlers, while 76 Israeli settlers (61 men, 10 women and 5 boys) were injured by Palestinians. In the Gaza Strip (excluding during the Operation Pillar of Defence), an additional 17 Palestinian civilians (11 men, 1 woman and 5 boys) were killed and 227 were injured (167 men, 13 women, 46 boys and 1 girl) by Israeli Security Forces.

6. The impact of the protracted crisis continues to have a devastating effect on the psychosocial well-being of women and families. The living conditions of women vary depending on sociocultural factors and the differential status that applies to Palestinian women and men in different areas<sup>2</sup> and related obstacles to movement and access. As at September 2013, 1.6 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remained effectively isolated from the rest of the West Bank, including East

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory, “Fragmented lives: humanitarian overview 2012” (May 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 interim Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the West Bank was divided into three zones, Areas A, B and C. Extensive responsibility was delegated by Israel to the Palestinian Authority in Areas A and B. Area C remained under full authority of Israel.

Jerusalem, by the continuing closure by Israel. Access to East Jerusalem has remained limited for Palestinian residents in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, and particularly those in the seam zones and the firing zones.<sup>1</sup>

7. Food insecurity remains a significant challenge as result of the continued closure of the Gaza Strip, restrictions on access in the West Bank and related high rates of poverty, and continued increases in food prices and threats to livelihoods.<sup>3</sup> According to the 2012 Socioeconomic and Food Security Survey, food insecurity levels rose by seven percentage points overall from the previous year, reaching 57 per cent in Gaza and 14 per cent in the West Bank. Female-headed households receive the highest level of assistance in the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2012, they received a monthly average of \$131 in assistance compared with \$78 for male-headed households. The targeted assistance was successful in lowering the percentage of food-insecure households, from 54 to 36 per cent for female-headed households and from 37 to 33 per cent for male-headed households.<sup>4</sup> To achieve further reductions in poverty and improve food security, it will be necessary to achieve sustainable and inclusive economic growth and to create jobs. This will require further easing of movement and access restrictions that currently hinder economic development and private sector activity (see A/68/76-E/2013/65).

8. Despite the adoption of a range of policies over the past few years demonstrating a clear commitment to women's economic empowerment, in practice women have not become full participants in the labour market. Instead, labour market indicators suggest that women are facing increasing challenges. The significant educational gains made by women have not been translated into gains in the labour market, reflecting a great loss of economic potential, and unemployment has increased. In 10 years' time, women's overall unemployment rate has almost doubled, from 17 per cent in 2002 to 32.9 per cent in 2012, while for men the rate has decreased from 33.5 to 20.5 per cent over the same time period. Young women below 25 years of age are particularly affected by the lack of jobs, with an overall unemployment rate of 62.2 per cent, compared with 34.5 per cent of young men. In Gaza, the unemployment rate for young women reached an unprecedented 88.1 per cent in 2012 compared with 48.8 per cent for young men.<sup>5</sup>

9. Discrimination in the workplace is still common. The average daily wage for women represented 86.8 per cent of that for men in 2012.<sup>6</sup> Most women in formal employment work in the public sector, in health and education. Outside of the public sector, women have few prospects of earning a living wage. For instance, women employed in childcare are paid as little as \$100 per month. Women are being pushed progressively into the informal economy, into unpaid and family jobs in the agricultural sector, domestic work and a broad range of cleaning jobs. According to ILO, many women lack control of revenues generated. In addition, a recent study

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<sup>3</sup> FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socioeconomic and food security survey 2012: West Bank and Gaza Strip" (August 2013) (available from: <http://www.wfp.org/content/state-palestine-socio-economic-food-security-survey-2012-august-2013> (accessed November 2013)).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Labour force survey annual report" (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, factsheet issued on the occasion of International Women's Day, 8 March 2013.



shows that 29 per cent of women aged 25-29 were subject to harassment in the workplace with little or no access to any complaint mechanism.<sup>7</sup> Women tend to be less present in workers' unions and less aware of their rights than men.<sup>8</sup> The Palestinian Authority adopted a minimum wage in October 2012,<sup>9</sup> but it is unclear how the agreement will be enforced across the territory and in sectors employing mostly women, such as the childcare and textile sectors. There is still no unified social security law. According to ILO, continued efforts are needed to find the means to provide income security and combat poverty and social exclusion.

10. Concerns highlighted in last year's report linked to access to health care and shortages of drugs and medical disposables remain. In the Gaza Strip, drug shortages currently stand at 29 per cent, while there is a 52 per cent shortage in medical disposables.<sup>10</sup> Measures taken to improve access to maternal and reproductive health care are contributing to a declining trend with regard to maternal mortality. Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health indicate a decline from 38:100,000 live births in 2009 to 23.7:100,000 (19.6 in Gaza and 27.5 in the West Bank) in 2012.<sup>11</sup> Out of married women aged 15-49, 94 per cent reported receiving at least four visits from qualified health-care personnel during their last pregnancy. At the same time, a review by UNFPA found a high prevalence of near-miss cases<sup>12</sup> and obstetric complications, with severe outcomes in 4.5 cases per 1,000 deliveries. According to WHO, the barrier and restrictions to movement and access continue to present particular risks for expectant mothers, such as lack of access to specialized maternal care for high-risk births. In terms of the overall disease profile, the incidence of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, is increasing among Palestinians.<sup>13</sup> Cancer and heart disease are among the leading causes of mortality in Palestine.

11. The water, sanitation and hygiene situation remains critical. In Gaza, less than 10 per cent of available groundwater resources are suitable for drinking purposes. In the West Bank, over 1 million people continue to access less than 60 litres per capita per day of water. Following the escalation of violence in Gaza in November 2012, damage to the water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure disrupted water supply and caused sewage to flood into the street, with the potential for polluting water resources and generating public health concerns.<sup>10</sup> Similar concerns have arisen regarding the impact of the energy crisis developing in Gaza. While Gaza faces structural power supply challenges, the situation has deteriorated as affordable fuel has become scarce following the shutdown by Egypt of illegal smuggling tunnels into Gaza. This has affected operations of the Gaza power plant, which was

<sup>7</sup> International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (2011), p. 3, available from [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_181071.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_181071.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> ILO, 2013, Palestine General Federation of Trade Union Survey.

<sup>9</sup> In October 2012, the Council of Ministers adopted a minimum wage of NIS1,450 monthly, NIS65 daily and NIS8.50 hourly, which took effect on 1 January 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Consolidated Appeal Process, Mid-year review (2013).

<sup>11</sup> See Ministry of Health, Health Annual Report Palestine 2012. Most recent global estimates for the West Bank and Gaza (2010) show a ratio of 64:100,000 live births, but also confirm a decline over time (see: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and World Bank estimates. Trends in maternal mortality: 1990 to 2010, Geneva (2012)).

<sup>12</sup> A near-miss case is defined as a severe life-threatening obstetric complication that required an urgent medical intervention in order to prevent the mother from dying.

<sup>13</sup> Palestinian Ministry of Health, Health Annual Report, Palestine 2012.

producing 25 per cent of the total electricity available in Gaza. Rolling blackouts are a daily occurrence, severely debilitating economic activity in the Strip and the functioning of basic services, including health, water and sanitation, with serious implications for the lives of Gazans, including many women.

12. While education indicators for enrolment continued to show significant progress, challenges linked to access and quality of education remain. The occupied Palestinian territory has reached parity in primary education (grades 1-10), and girls outnumber boys in secondary (grades 11-12) and higher education. The net enrolment rate for primary education is 93.4 per cent, with slightly more girls enrolled (94.4 per cent) than boys (92.2 per cent). In secondary education, the disparity is greater, where boys' net enrolment rate is only at 59.1 per cent, while at 74.7 per cent for girls.<sup>14</sup> It is noteworthy, that in private schools the ratio of girls to boys in primary education drops to 0.7 (while 1.02 for the whole of the occupied Palestinian territory).<sup>15</sup> In both Gaza and the West Bank, girls outperform their male counterparts in UNRWA schools.<sup>16</sup> A study conducted by the Agency found that families see education as the only tool to ensure a better future for girls, while education for boys is not seen as the only option owing to the fact that boys enjoy easier access to the labour market compared with girls.<sup>17</sup> Data from UNRWA shows that female students in the Gaza and West Bank are enrolling less in vocational training than male students. Disabled children, especially girls and children from Gaza, have less access to education (in Gaza, 29 per cent of disabled girls and 19 per cent of boys did not have access to formal education).<sup>18</sup>

13. Improvements in enrolment have, however, been coupled with an overall decline in the quality of education owing to the outbursts of violence, the closure of Gaza and other factors. According to UNRWA, continuous population growth and insufficient infrastructure stretches school capacity to its limits, with overcrowding putting pressure on diminishing resources and taking a toll on the quality of education delivered — 10,000 additional students joined UNRWA schools in the scholastic year 2011/12 and 8,000 in 2012/13 as well as in 2013/14. In Gaza, 89 per cent of the Agency's 245 schools operate on a double shift basis, resulting in shorter academic hours and a high number of students per classroom. The average classroom size in the 2012/13 scholastic year comprised 38 students. In addition, the shortage of schools means there is little opportunity for children to engage in organized recreational or creative pursuits during the regular school year. UNRWA is nonetheless planning to open 13 new school buildings in the first semester and 8 additional schools for the second semester. Access to schools for children living in the access restricted areas can be dangerous, and classes are often disrupted. The anxiety associated with attending school in those areas has taken a toll on students, with teachers reporting signs of psychosocial distress.<sup>19</sup> According to the Education Cluster of the humanitarian country team, in the West Bank, threat of harassment by

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Annual Report. Palestine Children — Issues and Statistics. Child Statistics Series (No. 15) (2013), Ramallah.

<sup>15</sup> Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Educational Statistical Yearbook 2012/2013*.

<sup>16</sup> UNRWA, *Results of 2012 Independent Tests UNRWA Schools by Gender*, West Bank.

<sup>17</sup> UNRWA, 2013, *West Bank Survey on the drop-out rate of boys in school* (forthcoming).

<sup>18</sup> Diakonia/NAD, 2011, *Access to formal education for people with disabilities*.

<sup>19</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, factsheet: Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip (July 2013), available from: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha\\_opt\\_gaza\\_ara\\_factsheet\\_july\\_2013\\_english.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_ara_factsheet_july_2013_english.pdf).

Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces on the way to school and fear of harm and humiliation at checkpoints create stress and fear among children and their families. At least 6,000 children in the West Bank cross through one or more checkpoints to reach their schools every day.

14. As a consequence of the November 2013 escalation of hostilities, at least 142 government school buildings in Gaza sustained damage, ranging from light to complete damage. This resulted in the disruption of schooling and an unsafe learning environment for at least 123,641 children (at least 50 per cent girls). According to UNICEF, the escalation of conflict had a devastating impact on the psychosocial well-being of children and adolescents in Gaza.<sup>20</sup> As observed by UNMAS, as a trend, every escalation of hostilities is followed by a spike in civilian casualties caused by explosive hazards left by both sides to the conflict. While explosive remnants of war in the streets and public places are dealt with quickly by the police, other hazards are encountered in private spaces, rubble and the access restricted areas. An emerging issue of concern is the number of children injured as a result of small arms and other weapons that are stored or made within homes. During the period covered by the present report, there were 30 victims (3 killed, 27 injured), of which 23 were children (5 girls and 18 boys).

15. Illiteracy rates among individuals aged 15 years or older in the occupied Palestinian territory fell in the period 1997-2012 from 13.9 per cent to 4.1 per cent. The illiteracy rate varies considerably between the sexes: 1.8 per cent for males compared with 6.4 per cent for females. Female illiteracy rates were highest in rural localities (8.6 per cent), followed by refugee camps (6.3 per cent) and urban localities (6.1 per cent).<sup>21</sup>

16. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in political life, they remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies. As of September 2013, women held only 3 out of a total of 24 ministerial level posts in the Palestinian Government — a drop from 21 to 12.5 per cent since the last report. UNDP reports that in Gaza, there is only one female minister, who is the Minister of Women's Affairs. Women have fewer opportunities to reach higher positions in the public sector and in the general administration of the Government. At the end of 2012, women held 47 per cent of the lower-level positions in the administration and 22 per cent of director's seats, but only 11 per cent were at the level of general director.<sup>22</sup> There has been some progress in the justice sector. Women now account for 15 per cent of judges, 19.5 per cent of prosecutors and 32.5 per cent of lawyers.<sup>23</sup> Some positive developments were also noted in the local elections held in the West Bank in October 2012, such as the introduction of an all-women party list in Hebron and Safa and the enacting of a 2010 manifesto from political parties to increase the quota of women on lists from 20 per cent to 30 per cent. As such, the women's movement has demonstrated its ability to channel its demands and raise women's voices for participation. In the 2012 local elections, the number of seats held by women increased moderately from 18 to 21.4 per cent (1,205 out of 5,629 seats).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> State of Palestine Inter-cluster Rapid Assessment and the Psychosocial Rapid Assessment done after the escalation of conflict in November 2012 in Gaza.

<sup>21</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, available from <http://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=en&ItemID=890&mid=3171&wvversion=Staging> (accessed November 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Data from 2012 from the Palestinian General Personnel Council.

<sup>23</sup> Data from 2012 from the Palestinian Bar Association's Women's Lawyer's Network.

<sup>24</sup> Data from the Central Election Commission, 2013.

Such quantitative gains must be backed up by sufficient technical support to women in elected and appointed posts. According to UN-Women, as of September 2013, no women were participating on the Palestinian side in the resumed Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Women have also not been present in the internal reconciliation committees set up to find a solution to the internal political divide. This is a reflection of a low level of political participation and representation of women across the board.

17. The Palestinian Legislative Council was not functional during the reporting period and, as such, there continued to be a hold on the passing of new laws or amending existing ones through democratic means, including those that are deemed discriminatory towards women and in contradiction to human rights, within the legal framework provided by the basic law of Palestine.

18. Since December 2012, human rights organizations and analysts in Gaza have noticed a negative development in Gaza regarding personal freedoms of the population, particularly in terms of imposing and enforcing conservative codes of conduct, and imposing separation of sexes in public. Further to the decision by Al-Aqsa University to impose a conservative dress code on female students and the cancellation of the UNRWA marathon after Hamas banned the participation of women, the de facto authorities in Gaza are now engaging in a “morality” campaign against young men citing “indecent” or “inappropriate” hairstyles and clothing (generally referred to as “westernized”), arresting young men and shaving their heads.

19. Violence against women remains a serious concern. According to the Independent Commission of Human Rights and civil society partners, 24 women were killed in the name of so-called “honour” between January and August 2013, in a significant deterioration over 2012 when 12 women were killed over the whole year. According to UNDP and UN-Women, the number of cases is most likely underreported. Studies suggest that overcrowding, especially owing to the housing situation in Gaza and East Jerusalem, exacerbates violence within households.<sup>25</sup>

20. A study by UN-Women<sup>26</sup> shows that access to justice, especially for women who are victims of violence, is a difficult and long process. The weakening of already inadequate protection mechanisms combined with the closure and restrictions on movement have made it more difficult and often impossible for women and girls who are at risk of being harmed or killed by family members to escape and seek justice and help. Although communities and families are often the source of discrimination and violence, female victims of violence first approach their communities or families for help. When this approach fails, only some will go to external service providers, such as the police or providers of social and health services. This may expose them to various levels of critique, rejection and marginalization. Such calls for help are in some cases not acted upon or become too burdensome for the victims, creating a spiral of violence. Owing to movement and access restrictions in Area C, checkpoints and the Barrier, women in isolated areas do not have access to formal juridical institutions, having as only recourse the informal justice system, which does not afford the same rights to women, men, boys

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<sup>25</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip (March 2013), and OCHA, Easing the blockade: Assessing the humanitarian impact on the population of the Gaza Strip (March 2011).

<sup>26</sup> UN-Women, Study on access to justice for women (forthcoming, 2013).

and girls.<sup>27</sup> In addition, social and health services are restricted from establishing a permanent physical presence in Area C, which limits opportunities for women to report to health posts for medical check-ups and documentation of injuries related to gender-based violence.<sup>28</sup> Although the overall number of female inmates in corrections and rehabilitation centres is low, their stories highlight the multiple layers of discrimination, violence and abuse perpetrated against women in Palestine, as well as failures of and gaps in the protection and justice systems.<sup>26</sup>

21. The Palestinian Authority continued to take noteworthy steps to strengthen capacity to prevent and respond to different forms of violence against women. The Ministry of Women's Affairs signed memorandums of understanding with six key line ministries for the operationalization of the national strategy to combat violence against women. The Ministry also finalized a national regulation for the establishment of women's protection centres detailing the supervisory and monitoring system within shelters. The Palestinian Civil Police launched a strategy for family protection units in June 2013 that provides a framework for addressing the rights of victims of violence in accordance with international standards. Sustained efforts are needed to improve and expand services and access to justice for victims, taking into account the context and reality on the ground.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

22. The present section provides information on efforts made by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. It contains updates on assistance provided in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development.

#### **A. Education and training**

23. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and support the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education to improve the learning environment, for example, through the Education for All package for inclusive and child-friendly education and early childhood development. The package is currently being piloted in 47 schools and, for the first time, preschool classrooms were opened in some of the schools.<sup>29</sup> WFP maintained the provision of food assistance (date bars and milk) in schools, reaching 88,834 children (49 per cent girls). UNRWA continued to provide primary and secondary education in Gaza to 222,000 students (48.6 per cent girls) and primary education to 51,695 students in the West Bank (58 per cent girls). UNRWA also continued efforts to narrow the gender gap in academic achievements, where girls currently outperform boys, while simultaneously increasing the pass rate of both girls and boys. As a result, the gap in

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna, 2013, *Inequalities facing women living in Area C of the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, West Bank.

<sup>29</sup> The initiative, which is coordinated by UNESCO, is supported by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP and WHO.

academic achievement has narrowed significantly, from 25 per cent in 2009/10 to 9.4 per cent in 2012/13. UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of 98 schools in Gaza, securing safer learning environments for more than 87,945 children (40,915 girls). In addition, as a response to the escalation of violence in November 2012, 29,000 children (50 per cent girls) received learning materials, and 3,317 children (1,037 girls) and 249 teachers benefited from improved and protected access to learning environments. To improve the quality of education, UNICEF trained 1,600 teachers in the most marginalized areas on active learning modules developed by the Palestinian Ministry of Education.

24. UNICEF, in partnership with non-governmental organizations, continued to implement after-school activities in adolescent-friendly service centres. During the reporting period, at least 10,000 adolescents (50 per cent girls) benefitted from creative learning, life skills, recreational activities and health awareness sessions. UNRWA provided technical training to 515 women in Gaza. One of its centres provides special courses in entrepreneurship and communication. In the West Bank, UNRWA continued its tertiary education programmes. Of these, the trade and the technical vocation training programmes were attended by 1,217 students (603 female), and the teacher pre-service training programme was attended by 642 students (424 female). The UNRWA education programme in the West Bank also provided 38 merit-based scholarships to young underprivileged refugees, the majority of whom (87 per cent) were young women. In 2013, UNESCO in partnership with a local radio station, trained five female journalists to produce and present news in a gender-sensitive manner as part of their integrated approach to promote the training of female journalists and the equal presence of women's and men's issues across all types of media.

## **B. Health**

25. The United Nations continued efforts to improve the access to and quality of health services, including maternal and reproductive health care. UNRWA provided a range of basic health-care services to refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, including antenatal care services. A total of 11,356 female and 7,976 male refugees were referred to external secondary and tertiary health-care services. In addition, 3,247 women and 2,290 men received care at the UNRWA-run Qalqilya Hospital. In Gaza, 60.6 per cent of visits to the health centres run by the Agency were made by women. During the second quarter of 2013, a total of 24,942 refugee women benefited from the Agency's family planning services in the West Bank, while in Gaza, 61,208 women benefited from such services in the month of August 2013. In addition, 9,265 women accessed preconception care. During the reporting period, there were 39,001 newly registered pregnancies. Of all pregnant women registered, 93.3 per cent attended four or more antenatal care visits.

26. UNFPA supported the implementation of the national obstetric care protocol through the training of 316 health providers and the establishment of hospital committees to audit near-miss cases in Gaza and the West Bank. Furthermore, they provided home visits for 2,625 pregnant women as well as postnatal care for 1,664 women in the West Bank and Gaza. Through outreach activities, UNFPA reached around 8,470 women, as well as 1,884 adolescent females and 975 males, improving their understanding of issues such as reproductive health, early marriage and healthy lifestyles. In addition, in August 2013, UNFPA supported the launch of the Youth

Peer Education Network, which is a network of young Palestinian men and women who are committed to promote healthy lifestyles among youth and raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. A total of 97 female and 57 male school counsellors were trained on the adolescent health guidance book in Jenin, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Hebron.

27. In Gaza, UNRWA provided postnatal care in follow-up to all 35,590 deliveries during the reporting period. Through the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative, UNICEF reached 26,000 pregnant women and 36,000 lactating mothers in 9 hospitals and 45 health facilities in the West Bank and 14,720 in 3 hospitals in Gaza with counselling sessions on exclusive breastfeeding. Mothers and newborn children at risk were reached through at-home follow-up, and the rate of 78 per cent of mothers who were exclusively breastfeeding was maintained after the third visit. WHO conducted awareness-raising activities on safe childbirth and postnatal care, training 769 health professionals on the process of care for mothers and newborns in the hospital.

28. UNICEF scaled up its psychosocial programmes implemented in Gaza reaching a total of 149,894 children and adolescents (50 per cent girls), 17,986 caregivers (of whom 65 per cent women) and 852 professionals (45 per cent women) all focused on helping children to increase their resilience and coping mechanisms especially in times of crisis.

29. UNICEF also supported a range of initiatives related to water, sanitation and hygiene. This included support for rehabilitation and construction of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in 30 schools in the West Bank and 51 in Gaza, benefiting 45,930 students (20,292 girls), as well as water tankering to 34 schools in the West Bank and 81 in Gaza providing safe drinking water to 65,815 students (34,664 girls).

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

30. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods. Several activities were targeted at building the capacity of cooperatives and entrepreneurs. In 2012, ILO provided support to the Ministry of Labour in the development of a cooperative assessment tool for advisory support services and counselling to cooperatives on enterprise management and governance issues. Training workshops and coaching activities were provided to cooperative extension workers on how to undertake feasibility studies and assess the business plans and performance of newly established cooperatives. ILO also provided direct support to six women's cooperatives. UNDP trained women entrepreneurs and provided technical assistance and support to 28 women's cooperatives to enhance the competitive advantage of their products, and at the same time enhance their business, networking, marketing and advocacy skills. UNRWA implemented a training programme targeting women entrepreneurs from refugee camps across the West Bank. Of all graduates, a total of 30 women accessed loans to start or develop small enterprises. UN-Women continued to build on previous work aimed at providing poor and rural women with the proper tools and mechanisms for the establishment of small, sustainable businesses through local women's community-based

organizations and scaling up the women-run school canteens project in all the schools in the West Bank.

31. UN-Women, UNESCO and UNDP built and/or rehabilitated 9 women's centres in Gaza and the West Bank. Of those structures, some are made of traditional mud brick, where UNESCO trained 40 women in the technique of earthen architecture. The women's centres will bring a range of services to approximately 50,000 women in isolated areas.<sup>30</sup> A business plan has been developed for three of the centres to ensure sustainability, and 39 board members of the centres were trained to adequately manage them.

32. FAO, WFP and UNRWA continued interventions aimed at improving food security. FAO provided agriculture inputs such as on small animal husbandry, beehives and home gardens, and provided training on processing of food, management and marketing, benefiting close to 3,000 female-headed households in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 2012. Forty women's associations participated in several exhibitions conducted in the West Bank and Gaza for the marketing of processed food products. WFP provided assistance through food distribution and conditional voucher programmes, which reached 310,148 female beneficiaries. WFP also started to implement a training component for eligible food-insecure Palestinian women which aims to improve their knowledge base, capacity and skills, thereby establishing a solid foundation for economic empowerment. During the third quarter of 2013, UNRWA supported a total of 36,264 special hardship cases<sup>31</sup> in the West Bank through the provision of food assistance. Of those refugees, 23,281 were female and 12,983 male, with 5,833 families (50.6 per cent) headed by females. In Gaza, the Social Safety Net Programme of UNRWA provided basic food supplies and cash subsidies<sup>32</sup> to 401,765 women (48 per cent of the total) from among the most vulnerable Palestinian refugees.<sup>33</sup> A total of 21,310 families are female-headed households, most of whom are extremely poor.

33. Microfinance support continued to be a source of short-term poverty alleviation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. UNDP, as of December 2012, had provided support to 2,453 female-headed households (66 per cent of the total households supported) to be enrolled in the microfinance component of an employment and training programme. In the West Bank, the UNRWA microfinance programme provided 35 per cent of loans to women (out of a total of 10,067) amounting to 27 per cent of the total value of loans (\$13.7 million). In Gaza, the same programme provided 39 per cent of loans to women (out of a total of 1,382), also amounting to 27 per cent of the total value of loans (\$1.48 million).

34. Through the Gaza gender initiative, UNRWA reached a total of 1,108 female graduates through its Young Women Leaders Programme. The programme seeks to ensure that young female graduates are developing the skills required by the labour market by offering training and courses in areas such as advanced information technology, English language, management and administration, and leadership. It

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<sup>30</sup> Part of those activities are undertaken in the framework of the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund (a joint programme with FAO, UN-Women, UNESCO, UNSCO and UNRWA).

<sup>31</sup> They are identified on the basis of belonging to one or more vulnerability categories, such as female-headed households or households with one or more members with a disability.

<sup>32</sup> Owing to funding constraints, the cash subsidies of the programme were cut in April 2013.

<sup>33</sup> The numbers in Gaza seem inflated relative to numbers in the West Bank because they include both regular cash and food assistance as well as emergency assistance.



also offers life-skills and self-development coaching and includes a work placement scheme to enhance employability.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

35. Building on lessons learned and good practices previously reported, United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. Priority was placed on the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women 2011-2019.

36. UN-Women continued to support the institutionalization of the Family Protection Units in the Palestinian Civil Police, which in 2012 handled 2,849 cases of family violence. UN-Women also continued to support the Corrections and Rehabilitation Centres Department to implement the United Nations minimum standard rules in relation to the rehabilitation component for women inmates in all four Corrections and Rehabilitation Centres in the West Bank where women are held. With the supervision of social workers, weekly training and exercise sessions were provided to an average of 30 women at any given time, and through the support of UN-Women to the Palestinian Bar Association, 20 women inmates were provided with biweekly lawyers' visits and representation in court. UNDP continued to support the Gender Unit of the Civilian Police, including in the development of a diploma programme on gender-responsive policing targeting mid- and high-level officers. UNDP also contributed to the establishment of a Coordination Committee to support and help harmonize strategies of gender units across security institutions. UNOPS supported a project aimed at improving the response by the Office of the Attorney General and Public Prosecution to gender-specific human rights violations. UNODC continued to implement a multi-year programme aimed at building the capacity and skills of forensics services and related personnel to investigate gender-based crimes and provide support for victims of sexual and family violence.

37. Efforts were made to expand and improve women's access to legal protection and services, as well as services specifically targeted at survivors of violence. From 2011 to June 2013, UNDP provided legal aid services to a total of 43,609 women in Gaza and the West Bank, tripling the number of women who were provided with legal representation in courts and almost doubling the number provided with legal information and advice. UN-Women continued to support the Mehwar Centre, which between 2008 and 2012 has sheltered 286 women and 79 child victims of violence and provided a range of services, including: social and legal services for women in the shelter; social counselling for family members; skills development; economic empowerment opportunities; support during the reintegration phase; and conducted outreach activities in the community. UN-Women, through the Millennium Development Goal programme, also continued to provide support to the Hayat multipurpose centre in Gaza City for the protection of victims of violence. Through the gender-based violence referral system established by UNRWA in all its field operations, 414 cases were reported (75 per cent female) in the West Bank, the majority of which received individual counselling from the UNRWA Health Programme's psychosocial counsellors. In Gaza, 384 survivors of gender-based violence were detected through the system.

38. UNFPA and OHCHR continued to support and build the capacity of community-based organizations and coalitions working in the West Bank and Gaza on the prevention of gender-based violence, the promotion of gender equality and the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). This included training by OHCHR on monitoring and reporting on human rights violations against women and support from UNFPA for publications documenting an organization's experience in monitoring implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). Thirteen cases of violations of women's human rights were reported by UNFPA partner organizations.

39. A range of activities were implemented to raise awareness and trigger action to end violence and discrimination against women. In Gaza, the Agency's gender-based violence awareness-raising programmes reached 346 adult women and 275 men as well as 285 youth. Concepts related to gender, human rights and violence were covered in training and discussion groups, including how to deal with violence within the home and how to build healthy and equal relationships. In the West Bank, UNFPA conducted several prevention activities focused on gender-based violence through awareness-raising sessions, media and advocacy activities, and training of community leaders, religious leaders and preachers, including staff at the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Social Affairs, Religious Affairs and Health. UNFPA also trained 75 health providers on gender-based violence identification and clinical management at the hospital, emergency, and primary health care and clinic levels. ILO supported the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics to develop research on violence at work.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

40. United Nations entities continued to work towards strengthening women's participation and representation in decision-making and their engagement in public life. UNDP supported the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, which is designed to enhance the capacities of young Palestinian women leaders across the occupied Palestinian territory. In 2013, 181 women received training on topics such as leadership and communication skills, advocacy, public speaking, human rights and project management. In addition, 453 women were targeted through an awareness campaign related to the Constitution.

41. In October 2012, UN-Women in partnership with UNDP and UNSCO facilitated a meeting between members of the Palestinian women's movement and the United Nations Deputy Special Coordinator. Participants discussed the need for time-bound plans to increase the participation of Palestinian women in decision-making processes and the establishment of a more permanent channel of communication between the Palestinian women's movement and representatives of UNSCO. In follow-up, UN-Women supported the organization of a two-day conference in December 2012 on the theme "Towards achievement of equality: women's political participation for the achievement of social development". The objective of the conference, which brought together over 700 participants, was to provide a platform for the Palestinian women's movement to establish a unified position and identify common priorities in terms of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and beyond.

42. UNFPA trained 20 women of the Wisal Coalition in Gaza on Palestinian law and women's rights to empower them to: act as community leaders; play an active role in family conflict resolution; and raise awareness about gender equality issues and human rights. UNFPA also trained over 40 youth leaders in the West Bank on communication and social media, gender equality and gender-based violence.

## **F. Institutional development**

43. UN-Women continued to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Planning, including support for the review of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2011-2013 and the development of the new strategy for 2014-2016. UN-Women supported the ministries to develop a gender-responsive planning and budgeting approach for the Government and to integrate gender equality priorities in sectoral strategies and plans of line ministries. UNFPA trained staff of the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the newly defined national indicators for youth and gender that were developed in cooperation with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for the national monitoring system. At present, the Ministry of Women's Affairs heads the National Committee for Gender-responsive Budgeting which was established in July 2012 and is tasked to advance the Gender-responsive Budgeting approach in national plans and budgets and build such capacities in target ministries. In addition, the Ministry of Women's Affairs is a member of the Local Aid Coordination Structure, the official coordination forum among the Palestinian Government, civil society and international partners. Despite growing responsibilities, the budget of the Ministry of Women's Affairs remains limited. The annual budget for 2012 was 6,272,000 NIS, 0.5 per cent of the national budget.<sup>34</sup>

44. Assistance was also provided for the institutional development of other ministries and bodies. UNDP continued to support the gender mainstreaming efforts of the Ministry of Justice. In 2013, the Ministry established a Juvenile Justice Unit, properly staffed its Gender Unit, trained all staff on gender equality, integrated gender and juvenile justice concerns into the workplans of all of its departments and developed an internal gender strategy. UNESCO continued to support the Palestinian Women's Documentation and Research Centre in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through capacity-building, research, advocacy and documentation activities. The last phase of the project, starting in 2013, will be transitional in order to create a financially and intellectually autonomous structure. ILO assisted the National Committee for Women's Employment in developing their three-year strategic plan to advocate for gender-sensitive policies, legislation, capacity-building interventions, economic empowerment, social security for women workers and a healthy work environment. UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Social Affairs to strengthen the national child protection system so that girls and young women are afforded greater protection from violence, abuse and exploitation. One of the results is the Amended Child Law that came into force in December 2012, which clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of duty bearers and sets enforcement mechanisms for implementation of its provisions.

45. Notably, during the reporting period the United Nations country team developed the first ever United Nations Development Assistance Framework for

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Finance, Annual Budget of the Government of Palestine 2012.

Palestine. UN-Women, as the coordinator of the United Nations Gender Task Force, ensured its alignment with national gender equality concerns. While promoting gender equality mainstreaming throughout all United Nations programming, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework also identified specific objectives on gender equality. The framework will be implemented in harmony with the National Development Plan of Palestine 2014-2016.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

**46. During the reporting period, prospects for peace were renewed through the resumption of direct negotiations. This occurred against the backdrop of a tense situation on the ground. The outbursts of violence and growing insecurity which have occurred since the previous report to the Commission are of great concern. The Secretary-General has called upon all parties to sustain an environment conducive for the peace process to move forward.**

**47. Many observations from previous reports still stand. Restrictions on movement and access, increased settlement expansion and settler violence, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and displacement, the fragmentation of the Territory and the closure of the Gaza Strip continue to have a negative impact on the lives of Palestinian women and their families. Progress on development indicators has remained slow owing to the volatility of the context, which renders progress fragile and prone to regression, including as it relates to women's rights.**

**48. High levels of unemployment and poverty persist, and many Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services, health care, justice institutions, water and sanitation, and economic opportunities. Signs of increased food insecurity levels, declining quality in education and the growing challenges faced by women in the labour market are all issues demanding greater attention in the coming year. The critical situation with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene as well as energy, in particular in Gaza, are other serious concerns that must be addressed with urgency by all relevant stakeholders.**

**49. Violence against women remains a serious concern. As noted in previous reports and as was evident during the reporting period, insecurity and poverty can exacerbate gender-based discrimination and abuse, including in the workplace, and lead to elevated levels of violence against women in both the public and private spheres. Stronger efforts are needed by all actors to prevent all forms of violence and address obstacles and challenges to women's access to justice and services.**

**50. The United Nations system should use the development of the first United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Palestine and the new Palestinian National Development Plan to improve harmonization and efficiency among all development actors. This includes the initiation of new joint programmes building on the results and good practices created by the joint programmes on gender equality and empowerment of women funded under the Millennium Development Goal Achievement Fund that ended in April 2013.**

51. The United Nations system and the donor community should use the current momentum to support the Palestinian Authority to build on the positive steps taken at the policy and institutional levels to address violence against women and promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, further political commitment, technical and financial support will be required for the effective implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women (2011-2019) and the National Gender Strategy (2014-2016). Technical and financial support must be provided to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's civil society organizations.

52. More determined action is needed by all actors to increase women's participation and representation at all levels of decision-making and to support women in elected and appointed posts. With the renewed peace talks, efforts to engage both Palestinian and Israeli women in the related processes need to be enhanced and supported in accordance with Security Council resolutions [1325 \(2000\)](#) and [2122 \(2013\)](#). Mechanisms for enhancing accountability and monitoring progress in the implementation of these and related commitments on women, peace and security should be established. The recent experience of UN-Women in building the capacity of women leaders in different regions in negotiation and mediation skills could be applied.

53. Dialogue during the reporting period between women's civil society organizations and senior representatives of the United Nations entities proved rewarding and informative for those involved. This should be transformed into a regular practice.

54. While progress has been made in improving systems for data collection and analysis, it is critical to continue to build capacity to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on the full range of issues that have an impact on the lives of Palestinians and to ensure that this information is used to inform programming and is incorporated systematically into all reports and briefings by the United Nations system to relevant intergovernmental bodies.

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2014/1, highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014, and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2015/1.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2014/1 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2014/6](#)), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-ninth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2014 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from the United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the State of Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women, including ESCWA. The present report includes contributions from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/69/84-E/2014/75](#), [A/69/371-S/2014/650](#), [A/69/81-E/2014/13](#) and [A/69/13](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. During the reporting period renewed efforts were made to resume direct final status negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians under the auspices of the United States. Despite an intensified direct engagement between the parties for a period of nine months starting in July 2013, an agreement failed to emerge and talks

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Palestine in the United Nations dated 8 March 2013 ([A/67/738](#)), the designation "State of Palestine" is now used in all documents of the United Nations, notwithstanding the use in parallel of the term used in previous reports, "Occupied Palestinian Territory".

have been suspended since the end of April 2014. Israeli settlement announcements accompanying each tranche of agreed release of Palestinian prisoners complicated negotiation efforts. At the end of March 2014, Israel did not release the fourth tranche of prisoners, citing lack of political progress within the peace talks, and the State of Palestine moved to accede to 15 international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which have since come into effect. Following a reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas on 23 April 2014, a Government of National Consensus was formed on 2 June 2014 in accordance with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commitments and the positions of the Quartet and Arab Peace Initiative.<sup>2</sup>

5. The situation in the West Bank deteriorated with a rise in violence and several disturbing developments, including the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenagers followed by the abduction and killing of a Palestinian teenager, continued settlement expansion, settler violence, land expropriation, the demolition of Palestinian houses and a high number of arrests of Palestinians, including Hamas affiliates, and confrontations between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers. During this period of heightened tensions, rocket fire at Israel from militants in the Gaza Strip increased. Israel responded mostly with airstrikes. The security situation began to dramatically unravel on 7 July after Hamas, for the first time in 20 months and following the arrest of hundreds of its members in the West Bank, claimed responsibility for firing a barrage of rockets towards Israel. On 8 July, Israel launched “Operation Protective Edge”, with the stated goal of stopping rocket attacks and destroying Hamas’ capability to conduct operations against Israel, including by destroying tunnels. On 26 August, an open-ended ceasefire brokered by Egypt went into effect and has largely held since.

6. The 51-day conflict — the third major one in six years — left an unprecedented level of loss of life and destruction. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 2,100 Palestinians, including 1,475 civilians (709 men, 260 women and 506 children) were killed. Additionally, over 11,100 Palestinians, including 3,374 children, 2,088 women and 410 elderly were injured.<sup>3</sup> Sixty-six Israeli soldiers and six civilians, including a child and a foreign national, were killed and 250 Israeli civilians and 450 soldiers were injured. In Gaza, an estimated 18,000 houses were destroyed or severely damaged, as were 111 UNRWA installations and critical infrastructure, including Gaza’s only power plant. At the peak of the conflict, more than 500,000 people were internally displaced with around 293,000 of those taking shelter in UNRWA schools, 100,000 people lost their homes and continue to be displaced.

7. On 23 July 2014, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution S-21/1, in which it decided to establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate all violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, particularly in the occupied Gaza Strip, in the context of the military operations conducted since 13 June 2014, and to report to the Council at its twenty-eighth

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<sup>2</sup> The Quartet asked that all members of future Palestinian Governments be committed to non-violence, the recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the road map.

<sup>3</sup> Data from the Palestinian Ministry of Health.



session in March 2015. A technical gender expert deployed by UN-Women is supporting the investigations.

8. The conflict has had a devastating impact on women and their families, further increasing vulnerability and insecurity. As the primary caregivers in Gaza, women are faced with acute challenges in coping with the large number of families with members killed or injured, the long-term impact of damaged infrastructure and reduced services. Displacement proved especially difficult for women and girls with reports of sexual harassment and gender-based violence in shelters, limited privacy, compromised dignity and reduced access to hygiene.<sup>4</sup> Psychosocial distress levels, already high among the Gaza population, have worsened significantly as a result of the conflict and will require specialized support, specifically for children and women.<sup>4</sup> Female-headed families, including new widows, are a priority group in need of protection and support.

9. In the West Bank, tensions and violent clashes between Palestinians, Israeli security forces and settlers resulted in a marked increase in civilian deaths and injury during the reporting period compared with the previous year. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs,<sup>5</sup> in the West Bank, 44 Palestinian civilians (34 men and 10 boys) were killed and 4,611 were injured (3,497 men, 92 women, 970 boys and 52 girls) by the Israeli Defense Forces, while 145 Palestinians (99 men, 10 women, 30 boys and 6 girls) were injured by Israeli settlers. Seventy-eight Israeli settlers (58 men, 8 women, 8 boys and 4 girls) were injured by Palestinians.

10. The ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the closure of the Gaza Strip, continued to affect the social and economic situation of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory. The living conditions of women vary depending on sociocultural factors and the differential status that applies to Palestinian women and men in different areas<sup>6</sup> and related obstacles to movement and access. As at September 2014, some 1.8 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remained effectively isolated from the rest of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by the continuing closure by Israel. Access to East Jerusalem has remained limited for Palestinian residents from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede humanitarian access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, and particularly those in the firing zone and those located behind the Barrier.

11. Food insecurity levels in the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained high at 33 per cent (57 per cent in Gaza Strip and 19 per cent in the West Bank),<sup>7</sup> as a result of the continued closure of the Gaza Strip, restrictions on access in the West Bank and related high rates of poverty and continued increases in food prices and threats to livelihoods. Since food insecurity is defined in the Palestinian context as the lack

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<sup>4</sup> Gaza Crisis Appeal, September 2014 Update (available from: [http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Gaza\\_Crisis\\_Appeal\\_9\\_September.pdf](http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/Gaza_Crisis_Appeal_9_September.pdf) (accessed September 2014)).

<sup>5</sup> Figures cover the period 1 October 2013 to 30 August 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 interim Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the West Bank was divided into three zones, Areas A, B and C. Extensive responsibility was delegated by Israel to the Palestinian Authority in Areas A and B. Area C remained under full authority of Israel.

<sup>7</sup> FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Socioeconomic and food security survey 2013: West Bank and Gaza Strip" (unpublished information).

of economic access to food, trends of food insecurity are driven by economic performance. The situation in the West Bank worsened compared to last year, when food insecurity stood at 14 per cent.

12. Female-headed households account for only 9.8 per cent of all families in occupied Palestinian territory (8.3 per cent in the Gaza Strip and 10.5 per cent in the West Bank). Latest available data<sup>7</sup> indicate that 26 per cent of female-headed households in the West Bank are food insecure compared to 18 per cent of the male-headed households. In the Gaza Strip the situation is the reverse, as a result of external assistance targeting female-headed households. Food insecurity among those households is 51 per cent, compared to 58 per cent among male-headed households. In Gaza, food insecurity is estimated to have increased as a result of the recent conflict and the high levels of displacement, the inability of the population to access their livelihoods, especially agriculture, and increased unemployment rates. This is expected to contribute to a deterioration of the nutritional status of women and children.<sup>8</sup>

13. Women continue to face significant challenges in the labour market. The labour force participation rate among women remained low at 16 per cent (compared to 65.8 per cent for men) in Gaza and 18 per cent (compared to 71.3 per cent for men) in the West Bank. Available data shows that women's unemployment rates remained high during the reporting period at 61 per cent in Gaza and 26 per cent in the West Bank.<sup>9</sup> Young women are particularly affected by youth unemployment, with an overall unemployment rate of 64.7 per cent, compared with 36.9 per cent of young men. In Gaza, the situation is particularly dire with unemployment rates of 86.3 per cent for young women and 51.8 per cent for young men.<sup>9</sup> Discrimination within the workplace continued to persist, as evidenced through disparities in wages. The average daily wage for women represented 81.1 per cent of that for men in 2013,<sup>10</sup> demonstrating an increase of the wage gap of 5.7 percentage points compared to 2012.

14. Concerns related to limited access to essential health care and shortages of drugs and medical disposables remain, with increased concerns in Gaza. The current crisis has left health-care centres damaged, without adequate medical equipment and stock, and health-care providers unable to properly attend to the needs of women and girls requiring sexual and reproductive health services. As a result of the destruction to homes and the shelter crisis, it is expected that about 3,000 displaced pregnant women will continue to suffer from lack of access to basic services and special dietary and vitamin supplements.<sup>4</sup> During the crisis, more than 45,000 pregnant women were deprived of access to basic reproductive health services, and around 5,000 deliveries took place in extremely poor conditions.<sup>4</sup>

15. The water and energy situation remains critical. Gaza's only aquifer will become unusable as early as 2016, with the damage irreversible by 2020; 95 per cent of water from the aquifer is unfit for human consumption. For drinking, people either purchase desalinated water from tankers or depend on small

<sup>8</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Gaza Initial Rapid Assessment" (27 August 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014. Labour Force Survey: (April-Jun, 2014) Round (Q2/2014), *Press Report on the Labour Force Survey Results*, Ramallah-Palestine.

<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. "Labour force survey annual report." (2013).

desalination units at home.<sup>11</sup> Prior to the conflict, the precarious energy supply only met approximately 46 per cent of the estimated demand. With the destruction of public infrastructure including the only power plant and water facilities during the recent conflict, the functioning of basic services, including water and sanitation were severely debilitated and present serious implications for the public health of the population, including women.

16. In terms of education, the situation showed mixed results. According to the latest data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics,<sup>12</sup> the adjusted net enrolment rate in primary education in Palestine was 92.74 per cent in 2012, with a gender parity index of 0.99. In the case of lower secondary education the enrolment rate was 83.6 per cent and the index 1.06 with girls slightly outnumbering boys. For upper secondary education the rate was 71.55 and the index 1.24 in favour of girls. Improvements in enrolment have, however, been coupled with an overall decline in the quantity and quality of education as a result of violence, the closure of Gaza and restrictions on movement. Additionally, the significant gains made by women in education over time have not been translated into progress in women's participation in the labour market. Continuous population growth and insufficient infrastructure stretched school capacities to its limits, negatively affecting the quality of education delivered. Prior to the crisis, Gaza faced a shortage of almost 200 schools and two-thirds of schools were operating on a double shift basis. The hostilities are expected to magnify the shortage of classrooms as roughly 258 schools (including at least 75 UNRWA schools) sustained damage and some schools are completely destroyed.<sup>4</sup> In the West Bank, threat of harassment by Israeli settlers and Israeli security forces on the way to school and fear of harm and humiliation at checkpoints continue to create stress and fear among children and their families.

17. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in the political realm, they remain underrepresented in formal decision-making bodies and processes. As at September 2014, women held 3 out of 17 ministerial level posts (16.6 per cent) in the new Palestinian Government of National Consensus — an increase from 12.5 per cent in the previous Government, but a drop from 21 per cent of the last Government of May 2012. In the justice sector, women only account for 15 per cent of judges, 16 per cent of prosecutors and 21 per cent of lawyers, with some drops registered from the previous year when figures were 15, 19.5 and 32.5 respectively. Women hold about 41 per cent of public sector employment and tend to remain at lower positions of decision-making.<sup>13</sup>

18. The occupied Palestinian territory continued to be characterized by a weak rule of law. Many barriers to women's access to justice, especially for women victims of violence, remain, hampering opportunities for women to seek redress.<sup>14</sup> The existing legal frameworks contain laws that are outdated and discriminate against women, particularly in matters of divorce and child custody. Women and girl victims of violence continue to face a combination of challenges preventing them from accessing available security and justice services, ranging from difficult physical access to security and judicial institutions, in particular those residing in

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<sup>11</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/oPt/Outcome\\_document\\_on\\_Water\\_and\\_Energy\\_in\\_Gaza\\_-\\_16\\_May\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/oPt/Outcome_document_on_Water_and_Energy_in_Gaza_-_16_May_2014.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>.

<sup>13</sup> Data from 2012 from the Palestinian General Personnel Council.

<sup>14</sup> UN-Women, "Women's Access to Justice — Access Denied." (December, 2014).

Area C, to stigmatization of and pressures from families and communities on women who seek justice. Even in cases where women manage to access justice services, they often face service providers who lack professional knowledge in dealing specifically with women and girl victims of violence and who continue to interpret outdated laws pertaining to the Penal Code and personal status law in a way that infringes on women's rights.

19. The informal justice system continues to deal with matters traditionally considered private issues, including so-called honour crimes and domestic violence. According to the civil society partners, 19 cases of femicide were reported for the period of January to September 2014, compared to 28 cases for the whole year of 2013. However, the number of cases is most likely underreported. During the reporting period, no cases of so-called honour crimes were reported to OHCHR in Gaza. This is likely a result of the social and cultural context and a lack of willingness to report such incidents openly. According to OHCHR, new trends have emerged in femicide cases or the killing of women as a result of family disputes or crime. Studies suggest that overcrowding, especially owing to the housing situation in Gaza and East Jerusalem, exacerbates violence within households.<sup>15</sup>

20. The Palestinian Government continued to take noteworthy steps to strengthen capacity to prevent and respond to different forms of violence against women. In May 2014, the President issued a presidential decree that amended articles of the Penal Code by removing provisions for leniency with regard to murder in the name of so-called family honour. The Palestinian Cabinet approved the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence (Takamol) in 2014. While the Family Protection from Violence law was provisionally accepted, it is still under discussion with regard to its legislative applicability with the Palestinian Basic Law. The Office of the Attorney-General appointed 15 trained prosecutors to investigate violence against women cases. Sustained efforts are, however, needed to improve and expand services and access to justice for all victims and survivors of gender-based violence and to review, revise and strengthen relevant laws.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

21. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to the range of development and humanitarian challenges. Priorities for the United Nations support to the Palestinian people are outlined in a set of key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016, which is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016, and the 2014 Strategic Response Plan for the occupied Palestinian territory which outlines the humanitarian programming. This section updates on assistance provided by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development.

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<sup>15</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, Overview of the Housing Situation in the Gaza Strip (March 2013), and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Easing the blockade: Assessing the humanitarian impact on the population of the Gaza Strip (March, 2011).

## A. Education and training

22. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and improve learning environments. In the 2013/14 academic school year 29,518 girls (59 per cent of all students) were enrolled in elementary and preparatory education in UNRWA schools in the West Bank and 111,825 girls in the Gaza Strip (48 per cent of all students); 630 female students were enrolled in technical and vocational training programmes (55 per cent of total) and 427 female students (63 per cent of total) were enrolled in a teacher training degree programme administered by UNRWA. In addition, UNRWA granted 36 scholarships to young refugees, of which 30 were granted to young women who excelled academically but would otherwise be unable to afford tertiary education in fields such as business administration, sciences, engineering finance and accounting. Through its Al-Fakhoora Dynamic Futures Programme in Gaza, UNDP provided academic scholarships for 324 students (180 female) and supported their economic empowerment opportunities in the form of paid internship to facilitate the transition to the labour market.

23. To promote access to quality education for all Palestinian children, nine United Nations organizations<sup>16</sup> coordinated by UNESCO continued their support to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in piloting an educational package designed to improve capacities on early childhood development and promote inclusive and child-friendly education regardless of gender, disabilities, backgrounds and circumstances. A major achievement has been the opening of Grade 0 (one year of pre-school) classrooms in 30 public schools in the West Bank and 14 in Gaza aiming to improve the development and learning of more than 1,000 children (50 per cent girls). Forty-four Early Childhood Development teachers (all female) have been trained in these pilot schools, along with Grade 1 teachers to facilitate the transition to primary education. In addition, training and awareness sessions on inclusive education in Gaza reached 603 university students (369 female) and 825 teachers (518 female).

24. In the West Bank, UNICEF and partners supported safe access to schools, providing protective accompaniment to schoolchildren at 14 Israeli military checkpoints and gates for safer commutes to school. This has benefitted 3,568 children (29 per cent girls) and 304 teachers. In Gaza, UNICEF, with the Ministry of Education and partners, supported the reopening of schools to ensure that 230,000 schoolchildren (52 per cent girls) return to school after the hostilities, including support for the cleaning and disinfection of 27 Government schools that were used as collective shelters during the conflict, as well as training about 12,000 schoolteachers and administrators on psychosocial support, a policy of non-violence in schools and identification of traumatized children and referrals. Along with partners, UNICEF implemented after-school activities that benefitted 14,000 adolescents (50 per cent girls) with creative learning, life skills and recreational activities. The gender-sensitive after-school activities aimed to increase leadership skills and the participation of girls.

25. Food assistance continued to play an important role in improving learning environments. WFP reached 140,014 children (50 per cent girls) through its food assistance in schools in the West Bank and Gaza. UN-Women maintained the

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<sup>16</sup> FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNRWA, UNSCO, WFP and WHO.

“Women-Run School Canteens” programme in the West Bank providing access to healthy and nutritious food for 123,809 schoolchildren (50 per cent girls). Through extracurricular activities, the programme also raised awareness of schoolchildren, teachers, staff and parents on the effects of good nutrition on health.

26. UNESCO continued to support the training of 83 young female journalists on the use of social media and gender-sensitive reporting. In addition, specialized workshops were organized on women journalists’ rights, media ethics and the role of women journalists in promoting reconciliation. Psychosocial counselling is being provided to 30 female journalists from Gaza and the West Bank.

## **B. Health**

27. The United Nations continued to build on good practice and results reported in the previous year to improve the access to and quality of health services, including maternal and reproductive health care. UNRWA remained a major provider of basic health-care services in the West Bank and Gaza, operating a range of care facilities, as well as mobile clinic teams and employing over 2,000 staff. From October 2013 to June 2014, UNRWA provided antenatal care to over 30,000 Palestine refugee women in the West Bank, which is more than double the number of women served last year. A total of 11,258 Palestine refugee women (68.6 per cent) were referred to secondary or tertiary care.

28. UNFPA continued to support a national programme of family planning and advanced the coverage of its services within Ministry of Health clinics and through civil society organizations. UNFPA also maintained support for a maternal mortality surveillance programme. In addition, UNFPA supported the integration of gender-based violence services into the national health system to detect, treat and refer survivors of gender-based violence and 1,200 health service providers were trained on gender-based violence response. During the hostilities in Gaza, UNFPA supported five maternities in Gaza with medical supplies and essential drugs and reached 4,000 displaced women with dignity kits, reproductive health services and psychosocial support. In addition, UNFPA reached 120,000 displaced young people with recreational activities and psychosocial support.

29. United Nations entities continued to provide a range of psychosocial services and support initiatives to improve the quality of mental health services. The UNRWA Emergency Community Mental Health Programme paid particular attention to Bedouin Palestine refugee children and women living in Area C and the Seam Zone in the provision of counselling and psychosocial support. During the reporting period, 2,735 women and girls (56 per cent) participated in psychosocial group activities. UNRWA also implemented community awareness and behavioural change programmes, including community-based family protection services integrated in the primary health-care centres, to address gender-based violence, child protection and sexual and reproductive health rights. Through the Family and Child Protection Programme, UNRWA aims to protect vulnerable groups in Palestine refugee camps, children, youth, women, the elderly and people with special needs from all forms of abuse, neglect and discrimination. Through WHO support, 117 mental health professionals (42 per cent female) received specialized training in child and adolescent mental health, family therapy that addressed gender-based violence, recovery, and cognitive behavioural therapy.

30. In response to the escalation of violence in Gaza, UNICEF provided drugs and medical consumable items for use in pediatric hospitals and primary health centres in the Gaza Strip benefiting at least 30,000 children (50 per cent girls). In addition, UNICEF-led awareness-raising activities on communicable diseases that reached 3,998 women (47 per cent of the total), 2,935 children (50 per cent girls). More than 23,475 lactating mothers in Gaza benefited from breastfeeding counselling, including 6,202 women during the conflict in Gaza.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

31. Within its development programming, United Nations entities continued to prioritize initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods.

32. Microfinance support remained a source of short-term poverty alleviation in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the West Bank, the UNRWA Microfinance Programme provided 2,776 loans to Palestinian refugee women (36 per cent of total loans) amounting to \$3 million (28 per cent of total loans). To promote the economic empowerment of women, UNRWA introduced a microfinance programme that targets women only with home-based income generating projects or activities.

33. UNDP, through its Productive Families and Economic Empowerment Programme, provided support to nearly 4,000 women entrepreneurs and female-headed households in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to secure sustainable income and employment. As a result, 37 per cent of the targeted beneficiary families were lifted out of poverty and 79 per cent improved their average monthly income by 64 per cent. Moreover, UNDP interventions contributed to creating more than 5,000 paid and sustainable new job opportunities for women leading to a substantive increase in family incomes. Female entrepreneurs and business owners' access to regional and international markets was improved. Through the Deprived Families Economic Empowerment Programme, UNDP supported comprehensive training and grant schemes, including business development services, in support of the empowerment of poor households, including female-headed households. UNDP also supported the establishment of a national committee to review trade agreements and cooperation frameworks.

34. UNESCO and partners rehabilitated buildings in four Palestinian villages to be used as centres for women's associations. These centres will provide services for around 150 women. Through women's engagement in community activities, UNESCO raised awareness of cultural heritage preservation and its role as a tool for socioeconomic development mainly through cultural tourism. UN-Habitat implemented a housing and income-generating project for underprivileged women in Hebron city where 100 housing units were developed. A technical and vocational training centre for marginalized women has also been established where small-scale economic activities and cooperatives were initiated.

35. Various initiatives sought to build women's skills and capacity to produce and market various products. UN-Women provided training for a total of 70 women beneficiaries in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on designing and producing quality marketable Palestinian handicrafts and products. Additionally, two training manuals were developed; one on the marketing of women-produced cultural products and the other on gender-sensitive agro-biodiversity. Supported by FAO and

UNDP, the national first initiative, aimed to promote and market high quality cultural and agricultural products of 28 women's associations locally and globally.

36. UNCTAD implemented a project entitled "Capacity development for facilitating Palestinian trade", which aimed to increase the representation of women in the Palestinian Shipper's Council staff (three out of seven employees are women) and the Council Board of Directors (two out of 13 Board members are women) as part of capacity development initiatives for facilitating Palestinian trade. The project reached approximately 220 women. It also supported 173 women through workshops and trainings on the trade and supply chain management.

37. ILO continued to support the promotion and development of women-only cooperatives. Over the past two years, ILO has been providing technical support to the General Directorate of Cooperatives at the Ministry of Labour. More recently, ILO worked closely with the Directorate in identifying new non-traditional economic sectors for cooperative development for women and building the capacity of cooperative counsellors at the Ministry of Labour to provide better advisory services and counselling to women-only cooperatives.

38. UN-Women continued to strengthen sustainability and financial autonomy of community-based women centres and secure greater livelihood and economic security for women in marginalized communities through the Women-run School Canteen Programme, which is now well-established across all 13 governorates of the West Bank. As at September 2014, 53 community-based organizations were involved in the programme, of which 18 centres were making profits and had almost achieved financial independence. The programme created part-time employment opportunities and a secure monthly income for around 625 women.

39. FAO, WFP, UNDP and UNRWA continued interventions aimed at improving food security, with a particular focus on women. FAO aimed to increase income generation, stabilize agricultural capacities and improve food security for vulnerable households in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, providing agriculture inputs such as small animal husbandry to more than 1,160 women. WFP contributed to women's empowerment through its nutrition awareness activities in the Gaza Strip. The trainings, which reached 1,000 women, aim to raise awareness on the nutritional impacts of food and support women's key role in guaranteeing food security for the entire household and their role in the management of food resources and meal preparation. Strengthened informal women's networks were created as a by-product of the trainings supporting women's resilience by providing a peer support group beyond close relatives.

40. UNDP contributed to enhancing women's access to resources and food security through the development of irrigation systems and water resources in the West Bank; 2,820 women benefited from upgrades in the land irrigation network, which effectively resulted in a marked increase of cultivated land of water storage. UNRWA supported 2,761 refugee households that joined the UNRWA food voucher programme, of which 8,543 (49 per cent of the total) were female beneficiaries. UNRWA also supported the Cash-for-Work Programme, with 3,665 (48 per cent of total) female beneficiaries, and provided cash-for-work opportunities.

41. During the Gaza hostilities, UNRWA and WFP undertook an exceptional food distribution scheme, providing food assistance to families that usually do not



receive food assistance from WFP, reaching an estimated 620,000 beneficiaries, of which 305,014 were female.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

42. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. Priority for activities continued to be placed on supporting the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019).

43. The UNDP Access to Justice and Rule of Law Programme supported the establishment of gender units across the justice and security sectors and the promotion of gender-sensitive laws and policies. More specifically, as part of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, it developed the capacity of the Gender Legislative Committee to review and improve draft laws, bylaws and amendments from a gender perspective. Through Birzeit University, an accredited diploma programme was provided for senior Palestinian Civil Police on public administration and gender mainstreaming. It also supported the establishment of a security sector gender taskforce under the auspice of the Ministry of the Interior comprised of seven Palestinian security agencies, which adopted recommendations to institutionalize and mainstream a gender perspective into all policies, plans and programmes. The Security Sector Gender Task Force fed into the development of the Security Sector Strategic Plan (2014-2016), which presents concrete steps to strengthen and develop tools and policies to incorporate gender into the security establishment.

44. Through this programme, UNDP provided legal aid services, including legal representation, counselling and information, to almost 22,000 women in 2013, in particular with regard to family breakdown issues and disputes frequently linked to family violence, including applications by women for divorce, separation, custody, maintenance and, alimony and inheritance issues. UNDP also supported a study on public perceptions of family law reform in collaboration with the Birzeit University Institute of Women's Studies, to help inform future family law reform efforts. In Gaza, the Awn Network of civil society legal aid providers established a gender justice council to provide legal aid services to female inmates and to campaign on legal policy issues in support of women's human rights. One such successful campaign resulted in a decision of the de facto authorities to remove the stigmatized labelling of women as "divorcees" from identification cards. In the West Bank, support provided to the Palestinian Maintenance Fund to develop institutional relations with other government bodies enabled the Fund to increase its retrieval rate and provide reliable monthly alimony payments to more of the most marginalized women and children in the West Bank.

45. A number of United Nations entities supported activities aimed at raising the awareness of violence against women, as well as expanding support services. During the reporting period, 311 UNRWA staff members and nearly 1,000 community group members were trained on gender-based violence, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights in the West Bank. From October 2013 to June 2014, 166 (87 per cent women and girls) gender-based violence survivors were identified and accessed services, including counselling. In response to the

Gaza crisis, UNRWA focused its attention on the protection of women and girls in the context of the unprecedented number of internally displaced persons in its temporary shelters. This included providing 24-hour services for victims of any forms of violence, sensitizing shelter staff and organizing awareness-raising campaigns for men and women about the risks of sexual and gender-based violence, in addition to establishing multipurpose rooms designated for women and adolescent girls in shelters. In 2014, OHCHR carried out three seminars with local leaders focusing on women's human rights in three different locations of the Gaza Strip and urged them to uphold the rights of women in their communities. In May and June 2014 OHCHR, in collaboration with the Gaza Bar Association and the NGO partners, organized full-day workshops for Gaza lawyers on human rights principles, including sessions on gender-based violence.

46. Based on the results of the 2012 Gender Based Violence Survey,<sup>17</sup> ILO has partnered with Birzeit University in the West Bank to promote a more gender-sensitive university environment. In June 2014, ILO conducted a training-of-trainers for the staff of the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University on the participatory gender audit methodology with the aim of increasing the role of the Institute in advocating for equal opportunities and treatment of women in the university while also developing capacities to identify and intervene on issues related to gender-based unfair treatment in the workplace.

47. UNFPA is currently supporting the establishment of a mechanism to collect data on gender-based violence, and the development of a national referral system to strengthen multisectoral services and support to gender-based violence survivors in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Palestinian Civil Police and the Ministry of Justice.

48. Through its Strengthening Women's Access to Justice Programme, UN-Women built the capacity of a core group of lawyers in the area of prosecution on violence against women. The Palestinian Attorney-General appointed 15 specialized lawyers (9 men and 6 women) to provide legal aid and representation to women victims of violence, in addition to the development of standard operating procedures for the prosecution of cases involving violence against women. UN-Women continued to provide technical support to the Palestinian Bar Association, where a specialized training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and international standards of handling and litigating violence against women was organized for about 20 lawyers. The lawyers, through the Palestinian Bar Association, continued to legally support cases of violence against women for female inmates inside the correction and rehabilitation centres and sheltered women. Furthermore, UN-Women provided training for Palestinian Civil Police officers within the Family Protection Unit to build their capacity on standard operating procedures for responding to violence against women with a view to safeguarding rights and due process.

49. UNODC continued to support and strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian Ministries of Justice and the Interior and the Palestinian Civilian Police to manage, administer, deliver and expand forensic services in accordance with international standards, including with regard to the investigation of gender-based violence cases.

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<sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization, *Gender-based Violence in the Workplace: An overview from the occupied Palestinian territory*-Policy Brief (2012).

Seven Palestinian doctors, undergoing a four-year specialized training programme in forensic medicine in Amman, completed their first year of training. A “best practice” manual on sexual and gender-based violence examination for forensic practitioners and criminal justice system stakeholders was developed, together with a training programme in forensic nursing, and a forensic laboratory facility was established.

50. In the second half of 2014, UNDP and UN-Women commenced implementation of a new comprehensive joint rule of law, justice and security programme in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip seeking to systemize gender interventions across all rule of law components and develop dedicated and specialized gender capacities to deal with cases of violence against women.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

51. During the reporting period, UN-Women supported the creation of a national women’s political participation caucus, which functions as an advocacy and lobbying body to support women’s political participation and access to decision-making spheres. The caucus group is comprised of 100 PLO political party representatives, women’s advocates, youth advocates and civil society organizations representatives in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The caucus members received trainings on gender concepts, the Palestinian women’s bill of rights, the personal status law, the Penal Code, the Labour Law, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Since its establishment,<sup>18</sup> the caucus has conducted a review of political parties’ bylaws from a gender perspective. At the local level, UN-Women supported the creation of 10 committees in rural areas of the West Bank to advocate for the participation of women in political and public life. UN-Women also supported the establishment of the Constitution Shadow Committee, comprised of 24 young women and five young men seeking to influence the ongoing Palestinian constitution-making process in favour of a gender-sensitive Constitution.

52. UNDP continued to support the Palestinian Initiative for Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, which is designed to enhance the capacities of 50 young Palestinian female leaders across the occupied Palestinian territory, including strengthening their networks and lobbying skills for formulation of gender-responsive policies and regulations to increase women’s political participation and representation.

## **F. Institutional development**

53. UN-Women continued to provide technical assistance and institutional support to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, including in the follow-up to the Cross Sectoral National Gender Strategy (2014-2016), which was endorsed by the Cabinet in April 2014, and in the review of the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016 and related sectoral strategies, including the labour sector strategy the local governance sector strategy, and the education sector strategy (2014-2016), from a gender perspective. In partnership with ILO, UN-Women supported the National Committee for Women’s Employment in developing its 2015-2017 Action Plan,

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<sup>18</sup> Established in the last quarter of 2013.

which focuses on increasing women's participation in the labour force and protecting their rights, with a special focus on the agriculture and the information technology sectors. As part of its Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment programme, UN-Women laid the ground for developing the capacity of national stakeholders in gender responsive budgeting and gender responsive planning. Technical support to line ministries continued on gender responsive planning, with more than 91 Government officials members trained during the latest government planning cycle for 2014-2016. UN-Women also supported the development of the Gender Charter for the Local Aid Coordination Structure, with the aim of developing a common vision and values with respect to dealing with gender issues within the aid coordination structure. ESCWA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, carried out a set of workshops to enhance the skills of relevant national staff on gender-related issues.

54. Following a series of consultations with its tripartite constituents in 2013, ILO developed a Decent Work Programme for the period 2013-2016 that addresses key deficits in the labour market and promotes workers' rights. The Programme supports entrepreneurship and skills development for male and female youth, as well as cooperatives' development. ILO also conducted a labour review that draws on the earlier gender legal review undertaken by the National Committee for Women's Employment, and a rapid assessment of the labour inspection system carried out previously by ILO. The findings of the review, including on barriers to women's participation in the labour market, were incorporated into a policy paper with clear recommendations including a maternity benefit in the social security law currently being developed and a provision in the Palestinian Labour Law for defining and preventing harassment in the workplace.

55. UNDP supported the Ministry of Social Affairs to integrate women's economic empowerment into the National Social Protection Strategy. The Palestine Trade Center, through UNDP support, integrated gender perspectives into its results-based management system, administrative and personnel manual, the financial manual and the newly developed Code of Ethics and launched a database on women-owned businesses.

56. During the reporting period, WHO conducted five capacity development workshops in the area of social determinants of health for 100 Ministry of Health mid-level managers from various regions in the West Bank, introducing concepts and methods for analysing and addressing social determinants of women's and men's health.

57. United Nations entities undertook various initiatives to assess and ensure that the different needs of women and girls are taken into account in humanitarian action. UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs organized workshops with women's organizations in Gaza to identify avenues and opportunities for their participation in humanitarian coordination mechanisms. The workshops brought the knowledge and experiences of women's organizations to address gaps in the humanitarian response in the 2015 cycle and beyond, notably, validating the analysis carried out by a Humanitarian Gender Adviser on gender-specific priorities to be reflected in the 2015 humanitarian appeals process. To inform the humanitarian response, UN-Women completed field research on the situation of women and girls in the Access Restricted Area in the Gaza Strip, analysing the impact of border conflict on women's and girls' protection, livelihood

and access to services within the framework of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

58. UNESCO, through the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre, supported the strengthening of capacities related to policy-oriented research on gender equality: 48 professionals (40 female and 8 male) from governmental, semi-governmental and non-governmental research and gender departments have completed a 96-hour capacity development programme. UNESCO also organized additional training sessions on gender-sensitive planning for 22 members of the Gender Advisory Committee of the Palestinian Authority's Security Sector.

59. ESCWA is supporting the development of a national Gender Statistics Framework for Palestine with gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated indicators that will constitute a tool for policymakers to monitor progress against global and national commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

60. **The reporting period was marked by a series of alarming developments, including a steep escalation of tension and violence between Gaza and Israel and a suspension of the direct final status negotiations. The large military operation launched by the Israeli army from 8 July to 26 August 2014 in the Gaza Strip resulted in a humanitarian emergency with an unprecedented scale of destruction, devastation and displacement, which further heightened vulnerability and instability. Women, girls, boys and men are affected differently by the crisis and greater involvement of all groups in the design and planning of humanitarian recovery and relief programmes needs to be undertaken. It is essential to ensure women's participation across all programming. In addition, male and female youth, who constitute the majority of the Gaza population, need to be given a voice in identifying their particular needs and priorities within relief and recovery planning and implementation.**

61. **Many observations from previous reports still stand. Restrictions on movement and access, increased settlement expansion and settler violence, demolitions of Palestinian infrastructure and displacement, the fragmentation of the territory and the closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, continue to have a negative gender differentiated impact on the lives of Palestinian women and their families. The volatility of the context poses formidable obstacles to development in the State of Palestine. As the report shows, progress on development indicators remains fragile and prone to regression, including as it relates to women's rights. The significant operational challenges on the work on the United Nations and its partners pose serious barriers to addressing both immediate and longer-term needs.**

62. **High levels of unemployment and poverty persist, and many Palestinian women and girls still face significant obstacles in accessing basic services, health care, psychosocial support, water and sanitation, justice institutions and economic opportunities. Signs of increased food insecurity levels, compromised quality of educational environments and services and the growing challenges faced by women in the labour market are all issues demanding greater attention and a more gender-sensitive response in the coming year. The critical situations with regard to water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as energy, in**

particular in Gaza following the recent conflict, are other major concerns that must be addressed with urgency by all relevant stakeholders.

63. Despite stronger normative frameworks in place, violence against women remains a serious concern. Sustained efforts and investments are needed to improve and expand services and access to justice for victims. As noted in previous reports and as was evident during the reporting period, insecurity and poverty can exacerbate gender-based discrimination and abuse, including in the workplace, and lead to elevated levels of violence against women in both the public and private spheres. The prevention of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls must be at the forefront of efforts in the coming year.

64. Efforts made by the State of Palestine with the support of the United Nations to strengthen policy and implementation frameworks and build institutional capacity to address violence against women and promote gender equality and women's empowerment over the past two years are laudable. These include the development and endorsement of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019) and the Cross Sectoral National Gender Strategy (2014-2016), as well as the inclusion of commitments to gender equality in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Palestine and the new Palestinian National Development Plan. Strong political commitment at the highest levels and across line ministries, in addition to technical and financial support to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's civil society organizations, will be required for their effective implementation. The accession to international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, brings new obligations requiring effective accountability and monitoring systems. The United Nations stands ready to assist in the implementation and monitoring of these obligations.

65. Progress has been made in improving systems for gender-sensitive data collection and analysis. Still, continued support is needed to further build capacity to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data on the full range of issues that have an impact on the lives of Palestinians. As stressed in previous reports, such analysis and data must form an integral part of all policymaking, planning and programming initiatives and inform reporting and briefings by the United Nations system to relevant intergovernmental bodies.

66. The United Nations will continue working towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The engagement of Palestinian and Israeli women in the peace process and talks must be supported in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2122 (2013) on women, peace and security. Building on promising initiatives under way that are supported by UN-Women, UNDP and others, stronger action is needed by all actors to increase women's participation and leadership at all levels of decision-making and to support women in elected and appointed posts. The good practice of direct dialogue between women's civil society organizations and senior representatives of the United Nations entities should be maintained.



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## Commission on the Status of Women

### Sixtieth session

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

## Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/13, highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2016/1.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2015/13 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed grave concern about the increased difficulties being faced by Palestinian women and girls living under Israeli occupation and about the critical socioeconomic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2015/5](#)), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixtieth session a report, including information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women based on information from the United Nations entities and individual experts that monitor the situation of Palestinians in the State of Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women. The present report includes contributions from the following United Nations entities: ESCWA, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/70/76-E/2015/57](#), [A/70/354-S/2015/677](#), [A/70/82-E/2015/13](#) and [A/70/13](#)), as well as the report of the independent commission of inquiry established pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution S-21/1 ([A/HRC/29/52](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

4. The reporting period began shortly after an open-ended ceasefire was agreed on 26 August 2014 between Israel and Palestinian militant groups, ending the 51-day conflict in Gaza, which had left an unprecedented level of destruction and

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Palestine in the United Nations dated 8 March 2013 ([A/67/738](#)), the designation "State of Palestine" is now used in all documents of the United Nations, notwithstanding the use in parallel of the term used in previous reports, "Occupied Palestinian Territory".



despair in the Gaza Strip and exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation. At the donor conference held on 12 October 2014, in Cairo, the international community pledged \$3.5 billion for the reconstruction needs of Gaza. As at 31 August 2015, only 35 per cent of pledges targeting the reconstruction needs of Gaza had been fulfilled.<sup>2</sup>

5. The United Nations brokered an agreement between the Government of Israel and the Government of Palestine to facilitate the entry of dual-use material, such as aggregate, steel bar and cement, into Gaza for the reconstruction of housing, water networks and schools, among other major infrastructure projects. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has, to date, enabled over 96,000 families to procure construction materials for repairing their homes. In addition, almost 2,300 families of the 19,000 whose homes had been severely or completely destroyed have been cleared to purchase material through the mechanism.<sup>3</sup> However, the scale of reconstruction remains far short of satisfying the tremendous need in Gaza.

6. Challenges remain with respect to the two-State solution and meaningful negotiations. Nevertheless, over the last three months of the reporting period, the Middle East Quartet envoys (representing the European Union, the United Nations, the Russian Federation and the United States of America) have held active and direct consultations with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and key international partners on how to preserve the two-State solution and whether conditions can be established for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations.

7. The eight-year long closure of the Gaza Strip has had a devastating effect on Palestinians living in Gaza. Challenges affecting women, in particular, include the prevalence of gender-based violence and limited access to water, housing, land and property, employment opportunities, higher education and health care, including prenatal and neonatal health care.<sup>4</sup> Psychosocial distress levels, which were already high among the Gaza population, have worsened significantly as a result of the conflict and will require specialized support, specifically for children, adolescent girls and women.

8. Refugee camps in the Occupied Palestinian Territory are among the most densely populated urban environments in the world and the conditions in these camps have deteriorated over decades, in both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Specifically for women and girls, this overcrowding limits their mobility, privacy and access to recreational spaces. Overcrowded living conditions and a lack of privacy cause psychological distress among camp residents and strain family and social relations. Residents frequently note that gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is a manifestation of such stress, combined with the strain caused by the unstable political and security situation and discriminatory gender stereotypes and norms.<sup>4</sup>

9. The Israeli Government has come under increasing pressure from settler groups to resume the planning and tendering of settlements, which have been in a

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank, "Reconstructing Gaza: Donor Pledges" (September 2015), available at: [www.worldbank.org/en/programs/rebuilding-gaza-donor-pledges#1](http://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/rebuilding-gaza-donor-pledges#1).

<sup>3</sup> Data available at: <http://grm.report/#/>.

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA and The Culture and Free Thought Association, "Protection in the Windward: Conditions and Rights of Internally Displaced Girls and Women during the Latest Israeli Military Operation on the Gaza Strip" (October 2014).

lull since the fall of 2014. In July 2015, following the demolition of two buildings in the settlement of Beit El, the Government announced the construction of 300 new residential units there, as well as around 500 more in East Jerusalem settlements. In addition, a spike in demolitions of Palestinian villages in Area C of the West Bank<sup>5</sup> was recorded in August. The Israeli authorities continued to promote plans for the relocation of Palestinian Bedouin communities in Area C, which if implemented, may result in their forcible transfer.

10. The reporting period was marked by lower levels of violence than the previous period, resulting in fewer civilian deaths and injuries, although there was an increase in casualties among Israeli civilians. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in the West Bank, between October 2014 and September 2015, 31 Palestinians (23 men, 1 woman and 7 boys) were killed and 3,248 Palestinians (2,544 men, 64 women, 621 boys and 19 girls) were injured by the Israel Defense Forces, while four Palestinians (two men, one woman and one child) were killed and 98 Palestinians (65 men, 9 women, 17 boys and 7 girls) were injured by Israeli settlers. Eight Israelis (four men, two women, one boy and one girl), mostly settlers, were killed by Palestinians, and another 127 Israelis (97 men, 17 women, 8 boys and 5 girls) were injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Another five Israeli men and two Palestinian men were also killed in one incident in West Jerusalem. In the Gaza Strip, four Palestinians were killed (three men and one boy), and 96 Palestinians were injured (80 men and 16 boys).<sup>6</sup>

11. During the reporting period, there was a decline in the total registered number of search operations, fatalities, injuries and arrests and detentions in the refugee camps in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Boys and young men are more likely than women and girls to be subject to violence during operations of the Israeli security forces, as well as during arrest and detention.<sup>7</sup> However, women in detention face gender-specific challenges, including inadequate access to medical care, risks associated with pregnancy and giving birth in prison, and sexual harassment. After their release from detention, women are particularly vulnerable to stigma and marginalization from their communities.<sup>8</sup>

12. Between October 2014 and July 2015, UNRWA provided emergency support to 766 families in the West Bank whose homes had been demolished or damaged by the Israeli security forces in the context of law enforcement and search operations.<sup>9</sup> Of the families affected, 214 (34 per cent) were female-headed households. With regard to the demolition of homes, of the 41 families that had their homes

<sup>5</sup> Following the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 interim Agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the West Bank was divided into three zones, Areas A, B and C. Extensive responsibility was delegated by Israel to the Palestinian Authority in Areas A and B. Area C remained under full authority of Israel.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Protection of Civilians database of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>7</sup> There were 499 search operations during the reporting period, compared to 680 search operations in the previous reporting period; 7 fatalities in the reporting period compared to 15 fatalities in the previous; 288 injuries in the reporting period compared to 716 in the previous; and 479 detentions in the reporting period compared to 560 in the previous. Input from the West Bank Field Office of UNRWA to the present report.

<sup>8</sup> UN-Women, "Access Denied: Palestinian Women's Access to Justice in the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Where are women? Where is women's accessibility to "justice"? Are there possibilities for justice in the context of military occupation?" (UN-Women office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> Input from the West Bank Field Office of UNRWA to the present report.

demolished, 13 were female-headed households. Of those 41 affected families, 12 women were referred to the women's programme run by UNRWA and 23 women were referred to the mental health support programme.

13. Several factors continue to present significant barriers to freedom of movement and access to livelihoods for Palestinians, with differing impacts on women and men: the ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the closure of the Gaza Strip and the differential status that applies to Palestinian women and men in different areas. The population of 1.8 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip remains effectively isolated from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by the continuing closure of Gaza by Israel. In addition, access to East Jerusalem remains limited for Palestinian residents from the remainder of the West Bank. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede humanitarian access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, particularly those in the firing zones and those located behind the separation barrier. However, regulations for the movement of Palestinians from the West Bank to Israel were relaxed during the reporting period, and the number of permits issued for Palestinians employed in Israel reached 60,150.<sup>10</sup>

14. According to data collected by UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it is estimated that around 700 women were widowed as a result of the conflict in Gaza in 2014. Female-headed households in Gaza face particular challenges in accessing humanitarian assistance and inherited assets, owing to social restrictions. As primary caregivers, they also disproportionately experience the long-term impact of damaged infrastructure and reduced services, including on health-care, education and social protection services. The traditional division of roles between women and men in Gaza renders many newly widowed women unprepared to deal with challenges outside the home. Due to the lack of economic opportunities for women, few widows are able to provide for their families when the male head-of-household dies. Widowed women are frequently incorporated, along with their children, into the households of their parents or in-laws. In both cases, male kin and in-laws can block their direct access to benefits or entitlements, and women have no guarantees for control over any benefits or entitlements they receive.

15. The Palestinian labour force grew by 8.6 per cent in 2014, to reach over 1.25 million.<sup>11</sup> Although the female labour force participation rate grew from 17.3 per cent in 2013 to 19.4 per cent in 2014, it remains extremely low by both global and regional standards. The gender gap in labour force participation is significant, at 71.5 per cent for men, compared to 19.4 per cent for women. The most common areas for women's employment are the services sector (where 57 per cent of working women are employed) and "unskilled" agriculture work (20 per cent of working women),<sup>12</sup> both of which are highly susceptible to outside economic pressures. In addition, there is a gender gap in the median daily wage in the West

<sup>10</sup> Information provided by the Gisha Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories", appendix, para. 33 (2014).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., para. 35. The remainder of women are employed in commerce, restaurants and hotels (10.3 per cent of women); manufacturing, mining and quarrying (9.8 per cent of women); transport, storage and communication (1.3 per cent of women); and construction (0.7 per cent of women).

Bank and Gaza Strip; in 2014, women's median daily wage was only 76 per cent that of men.<sup>13</sup>

16. Access to essential health care remains limited, and shortages of drugs and medical disposables are frequent in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The recent conflict in and continued closure of Gaza has left health-care centres damaged, without adequate medical equipment and stock. In particular, the conflict in Gaza in 2014 resulted in a serious deterioration of family planning services, which has affected the health-care system's capacity to provide women with safe and reliable reproductive health services.<sup>14</sup> According to UNFPA, the maternal mortality ratio for 2014 for the State of Palestine was 30.97 per 100,000 live births, but UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have warned that this ratio is now at risk of increase owing to the inaccessibility of reproductive health care in Gaza.<sup>14</sup>

17. Access to safe, sufficient and affordable water also continues to pose a challenge for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, which affects women and girls in particular. In Gaza, the damage to water and wastewater networks caused by the conflict in 2014 has further exacerbated the situation. The unreliability and shortage of electricity and fuel further hamper the pumping and distribution of water to the population, as electricity is essential for the functioning of water pumps that extract and distribute water to households. Over 70 per cent of households in Gaza receive between 6 and 8 hours of piped water once every 2 to 4 days, and large areas of Gaza experience 12 to 16 hours of electricity blackouts every day.<sup>14</sup> In the West Bank, even though 96 per cent of the total Palestinian population is connected to water networks, reliability and quality remain serious issues of concern.<sup>15</sup> According to UNICEF, Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank are the worst affected by water scarcity, where roughly half the population is estimated to be without a water network connection, and the Palestinian Government has limited ability to provide access to water.

18. Limited household access to water and electricity has significant implications for women's and girls' burden of care, health, time spent collecting resources and ability to generate income in Gaza and the West Bank, given the strict division of labour between women and men within households. Water and sanitation issues also affect girls' enrolment and protection needs in schools. Prior to the 2014 conflict, a total of 300,000 students throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory had poor water, sanitation and hygiene facilities at school. Assessments conducted after the conflict indicated that at least 189 public schools were damaged, 26 of which were seriously damaged, and 83 out of 155 UNRWA school buildings incurred damage, although 90 per cent of those schools were repaired by the end of the reporting period.

19. The net enrolment rate for pre-primary education in the State of Palestine in 2013 was 40.6, with a gender parity index of 0.99. The adjusted net enrolment rate for primary education in the same year was 92.36, with a gender parity index of 1.01. In secondary education, the net enrolment rate was 80.35, with a gender

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<sup>13</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release dated 5 March 2015, available from [http://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/\\_pcbs/PressRelease/WomenDy2015E.pdf](http://pcbs.gov.ps/portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/WomenDy2015E.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Needs of women and girls in humanitarian action in Gaza — Gender alert for the 2016 response plan" (August 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Palestinian Water Authority, "Annual Water Status Report" (2014).

parity index of 1.09.<sup>16</sup> High rates of educational enrolment do not necessarily mean high completion rates, nor do they capture concerns about the quality of education. Boys are more likely to drop out at both the secondary and tertiary levels; nevertheless, girls' higher educational achievements have not translated into improved employment experience.

20. While women have continued to participate in a range of roles in the political realm, they remain underrepresented in formal decision-making bodies and processes. As of September 2015, women held 3 of 17 ministerial level posts (16.6 per cent) in the new Palestinian Government of national consensus, the same number and percentage as in the previous reporting period. During the reporting period, the Palestinian Central Council of the Palestinian Liberation Organization announced that it would adopt a 30 per cent quota for women's representation in State of Palestine institutions, in response to advocacy and lobbying by the General Union of Palestinian Women.

21. In June 2015, the Ministry of Women's Affairs produced a national strategy on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, with support from UNFPA and UN-Women. The strategy has a particular focus on preventing and protecting women from violations of their human rights in relation to domestic, workplace and community-based violence, and improving gender equality and women's participation in education, the labour market and decision-making.

22. The rule of law remains a significant issue across the State of Palestine. Palestinian women face specific challenges in accessing justice as a result of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex (notably in respect to inheritance and other personal status issues); women's limited knowledge of their rights and procedures; economic dependency; and social pressures and stigma.<sup>8</sup> Even in cases where women manage to access justice services, they often face service providers who lack professional knowledge in dealing specifically with women and girl victims of violence, and who continue to interpret outdated laws pertaining to the Penal Code and personal status law in ways that infringe on women's human rights. The result is a high level of underreporting of gender-based violence and attrition of those cases that are brought forward. Further, when women access the justice system and obtain judgements in their favour, a lack of enforcement means that justice remains out of reach.

23. Gender-based violence continues to be a key protection concern for women in the State of Palestine, and the situation is particularly acute in the Gaza Strip. A 2011 survey showed that 51 per cent of women in Gaza had been victims of gender-based violence.<sup>17</sup> A rapid assessment by UNFPA conducted after the 2014 conflict revealed that the protracted crisis and related displacement, lack of privacy and lack of basic services had exacerbated people's sense of vulnerability, leading to violence against women.<sup>18</sup> Case studies as part of a 2015 situation analysis by UNFPA

<sup>16</sup> Data available from <http://data.uis.unesco.org/#>.

<sup>17</sup> For the State of Palestine, 37 per cent of women had been victims of gender-based violence. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, survey on violence in Palestinian society (2011).

<sup>18</sup> UNFPA, WHO and the Palestinian Ministry of Health, "Victims in the shadows: Gaza post-crisis reproductive health assessment" (October 2014); UNFPA and The Culture and Free Thought Association, "Protection in the Windward: Conditions and Rights of Internally Displaced Girls and Women during the Latest Israeli Military Operation on the Gaza Strip" (October 2014), p. 9.

indicate that economic hardship, following the 2014 conflict in Gaza, has driven families to marry off their daughters early in order to improve the economic situation of the family. The rate of child marriage is higher in Gaza than in the West Bank; 28.6 per cent of women in the Gaza Strip aged 20-49 were married before the age of 18, compared to 21.4 per cent in the West Bank.<sup>19</sup>

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

24. An update on assistance provided by the United Nations system, coordinated by the United Nations country team, in cooperation with the State of Palestine, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development, is given in paragraphs 29-65 below. United Nations support to the Palestinian people is guided by key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the State of Palestine 2014-2016 (aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016), and the 2015 strategic response plan for humanitarian programming. The information presented below is based on the contributions from United Nations entities to the present report, compiled by the United Nations country team.

#### **A. Education and training**

25. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and improve learning environments. During the academic year 2014-2015, UNRWA ran 252 schools in Gaza and 97 in the West Bank, with 290,977 pupils enrolled as at October 2014, of whom 53.4 per cent were girls. Gender equality and a quality education for boys and girls are at the centre of education reform by UNRWA, and special attention has been given, at UNRWA schools, to increasing awareness of gender-based violence. In addition to basic education, UNRWA provides technical and vocational education training. During the reporting period, 1,695 students, of whom 35.3 per cent were female, participated in such trainings. The Ramallah Women's Training Centre, with support from UNRWA, offers a co-educational technical vocational programme and female-only trade courses.

26. In order to ensure safer commutes to and from school, UNICEF and civil society partners provided protective accompaniment to schoolchildren at 14 military checkpoints and gates in the West Bank. This benefited 1,461 girls and 2,873 boys, as well as 333 teachers, 80 per cent of whom were women, throughout the 2014-2015 school year.

27. UNESCO continued to support the training of 265 young women journalists on gender-sensitive reporting, as well as with psychosocial counselling workshops and specialized training on social media.

28. Through the use of the participatory gender audit methodology developed by ILO, the Women's Studies Institute at Birzeit University has carried out a series of

<sup>19</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, UNICEF and UNFPA, "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014: Key Findings" (December 2014).

assessments, followed by awareness-raising initiatives among university students and staff, with the aim of introducing more gender-sensitive policies and procedures and creating an educational environment free from gender-based violence. In order to further promote gender equality, ILO provided technical support to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics for conducting a survey on pay equity that focuses on discrimination patterns in the education sector in the West Bank and Gaza.

## **B. Health**

29. The United Nations continued its efforts to build on good practice and results reported in the previous reporting period so as to improve the access to and quality of health-care services, including maternal and reproductive health care. UNRWA remained the major provider of basic health-care services for Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza, operating a range of care facilities and mobile clinic teams. The total number of medical consultations between October 2014 and September 2015 stood at 4,055,248 in Gaza, where 60 per cent of the patients were female, and 1,304,219 in the West Bank, where 59 per cent were female. Maternal and child health continues to be an essential element of UNRWA assistance. As part of that effort, there is a need to raise awareness of the importance of engaging men in the family planning process.

30. UNICEF has also continued to support the Ministry of Health and partners to provide lifesaving postnatal care. A total of 32 per cent of women with high-risk pregnancies in Gaza (5,500 women) benefited from postnatal home visits by skilled midwives and nurses in the first half of 2015. In addition, 26,000 women were counselled on nutrition and breastfeeding practices, and four hospitals and one maternity home in the West Bank were certified as “baby friendly”. With more than 100,000 people still displaced in Gaza, UNFPA supported mobile clinic services, reaching 7,000 displaced women with reproductive health-care services and education. Similar outreach activities provide for isolated West Bank communities in locations affected by the separation barrier and settler violence. UNFPA has also partnered with the Ministry of Health to empower midwives through specialized courses on delivery and neonatal care. In addition, WHO, through the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health, developed a mammogram registry information system and a harmonized reproductive health registry to improve data quality and to reduce maternal and infant mortality by facilitating the introduction of reproductive health registries for better governance, targeting, health surveillance and accountability of public health initiatives in reproductive health.

31. The community mental health programme run by UNRWA pays particular attention to the needs of refugee children and women in the provision of counselling and psychosocial support, and works through a number of channels, including health centres, community-based organizations and schools. During the reporting period, the community mental health programme provided counselling for 2,247 women in Gaza through UNRWA health centres. WHO also worked with primary and secondary health-care workers to provide mental health services of higher quality. A total of 117 mental health professionals (68 men and 49 women) received specialized training in child and adolescent mental health; family therapy, which addresses gender-based violence; and cognitive behavioural therapy. Training was

delivered in 19 community mental health centres, 13 in the West Bank and 6 in Gaza, and in two psychiatric hospitals, one in the West Bank and one in Gaza.

32. WFP supported interactive training sessions for women in Gaza, on diet, hygiene, cooking, purchasing healthy food on a budget and caring for infants. Starting in November 2014, the husbands of women who had attended the training were also targeted through selected sessions, combining nutrition elements and psychosocial support. The training programme aimed to increase mutual understanding of women's empowerment and gender equality issues. The sessions, requested by women trainees, encouraged dialogue within communities and households, and promoted women's roles as agents of change. These interactive trainings also strengthened informal women's networks, facilitating their interaction outside the home and providing a peer support group beyond close relatives.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

33. Within their development programming, United Nations entities continued to prioritize initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods.

34. Women's access to housing is key to their enjoyment of other human rights. During the reporting period, UNRWA introduced a policy in Gaza that requires both the head of household and their spouse(s) to sign a joint undertaking, indicating a joint right to benefit. Prior to this practice, the head of household was the only required signatory for the housing units.

35. During the reporting period, 872,199 people benefited from food assistance under the emergency and social safety net assistance programmes run by UNRWA. Women represent 49.9 per cent of the cases, and around 22,715 of the families assisted were female-headed households. UNRWA recently reformed its poverty assessment system, as applied in Gaza, to include new categories, for women who are particularly vulnerable and who were not previously eligible for assistance owing to a requirement that they be registered under a husband's or father's name. The new categories include women in polygamous marriages, widows, divorced women and abandoned women, who can now apply for independent assessment and to receive food assistance from UNRWA directly. Similarly, in its social safety net assistance programme, WFP uses assessment criteria that include female-headed households as a vulnerable category. A gender perspective is mainstreamed through WFP activities by placing food distribution centres in areas close to households headed by women and issuing vouchers and food ration cards in women's names, when possible.

36. The job creation programme run by UNRWA in Gaza employed 23,490 persons, of whom 26 per cent female, for between 3 and 12 months each. The bulk of jobs offered by the programme were for unskilled labour (66.6 per cent). However, the programme faces challenges in finding culturally acceptable jobs for women as a result of social and cultural barriers. Currently, the majority of unskilled jobs for women are found in the agriculture sector (60 per cent of all beneficiaries in this sector are female).

37. As part of efforts to harness the economic potential of Palestinian women, UNDP provided support to women entrepreneurs in Gaza and the West Bank.



Through the provision of business development services, assets and access to solidarity and risk-sharing finance, 215 women entrepreneurs were able to start their own businesses, creating employment for at least 400 people. In addition, through its economic empowerment programme for deprived families, UNDP supported the creation of 1,420 micro-businesses, run by vulnerable households, 35 per cent of which are female-headed households. Families who were previously dependent on cash assistance from the Ministry of Social Affairs have begun a journey out of poverty through running their own microprojects.

38. UNCTAD worked with the Palestinian Shippers Council to forge partnerships with the Palestinian Business Women Forum, provide its members with training and promote their active participation in the Shippers Council. Approximately 70 women members of the Forum were trained on the trade facilitation supply chain and participated in study tours to Europe and in the region to gain a better technical understanding of trade. The International Trade Centre provided training to Palestinian women-owned small and medium enterprises on the development of business plans and marketing.

39. FAO established two retail shops in the northern and southern West Bank to market agricultural products from more than 15 women's cooperatives. More than half of those received tools and equipment to enhance their production quality and capacity. More than 100 female farmers were supported through the construction of infrastructure for water collection or land rehabilitation. In Gaza, FAO supported 93 female-headed households with a package of agricultural tools, equipment and livestock. During the reporting period, FAO conducted several business trainings for 90 women members of six women's cooperatives, two of which are in the Gaza Strip. Each cooperative was also supported in establishing an effective finance and credit management system and links with reliable loan service providers, which enhanced women's capacity to manage loans.

40. UN-Women continued its implementation of the school canteen project, run by women. During the reporting period, nine additional community-based organizations were supported in managing and running sustainable businesses and providing work opportunities for women, bringing the total number of partner organizations in the project to 62. Of the 62, 36 have now reached financial independence and 18 are generating profit. A total of 72 additional women were employed during the reporting period, increasing the total number of women employees, through the different phases of the project, to 761. The women involved with the community-based organizations benefit from school canteen management training, financial management training, communication skills training and food processing training. The additional organizations were also provided with financial support to enable them to run and manage 28 new school canteens, bringing the total number of school canteens managed by women's community-based organizations to 337, in schools throughout the West Bank.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

41. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. The priority continued

to be supporting the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2019).

42. Under their joint programme on the theme of “Strengthening the rule of law: justice and security for the Palestinian people”, UNDP and UN-Women provided support to justice and security institutions in mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and procedures, including in the area of law-making. The Ministry of Justice and the High Judicial Council were supported in the development of gender-sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation systems. The Gender Legislative Committee of the Ministry of Justice reviewed the Family Protection Law and provided recommendations to the Council of Ministers. As part of the programme’s efforts to develop specialized justice and security services for women and girls, 16 specialized prosecutors received follow-up coaching on investigating violence against women. Moreover, 19 senior officers from the Palestinian Civil Police concluded an accredited professional diploma course in public administration and gender, delivered by Birzeit University in partnership with the programme.

43. Women and girls continue to be the largest beneficiary group of legal aid services provided through the rule of law programme run by UNDP and UN-Women. Between January and June 2015, 3,657 women and girls, representing 55 per cent of all beneficiaries, benefited from legal advice, mediation and legal representation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In Gaza, women continue to constitute the vast majority of beneficiaries of legal services (75 per cent). As a result of the support provided through the programme, at least 20 legal verdicts were issued in early 2015 in favour of women receiving representation in sharia courts.

44. In Gaza, UNDP and UN-Women continued to support the work of the Awn Access to Justice Network, a network of civil society legal aid providers hosted by the Palestinian Bar Association. Eighteen mobile and fixed legal aid clinics provided legal assistance in cases related to land and property rights, as well as on a range of issues relating to family and personal status. Through community legal information sessions, more than 13,801 beneficiaries, 81 per cent of them female, were made aware of the rights and the services available to assist them.

45. In December 2014, UN-Women launched an in-depth research study on Palestinian women’s access to justice in the occupied West Bank.<sup>20</sup> The study discusses the ordeals faced by women victims of violence living in Area C, which comprises roughly 60 per cent of the West Bank and remains under the full civil and security control of Israel and the Israeli army. Without a formal justice system to turn to for the protection of their rights, these women are denied redress for discriminatory and patriarchal practices within their own communities. During the reporting period, ESCWA produced a study on access to justice for women and girls in the Arab region, covering aspects from the ratification to the implementation of international instruments, which focuses on access to justice, including for Palestinian women and girls under occupation.

46. A number of United Nations entities conducted awareness-raising activities regarding gender-based violence, with different target populations. ESCWA developed a toolkit to combat gender-based violence in the Arab region, which aims

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<sup>20</sup> UN-Women, “Access Denied: Palestinian Women’s Access to Justice in the West Bank of the Occupied Palestinian Territory” (UN-Women office in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, 2014).

to ensure that service providers in Palestine have the necessary tools and methodological guidelines to protect victims of violence and ensure their physical and mental well-being. UNRWA, through its gender initiative, worked with community-based organizations in Gaza to hold trainings and seminars on ending violence against women. UNESCO partnered with Theatre Day Productions in Gaza to support women community leaders in raising public awareness against violence through storytelling of women's experiences of gender-based violence in the community. UNPFA trained men and boys, as well as religious leaders, on issues relating to reproductive health and gender-based violence. UNFPA also increased media attention surrounding the issue by supporting the development of a documentary film about gender-based violence and violations of inheritance law, as well as a documentary telling women's stories after the Gaza conflict.

47. A number of entities also supported services for women victims of violence. UN-Women has provided support to shelters for victims in the West Bank to begin the process of standardizing their procedures. WFP has also supported shelters by providing them with food assistance, reaching more than 80 women in four shelters. UNFPA trained 3,000 health-care providers in hospitals and primary health-care clinics to detect and respond to cases of gender-based violence. During the reporting period, UNFPA distributed 2,300 hygiene kits, which address a critical protection concern and core aspect of preserving dignity. The hygiene kits also included solar panels and flashlights, which may help mitigate the risk of gender-based violence for displaced women and adolescent girls in the caravans and shelters in the Gaza Strip.

48. UNODC continued to strengthen the capacity of the Palestinian ministries of justice and the interior and the Palestinian Civil Police to manage, administer, deliver and expand forensic services in accordance with international standards, including with regard to the investigation of cases of gender-based violence. Seven Palestinian doctors have received specialized training in collecting forensic evidence of sexual and gender-based violence. UNODC also launched two manuals for Palestinian forensic practitioners on specialized forensic medicine topics, including sexual and gender-based violence, which will help enable survivors to access high-quality health and forensic interventions, and will assist the Government of Palestine in the investigation and prosecution of such offences.

49. UN-Women and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs collaborated closely to ensure that a gender perspective was mainstreamed in humanitarian coordination and response. Through the technical expertise of a humanitarian gender adviser, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Women, in coordination with UNFPA, developed a joint action plan to ensure accountability for gender equality and gender-based violence in humanitarian programming. The plan seeks to improve the availability and quality of data and analysis on gender-specific humanitarian needs, to develop the capacity of humanitarian actors for gender-responsive programming and to support women's organizations participating in humanitarian processes and responses.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

50. During the reporting period, UN-Women continued to support the newly established women's political participation caucus group, which reviewed the

by-laws and internal policies of nine political parties and presented conclusions to leaders of political parties, at a conference organized in December 2014. The result of the conference was a commitment by those leaders to follow up on the findings and recommendations of the group.

51. UN-Women continued to develop the capacity of media professionals to advocate and lobby for women's participation in politics and the decision-making process. Ten media professionals (four men and six women) in the West Bank and 12 media professionals (seven women and five men) in Gaza were trained on gender-sensitive media coverage and delivering key messages on women's issues.

52. Civil society involvement is critical for effective implementation of and reporting under the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. UN-Women supported a coalition of non-governmental organizations from Gaza and the West Bank to prepare the first shadow report from the State of Palestine to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which complements the official government report, before the Committee's deliberations. UN-Women also trained 35 women's rights activists from a number of civil society organizations on international human rights frameworks and the shadow report drafting process.

53. Additionally, UN-Women continued its support to the newly established local committees in Gaza, which are made up of representatives from civil society and are responsible for monitoring local governance, by providing them with training on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and tools for advocacy. Similar local committees were also established, in 10 local councils, in three governorates of the West Bank. UN-Women continued its support to the shadow constitutional committee, comprised of young women and men, who drafted a gender-sensitive shadow constitution presented to national decision makers in December 2014, and also promoted a public advocacy campaign.

54. Through its national unity and social cohesion programme, UNDP supported a conference in June 2015 that gathered women's organizations and female politicians. The conference, which took place simultaneously in Ramallah and Gaza, with over 1,600 participants, was a forum for women of different political affiliations, religious and regional groupings to discuss joint strategies, speak out for peace and reconciliation, and review the factors that prevent women from engaging actively in the reconciliation processes.

55. UNICEF supported over 27,000 adolescents, of whom 54 per cent were girls, in receiving structured training, including leadership skills for girls to promote their participation in decision-making and community life. WFP also worked to empower women in decision-making processes by promoting a principle of 50 per cent representation of women on food management committees. In 2014-2015, up to 30 per cent of the members of local food management committees were women. Through its young women leaders programme, the gender initiative of UNRWA engaged recent female graduates in leadership training, to increase their readiness for active participation in their communities and the labour market.

56. UNESCO developed an online library and database to collect research and data on gender in Palestine.<sup>21</sup> The website includes an online calendar, which aims to coordinate and manage the different gender-related activities of national and international stakeholders. The website also functions as a research network for academic and civil society organizations to promote innovative research topics and circulate new publications on gender equality in Palestine. UNESCO also supported an in-depth study, following the 2014 conflict in Gaza, entitled “Women’s and men’s voices”, which is currently being finalized and will examine the impact of the conflict on gender relations.

## **F. Institutional development**

57. During the reporting period, OHCHR supported the State of Palestine in building capacity to implement and follow up on its human rights treaty commitments utilizing a multisectoral, harmonized human rights reporting and implementation approach, which seeks to ensure that a focus on gender-based discrimination is integrated into the processes of the seven human rights treaties to which the State of Palestine has acceded. OHCHR mobilized the United Nations country team to engage and coordinate treaty-reporting efforts, jointly conducting a number of workshops for government representatives on specific human rights. OHCHR also organized three trainings for Palestinian women’s organizations, presenting methods for monitoring and documenting women’s human rights violations, and facilitated one workshop for women’s human rights defenders on the compatibility of Palestinian laws with provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In Gaza, OHCHR implemented four trainings on human rights and gender-based violence and one workshop on women’s right to life, for female lawyers and women’s organizations.

58. ESCWA provided technical assistance and advisory services to the State of Palestine, including through the organization of two workshops on gender, change management and local development to strengthen the capacity of local government officials to mainstream gender equality principles at the community level. ESCWA also provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, in reviewing and developing the existing organizational structure, mandate and resources to advance the achievement of gender equality.

59. Through the multiple indicator cluster survey, UNICEF continued to strengthen the capacity of the Government to manage, monitor and conduct research and analysis on issues relating to children’s rights, gender equality, social protection and inclusion. The 2014 survey results provide a wealth of disaggregated data on the situation of women and children in the State of Palestine.

60. UN-Women continued its support to the Ministry of Finance on gender-responsive budgeting by providing an analysis of the public management financial system from a gender perspective and presenting recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the system. UN-Women also provided technical training on gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation to 30 staff members from gender units in different line ministries. Those staff members now have the skills to integrate a gender perspective into the sectoral strategies of line ministries and ensure planning

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<sup>21</sup> Database available from [www.pwrdc.ps](http://www.pwrdc.ps) and [www.unesco.org/ramallah](http://www.unesco.org/ramallah).

processes at the national level are responsive to the needs of Palestinian women. The training was followed by a meeting of ministers and deputy ministers to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the gender units in line ministries and how to effectively mainstream a gender perspective in national plans, policies and budgets. As a result, some of the gender units' focal points have been included in the planning and budgeting teams in line ministries, while other ministries have established gender units or institutionalized the current gender units in the formal organizational structure.

61. UN-Women supported the establishment of the gender marker reporting tool to track the extent of gender mainstreaming in the financial support provided by international donors to the Palestinian Authority. The gender marker was launched jointly by UN-Women and the Ministry of Planning and Administrative Development, and has been integrated into project tracking since July 2015. It will enable the Government to track financial allocations to priority areas and identify gaps. In turn, this will support an evidence-based dialogue with donors on the importance of financial allocations to gender equality issues.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

62. **The reporting period was marked by the intensification of the humanitarian impact of the 2014 conflict and the slow pace of the recovery effort in Gaza. Women and girls in Gaza continued to experience displacement, loss of livelihood, limited access to basic services, restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza, and the continuous threat of violence, including gender-based violence. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, settlement expansion and settler violence, the demolition of homes and livelihood structures, and restrictions on the freedom of movement persisted. Those violations have high costs for all Palestinian women, and in particular, for women in Bedouin communities faced with demolition orders, women working in agriculture, women living in communities targeted by settler violence, and girls whose access to education is impeded by violence. Efforts should be intensified to protect women from all forms of violence and reconstruction efforts in Gaza should be expedited. A gender perspective should be central to the relief and recovery work of the United Nations system and gender equality programming should be adequately financed.**

63. **Insecurity and poverty have continued to exacerbate gender-based discrimination and gender inequality in the State of Palestine, leading to elevated levels of violence against women and girls. In support of the Government of Palestine's efforts to combat gender-based violence, the United Nations has worked to improve women's access to justice in relation to gender-based violence, through initiatives for strengthening the rule of law. United Nations entities should further deepen their efforts to support survivors of gender-based violence, developing a comprehensive approach that ensures access to the full range of quality essential multisectoral services. Taking into account the comparative advantages and expertise of individual entities across the United Nations system, such a holistic approach should include ensuring access to quality health care, psychosocial counselling, legal services and material and financial assistance. Further, United Nations entities should continue to work with all key actors and groups to prevent gender-based**

violence, including with men and boys, to address the root causes, risk factors and structural issues that lead to violence. The Government of Palestine should also be supported in developing normative frameworks in line with international standards and defining national standards on ending violence against women.

64. Limited economic opportunities exist for Palestinian women and a major gender gap persists in labour market participation. High unemployment rates, especially among young women, are particularly worrisome. The existing vulnerability in the two main sectors where women find employment, the services sector and agriculture, compounded by increased care burdens owing to a lack of access to water, energy and markets, all contribute to women's deteriorating economic situation. Assistance should aim to increase women's access to decent work, including in non-traditional sectors, and address women's economic vulnerability resulting from the concentration of their employment in informal and unpaid work.

65. The lack of access to justice for Palestinian women and girls remains a grave concern, with outdated and discriminatory laws, social restrictions, a lack of physical access to judicial institutions and the fragmentation of territory all posing challenges. United Nations entities should provide assistance to governance mechanisms that seek to modernize and harmonize legislation on gender equality and women's human rights. Assistance to transitional security and justice sectors, as well as informal justice mechanisms, should build the capacity of those sectors to apply women's human rights standards throughout the justice system, on the basis of the State of Palestine's accession to seven core human rights treaties.

66. Many of the recommendations put forward in previous reports regarding improvements in the areas of education, health and political participation for Palestinian women and girls have not yet been fully implemented and continue to require sustained effort. In particular, renewed efforts should be made to ensure that Palestinian women play a leading role in reconciliation efforts. All relevant actors must insist on women's participation in negotiations and contribute to providing an enabling environment for Palestinian women to express their views and form coalitions across political factions. Support to Palestinian women's non-governmental organizations should be a central aspect of the United Nations system's gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.

67. Data disaggregated by sex and age and gender-sensitive analysis are essential to all efforts to advance the situation of women and girls in Palestine. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and a number of United Nations entities have made improvements to systems for gender-sensitive collection and analysis of data and are able to collect disaggregated data of quality on a range of issues. However, data gaps remain as regards women's economic roles, their access to property rights and gender-based violence. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics will conduct a census in 2017, which provides an important opportunity to address some of those gaps. Additional specialized surveys, including on sexual violence, employment and time-use, and enhanced registration and reporting mechanisms are necessary to improve the quality and availability of data and its analysis.

68. **The United Nations will continue working towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Improving the situation of Palestinian women remains inextricably linked to such efforts. The development by the Government of Palestine of a national strategy on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) makes an important contribution in this regard, highlighting a national commitment to women's empowerment and the protection of women's human rights. The adoption of Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security reiterates the importance of such national plans and calls for adequate resourcing for their implementation. In this regard, United Nations system entities should continue to support national efforts to deliver on the Palestinian national strategy on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and all other efforts to achieve commitments to women, peace and security in the State of Palestine.**

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2016/4, highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* E/CN.6/2017/1.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2016/4 on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, to assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women (E/CN.6/2016/6), and to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-first session a report, on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women on the basis of information from the United Nations entities in the State of Palestine.

3. Unless indicated otherwise, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women. It includes contributions from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It also includes information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

4. The present report complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/71/87-E/2016/67](#), [A/71/359-S/2016/732](#), [A/71/86-E/2016/13](#) and [A/71/13](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

5. The reporting period witnessed substantial efforts by the international community to advance peace and to preserve the two-State solution. The Middle East Quartet Principals met on 23 October 2015 in Vienna and called for significant steps to be taken by the parties, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, in order to restore confidence and hope in the viability of a negotiated two-State solution that resolves the final status issues, including that of Jerusalem, and ends the occupation that began in 1967. In accordance with its decision on

12 February 2016, the Quartet issued a report in July<sup>1</sup> outlining three negative trends imperilling the viability of the two-State solution: violence against civilians and the incitement that fuels it; the Israeli policy of expanding settlements, the taking of land for exclusive Israeli use and denying Palestinian development; and the situation in Gaza, marked by the lack of Palestinian unity, continued militant activity and a dire humanitarian crisis, augmented by a restrictive closure regime. It offered recommendations for creating the conditions for an eventual return to meaningful negotiations, and called on the parties to take action independently, in line with their commitments under previous agreements, that can realistically contribute to progress towards establishing a two-State reality on the ground.

6. Meanwhile, on 17 May 2016, the President of Egypt, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, called on Israeli, Palestinian and Arab leaders to take historic steps for peace, expressing the readiness of Egypt to contribute to these endeavours and to help facilitate intra-Palestinian reconciliation. On 3 June, France hosted a Ministerial meeting at which participants from 28 delegations reaffirmed support for a two-State solution and discussed ways in which the international community could contribute to this goal, including by providing incentives. In follow-up, France expressed its intention of convening an international conference, now planned for early 2017. The possibility of a direct meeting between the parties has also been advanced by other key international stakeholders.

7. The rates of settlement planning and construction rose during the reporting period. The first three quarters of 2016 saw a 25 per cent increase in construction starts over the equivalent period in 2015, owing to a spike during the second quarter of 2016 registering the highest quarterly rate in three years. The classification of new “state land” in the Jordan Valley, the approval of several plans in settlements and a surge in demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank during the first quarter also appear to reflect a systematic policy to expand Israeli presence and limit Palestinian development in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. Since 1 April, settlement plans have been advanced for at least 2,400 units in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Israel also advanced the so-called retroactive “legalization” of outposts, and, since July, Members of Knesset have resumed efforts to promote a bill aimed at legalizing settlement units built on privately owned Palestinian land.

8. The absence of Palestinian reconciliation impedes efforts to achieve a negotiated solution. In reconciliation talks between Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions, which were hosted by Qatar in 2016, as well as efforts by Egypt and other regional stakeholders, no consensus has been reached on achieving genuine Palestinian unity on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Principles — crucial for reuniting the West Bank and Gaza under a single, democratic and legitimate Palestinian authority. The parties remain divided on two main issues: the formation of a national unity Government based on PLO principles, and the organization of parliamentary and presidential elections. Municipal council elections, which were originally set for 8 October 2016, with the participation of nearly all major Palestinian factions, were to be the first simultaneous elections in Gaza and the West Bank since 2006. However, on 4 October, the Palestinian Government decided to postpone local

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<sup>1</sup> [S/2016/595](#), annex.

elections until further notice. That decision followed the suspension on 8 September of election preparations by the High Court in Ramallah.

9. The reporting period saw a sharp increase in violence, in the last quarter of 2015, in East Jerusalem, with protests, clashes and individual attacks by Palestinians on Israeli civilians and security personnel spreading to the other parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including to the access restricted areas in Gaza, and Israel. Palestinians continued to be subjected to threats to their lives, physical safety and liberty from conflict-related violence and from policies and practices related to the Israeli occupation, including settler violence. In the last quarter of 2015, the highest number of casualties among West Bank Palestinians and among Israelis since 2005 was recorded. The violence began to wane in early 2016, owing in large part to effective efforts by the Palestinian National Security Forces, who successfully thwarted attacks, seized weapons and arrested suspected extremists. Continued security coordination between both sides was also key to reducing violence. There nevertheless remains a growing concern that ongoing settlement activity, incitement to violence, cases of excessive use of force by Israel and the absence of genuine Palestinian unity may lead to a renewed escalation.

10. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, 235 Palestinians (168 men, 14 women, 48 boys and 5 girls) were killed and over 16,556 (82 per cent men, 1 per cent women, 19 per cent boys and 1 per cent girls) were injured, mainly by the Israel Defense Forces or by settlers to some extent across the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel. Many of the Palestinians were killed while carrying out, or reportedly carrying out, knife, gun or car-ramming attacks. A total of 32 Israelis (25 men, 6 women and 1 girl), most of whom were members of the Israel Defense Forces, were killed by Palestinians, and more than 341 others were injured.

11. Among the main concerns relating to the increase in violence were Palestinian attacks on Israelis and the response of Israeli security forces, including possible instances of excessive use of force and extrajudicial killings. These concerns were compounded by the chronic lack of accountability and effective remedy for the killing of Palestinians. For example, from October 2015 to June 2016, the Israeli authorities opened a total of 24 criminal investigations into incidents resulting in the death or injury of Palestinians in the West Bank and Israel, including the highly controversial apparent extrajudicial killing on 24 March 2016 of a reported assailant who was incapacitated. Of these investigations, one has led to the indictment and prosecution of a soldier.

12. The Palestinian Government launched an investigation into the apparent extrajudicial execution while in police custody by Palestinian security forces on 23 August 2016 of a Nablus man who was suspected of involvement in the previous killing of two security personnel. Questions remain regarding accountability for such acts.

13. UNICEF reported a concerning number of incidents of grave violations against children documented in 2015 and 2016. From October 2015 to September 2016, 3,205 incidents were documented, affecting 61,667 children. This included the killings of 57 children (56 Palestinian children — 7 girls and 49 boys — and 1 Israeli girl) and injury of 2,384 children (2,271 Palestinian boys and 113 girls, and 7 Israeli boys and 2 girls). In addition, 448 attacks on schools were documented.

14. As at August 2016, an estimated 11,700 Gazan families (almost 60,000 people) — of which about 10 per cent are female-headed households — remained displaced and are living with host families, in rented apartments, in prefabricated units, or in the rubble of their previous homes.<sup>2</sup> The root causes of the conflict remained unaddressed as the land, air and sea closures of Gaza entered their eleventh year. Accountability for victims remains unaddressed and, as local non-governmental organizations and legal aid providers report, access to justice mechanisms remains severely limited.<sup>3</sup> The Israeli authorities received complaints relating to approximately 360 incidents, which led to the opening of 31 criminal investigations and indictments in a single instance of looting.

15. A fragile ceasefire in Gaza continues to hold. The beginning of May saw the most serious escalation of violence between Israel and Hamas since the 2014 conflict, with the discovery by Israel of two tunnels and, as a response, nine incursions to destroy them. Militants fired some 45 mortars and rockets at Israel and the Israel Defense Forces conducted 13 airstrikes: one woman was killed and several other Palestinians were injured during the exchanges. On 21 August, two rockets were fired from Gaza, without causing injury or damage. Israeli forces responded with some 60 missiles and shells to various locations in Gaza, directed at Hamas bases and those of other militants. Five people were reported injured during the operation. These incidents highlight the fragility of the security dynamics in Gaza and the need for all sides to vigorously uphold the ceasefire.

16. The reporting period also saw a massive surge in demolitions by the Israeli authorities of Palestinian property in the West Bank, primarily in Area C and East Jerusalem, citing a lack of building permits. Such permits are almost impossible to obtain owing to the seemingly discriminatory and unlawful planning regime applied in those areas. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016, the authorities demolished or confiscated 971 Palestinian-owned structures, displacing over 1,500 people and affecting the livelihoods of more than 6,500 people.

17. Several factors continue to present significant barriers to freedom of movement and access to livelihoods for Palestinians, with differing impacts on women and men. The population of 1.9 million Palestinians in Gaza remains effectively isolated from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by the continued closure of Gaza by Israel and the highly infrequent opening of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza. Access to East Jerusalem remains limited for Palestinian residents from the remainder of the West Bank. Physical and administrative restrictions continue to impede humanitarian access to some of the most vulnerable communities in Area C, particularly those in the firing zones and those located behind the barrier.

18. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the Palestinian labour force reached 1.3 million in 2015, 3.5 per cent higher than in 2014. With a concurrent 3.4 per cent increase in the population aged 15 and above, the labour

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<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Gaza: two years since the 2014 hostilities (August 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, “Update: no reparations in Israel for Palestinians: how Israel’s amendment No. 8 leaves no room for recourse, Gaza, December 2015” (24 February 2016), available from <http://mezan.org/en/post/20954>.

force participation rate remained unchanged at 45.8 per cent (71.9 per cent for men, 19.1 per cent for women). The labour force participation of women remains extremely low by global as well as by regional standards, despite high levels of educational attainment on the part of Palestinian women, resulting in a substantial loss of economic potential. The overall rate of unemployment eased slightly, from 27 per cent in 2014 to 25.9 per cent in 2015 (336,300 people), owing to improvement in male employment. The unemployment rate for women increased only slightly, to 39.2 per cent (from 38.55 per cent, as recorded in 2014). In Gaza, women's unemployment rose to a staggering 60 per cent. A gender wage gap persisted, with the average daily wage for Palestinian women reaching NIS 81.9, compared with NIS 108 for men.<sup>4</sup> The unemployment rate for youth aged 20-24 years stood high in 2015, at 36.5 per cent,<sup>5</sup> and rose further, to 42.6 per cent, in 2016.<sup>6</sup>

19. Women's access to health services was monitored and analysed in 2015 and 2016 through analysis by WHO of permit data disaggregated by sex for patients seeking access out of Gaza and the West Bank to medical facilities in East Jerusalem and elsewhere. Health access through the Erez checkpoint declined sharply in 2016, as the approval rates in the first seven months of the year decreased to 74.8 per cent for females and to 66.2 per cent for males, the lowest rates recorded since 2009. This signified a 12 per cent drop in approval rates for both female and male patients, as compared with a similar period in 2015.<sup>7</sup> According to data provided by the Coordination Office of the Ministry of Health in Gaza, in 2015, 25 per cent of patients requested for Israeli security interviews in the context of permit applications were female. In 2016, the percentage of females rose to 33 per cent.

20. The adolescent birth rate (the fertility rate for women aged 15-19) remained concerning, at 48 per 1,000 (35 per 1,000 in the West Bank and 66 per 1,000 in Gaza). Among women aged 20-24, 22 per cent had had at least one live birth before age 18 (25 per cent in Gaza and 20 per cent in the West Bank).

21. Lack of access to safe, sufficient and affordable water remains of critical concern. In Gaza, only 10 per cent of households have access to clean drinking water.<sup>8</sup> It is estimated that at least 96 per cent of the water from the coastal aquifer in Gaza is unfit for human consumption.<sup>9</sup> In the West Bank, 97 per cent of households have access to clean drinking water;<sup>10</sup> however the quantity of water

<sup>4</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey (2016b) and consumer price index data (2016e).

<sup>5</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, press release, 25 February 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force survey, press release, 8 August 2016.

<sup>7</sup> See [www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO\\_monthly\\_Gaza\\_access\\_report-July\\_2016-\\_final.pdf?ua=1](http://www.emro.who.int/images/stories/palestine/documents/WHO_monthly_Gaza_access_report-July_2016-_final.pdf?ua=1).

<sup>8</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "Palestinian multiple indicator cluster survey 2014" (2015).

<sup>9</sup> WHO, "Report of a field assessment of health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, 22 March to 1 April 2015" (2016).

<sup>10</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Palestinian Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014 (2015).

supply remained insufficient.<sup>11</sup> Around 70 per cent of the Palestinian communities located entirely or mostly in Area C are not connected to a water network and the Government of Palestine has limited ability to provide access to water. The average domestic consumption rate among Palestinians is approximately 40 litres per capita per day in Area C: well below the WHO minimum recommendation of 100 litres per capita per day.<sup>12</sup> Owing to the inadequate quality and quantity of the water available, these communities are forced to buy water at unaffordable rates<sup>13</sup> and Palestinians spend an average of 8 per cent of their monthly expenditure on purchasing water.

22. According to FAO, food insecurity levels among Palestinian households remained high during the reporting period, at 27 per cent (46 per cent in Gaza and 17 per cent in the West Bank).<sup>14</sup> Food insecurity in the Palestinian context is defined as the lack of economic access to food. In the West Bank, the prevalence of food insecurity among female-headed households is 10 percentage points higher than among male-headed households (25 per cent, compared with 15 per cent), while it is 3 percentage points higher for female-headed households in Gaza.<sup>15</sup>

23. Access to early learning opportunities in Palestine is low, with a 57.3 per cent enrolment rate in preschool education (57.7 per cent for boys and 56.9 per cent for girls). Levels of enrolment in basic education are higher: 95 per cent for girls and 93 per cent for boys. However, the net enrolment rate in secondary school is concerning, especially for boys: 59 per cent for boys and 77 per cent for girls in 2015.<sup>16</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that girls and children with disabilities are more prone to dropping out of school in areas where they feel unsafe in and on the way to school, such as in military zones and around checkpoints and settlements.

24. Rule of law remains a significant issue across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Palestinian women face specific challenges in accessing justice as a result of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex, notably with respect to inheritance, child custody and other personal status issues; women's limited knowledge of their rights and procedures; economic dependency; and social pressures and stigma. Even in cases where women manage to access justice services, they often face service providers who lack professional knowledge in dealing specifically with women and girl victims of violence, and who continue to interpret outdated laws pertaining to the Penal Code and personal status law in ways that infringe women's human rights. The State of Palestine has demonstrated its commitment to address women's access to justice through accession to seven human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was endorsed without reservations.

<sup>11</sup> Consumption per person is 71 litres per day, as compared with the WHO recommendation of 100 litres per person per day — source: “WHO, Report of a field assessment of health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory, 22 March to 1 April 2015 (2016).

<sup>12</sup> EWASH, *Thirsting for Justice* (January 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “2016 Humanitarian Needs Overview” (2015) p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> FAO, UNRWA, WFP and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Socioeconomic and food security survey 2014: West Bank and Gaza Strip” (unpublished information).

<sup>15</sup> Palestine Food Security Sector and Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, *Socioeconomic and food security survey 2014* (May 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *Baseline M&E report 2015* (2016).

25. In the State of Palestine, women and girls continue to experience multiple types of violence at home and in their communities, including structural violence in the form of discriminatory laws and traditional practices, and physical, economic and psychological violence from family members and intimate partners. Psychosocial violence continues to be the most reported type of violence in Gaza (55 per cent), while in the West Bank psychosocial violence comprise 30 per cent of reported cases, and cases of physical violence comprise another 30 per cent of reported cases. Overall, in 78.5 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was a spouse, parent or sibling, with spouses alone making up 67 per cent of all cases. In 84.3 per cent of cases where a woman was killed, the perpetrator was a family member. While domestic violence constitutes the most prevalent form of violence against women, it should be noted that merely 1.4 per cent of domestic violence cases reach the courts, with 57.6 per cent of women stating that social customs prevent them from filing a complaint.<sup>17</sup> There is also a severe lack of shelters and a social support system, which makes addressing violence against women particularly challenging.<sup>18</sup>

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

26. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to a range of development and humanitarian challenges. Priorities for United Nations support to the Palestinian people are outlined in a set of key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2014-2016 for the State of Palestine, which is aligned with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016, and the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan, which outlines the humanitarian programming. An update on assistance provided by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Government of Palestine, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development, is given in paragraphs 27-63 below.

#### A. Education and training

27. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote women's and girls' access to education and training and improve learning environments. During the academic year 2015-2016, UNRWA operated 349 schools (252 in Gaza and 96 in the West Bank), serving over 290,400 students. In Gaza, 127,490 girls were enrolled in UNRWA schools (48.5 per cent of the student population), with an annual student increase of approximately 8,000 students. In the West Bank, 28,771 girls (58.8 per cent of the total) were enrolled in UNRWA schools. In addition to basic education, UNRWA continued to offer technical and vocational education training. During the reporting period, 540 girls (32 per cent of

<sup>17</sup> "UN-Women, Impact stories on ending violence against women — specialized prosecution", 2016, available from: <http://palestine.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/10/spp#sthash.Fry1yfEu.dpuf>.

<sup>18</sup> UNRWA GBV referral system — first quarter of 2016.



all students) in Gaza, and 567 girls (82 per cent of total) in the West Bank participated in such training.

28. In the West Bank, UNICEF and partners provided protective accompaniment presence to school children for safer commutes to school in locations with Israeli military presence and settlers. This benefited 4,667 children (1,670 girls and 2,997 boys) and 333 teachers (180 female and 153 male).

29. UNESCO and partners continued to promote early childhood education by conducting awareness-raising sessions on inclusive and child-friendly education for 980 mothers and training 120 female teachers. School principals and supervisors participated in the project training on inclusive education, action research and child-led activities, benefiting 17,810 female students in 49 schools in the West Bank and Gaza.

30. In East Jerusalem, UNDP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) provided quality education and counselling services to nearly 8,500 female students in private schools.

31. In Gaza, UNDP has responded to the needs of girls in schools that were damaged during the 2014 conflict. The recovery process has considered and responded to girls' needs on the basis of the principles of building back better and child friendly schools. This includes the adaptation of the school premises, primarily with regard to water and sanitation facilities, to make them accessible to girls with special needs. The rehabilitation and reconstruction of 32 partially damaged educational institutions (12 public schools, 13 private schools and 7 universities/colleges) benefited 37,222 students (19,445 of whom were female).

32. ILO and partners supported 50 unemployed female university graduates from low-income households with skill-building training, followed by three-month temporary job placements in the private sector or community-based organizations. Around 25-30 per cent of the graduates found paid work and the majority indicated that their participation in the programme had increased their hope of finding longer-term employment. In partnership with the Islamic University of Gaza, ILO delivered furniture design training to 20 young female architects experiencing difficulty in finding employment in the architecture sector. Some 15 women architects were trained in basic business concepts, management and entrepreneurship skills and 18 female furniture design trainees received subsidized on-the-job training in furniture manufacturing small and medium enterprises in Gaza.

33. In Gaza, UNRWA enhanced the leadership skills of young women by providing female university graduates with skills that better meet the labour market needs. During the reporting period, 391 women and 34 men participated in the programme. Moreover, 724 young female graduates accessed job placement opportunities in civil society and the private sector.

## **B. Health**

34. The United Nations continued to build upon good practices and results reported in the previous reporting period to improve the access to and the quality of health-care services. UNRWA remained the major provider of primary health-care services for Palestine refugees, operating 21 health centres in Gaza and 42 in the

West Bank. Palestine refugees, who constitute over 70 per cent of the population in Gaza, continued to rely on UNRWA for primary health care. In Gaza, the total number of medical consultations from October 2015 to June 2016 stood at 2,870,183, of which 60 per cent were for women, and 904,058 in the West Bank, where 59 per cent were for women.

35. Maternal and child health care continues to be an essential component of assistance. UNRWA provided assistance to 32,625 newly registered pregnant women, 218,661 women who were receiving antenatal care and 28,303 women who were receiving postnatal care services. A total of 94.8 per cent of all pregnant women paid at least four visits to UNRWA health centres during their pregnancies. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health and partner non-governmental organizations to reach and support a total of 3,532 “high-risk” women and their newborns under the postnatal home visiting programme in Gaza. Over 30,000 women have been reached with nutrition counselling and health education sessions. UNDP supported the rehabilitation of Al-Shifa and Al-Tahrir maternity hospitals, which served 16,000 women in Gaza City and Khan Younis during 2016. UNFPA supported the operation of mobile clinics in 12 communities in Gaza, with 3,681 women, including 1,654 pregnant women, benefiting from mobile clinic services.

36. UNRWA health clinics provided adolescent and adult women refugees with preventive and curative services, including screening for breast cancer and reproductive health-related services. UNDP in partnership with Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem launched a mobile mammography clinic initiative, while in Gaza, UNRWA launched a project to raise awareness of breast cancer. Through UNRWA health centres, 68,382 women were screened for breast cancer and 4,438 were referred for mammograms and scans.

37. UNDP upgraded specialized departments in three East Jerusalem hospitals, thereby allowing more than 6,500 women annually to benefit from improved conditions during the reporting period. It also supported tertiary treatment for vulnerable cardiac patients, including women in Gaza, through the rehabilitation of a floor of the Palestine Red Crescent Society and the construction of two operation rooms for cardiac care.

38. In the first half of 2016, 6,166 women and girls benefited from water network repairs and water tankering supported by UNICEF, while 10,500 women and girls benefited from improved sanitation services. Some 9,000 households in Gaza received e-vouchers for hygiene items and another 14,400 households were provided with sanitation and hygiene items.

39. United Nations entities continued to provide psychosocial support to women and girls across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. UN-Women provided group and individual psychosocial counselling to 1,800 women and girls displaced during the escalation of hostilities in 2014. Through the psychosocial counselling programme, 56 gender-based violence cases were referred to other service providers for further follow-up. In the West Bank, in 21 locations, UNRWA engaged family and child protection committees, which are composed of community-based organization representatives, UNRWA staff, community leaders and the popular refugee committees, to reach more than 6,300 women and girls with support group discussions and awareness-raising events. With UNICEF support, the Ministry of Social Development and other partners reached 32,417 children (of whom 49 per

cent were girls) with psychosocial support services, and 7,987 children (of whom 51 per cent were girls) with community-based child protection services, including in response to gender-based violence.

40. UN-Women provided physiotherapy, conducted by four women physiotherapists, to 16 women with disabilities and also provided necessary medical equipment. Some 30 women with disabilities received psychosocial and legal counselling in Gaza.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

41. Within their development programming, United Nations entities continued to prioritize initiatives to promote women's economic empowerment and improve food security and livelihoods.

42. During the reporting period, UN-Women provided technical assistance to 45 women-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and 547 beneficiaries to enhance the competitiveness and marketability of their products locally, regionally and internationally through a comprehensive capacity-building, on-the-job coaching programme. Financial assistance was provided for 34 women-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

43. In a joint initiative by ILO and UN-Women, a participatory gender audit was conducted for two major Palestinian companies to enhance social responsibility and encourage a transformational change towards gender-responsive working environments.

44. FAO conducted several training sessions on marketing and bookkeeping for 90 women members of six women's cooperatives, to establish an effective finance and credit management system and links with reliable loan service providers. The training and workshops enhanced the women's capacity to manage loans. A total of 59 women from 10 women's cooperatives in the West Bank benefited from training focused on quality control, quality assurance and the application of local and international standards for food processing products.

45. The UNRWA job creation programme employed 17,063 refugees (of whom 26.4 per cent were female). The bulk of jobs (78.9 per cent) offered by the programme require unskilled labour; however, owing to social and cultural barriers, the programme faces challenges in finding culturally acceptable jobs for unskilled women. In the West Bank, the cash-for-work programme employed women as clerks, cleaners, guards, administrative assistants and tutors, among other roles. Over the reporting period, 8,124 labourers participated in the cash-for-work programme, of whom 41.2 per cent were female.

46. In Gaza, the enhanced UNRWA poverty assessment system makes it possible for vulnerable categories of women, such as women in polygamous marriages, widows, divorced women and women living in a state of separation from their husbands, to apply for an independent poverty assessment and receive food assistance from UNRWA separately from the male head of household. During the reporting period, 3,324 women applied for an assessment. Of the 2,082 cases already visited, 68.3 per cent qualified for assistance.

47. In the West Bank, UNRWA used a poverty-based targeting strategy for its social safety net programme that ranks households according to a variety of poverty-related elements. Of 7,613 households, 34 per cent are female-headed households and 55.3 per cent of beneficiaries are women. Priority interventions include essential food requirements, emergency cash intervention, referrals and in-house counselling.

48. Through general food distributions and vouchers, WFP ensured increased food consumption and dietary diversity for 294,818 female beneficiaries, 50 per cent of all beneficiaries. WFP food vouchers empower beneficiaries in managing household needs as they give them the freedom to choose which food commodities they want to buy. Women make the decisions on the use of the vouchers in 87 per cent of cases.

49. As part of reconstruction efforts in Gaza, UNDP provided transitional shelter cash assistance for 1,154 non-refugee families whose homes were damaged during the 2014 escalation of hostilities, with priority given to female-headed households, which comprise 10.7 per cent of the households in Gaza. In East Jerusalem, 150 Palestinian female-headed households benefited directly from improved living conditions through the rehabilitation of 250 homes.

50. ILO implemented a response programme in 2015 to train 50 women sheep breeders on management of sheep farms, life skills, financial and marketing literacy, cooperative work and business group formation. In the West Bank, FAO supported 85 women farmers with the construction of rainwater collection cisterns and facilitated land rehabilitation for five women farmers. In Gaza, FAO supported 65 female-headed households with vegetable and protein production units and rehabilitated 48 damaged animal shelters. In response to shocks, including unusual seasonal weather conditions in the West Bank, 71 women herders received drought-tolerant seeds to enhance their capacity to produce fodder for their animals. Some 30 animal shelters belonging to women herders were rehabilitated and FAO supported 240 women herders in the West Bank and Gaza by providing plastic sheeting for the winterization of animal shelters in preparation for cold weather conditions.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

51. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives designed to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women.

52. From January to June 2016, through the joint UNDP and UN-Women Rule of Law programme, in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 5,248 women received free legal aid and 1,778 received legal rights awareness training. In Gaza, 2,025 women received legal aid and 6,569 received legal rights awareness training. In Gaza, OHCHR conducted training on gender-based violence and the right to life for women's organizations and female traditional community leaders. During the reporting period, and particularly in the context of the aftermath of the 2014 conflict, 2,749 internally displaced persons, including 123 sexual and gender-based violence survivors, received legal assistance through 10 legal aid clinics and 3 additional mobile aid clinics.

53. Through humanitarian response interventions implemented by United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations, 2,564 survivors of gender-based violence (including 107 men) accessed legal services; 2,645 survivors (2,521 women, 124 men) received psychosocial support services; and 19,904 people (17,094 women, 2,810 men) attended gender-based violence awareness-raising sessions or received information on related services. UNRWA continued to operate a gender-based violence referral system in Gaza and the West Bank providing services for Palestinian refugees. During the reporting period, 2,138 gender-based violence cases were identified in Gaza, 92.8 per cent of them against women. A total of 7,129 psychosocial counselling sessions were accessed by gender-based violence survivors and 994 women received legal counselling. In the West Bank, 309 women and girl survivors received support through the community mental health programme, through the mother-to-mother groups and through medical and school counsellors. A total of 11 cases of child marriage were identified through the gender-based violence referral system.

54. During the reporting period, UN-Women worked to improve the quality of services provided to women victims and survivors of gender-based violence in Gaza, with a special focus on internally displaced women. UN-Women interventions reached more than 5,736 beneficiaries (5,194 women and 542 men) with awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence and related services. UN-Women and civil society partners, mainly the Al-Hayat Centre, the Arab Women's Forum and Wifaq Association, provided more than 131 women victims of gender-based violence with case management support. The Hayat Centre also supported vulnerable and at-risk groups such as women in conflict with the law (17 women) and children of divorced couples (20 children) with case management and reintegration services. UNFPA provided training for 800 service providers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip on gender-based violence "detection", response and referral, utilizing the guidelines developed and the Palestinian national referral system. UNFPA supported the establishment of a "one-stop" centre in Jabalia in Gaza, as a pilot phase to serve as a safe space for gender-based violence survivors.

55. UNICEF and UNFPA further supported the development of standard operating procedures for gender-based violence and child protection case management and referral in Gaza. Some 160 Ministry of Social Development social workers, 61 Ministry of Education and Higher Education school counsellors and 38 Ministry of Health medical staff received orientation on the standard operating procedures, detection of gender-based violence and referrals.

56. UNODC continued to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior and the Palestinian Civil Police to manage, administer, deliver and expand forensic medicine and forensic science services in accordance with international standards, including with regard to the investigation of cases of gender-based violence. Seven Palestinian doctors continued their specialized training programme in forensic medicine, including the forensic examination of victims of sexual and gender-based violence. UNODC also conducted awareness workshops on gender-based violence and child abuse recognition and response for forensic medicine practitioners, the High Judicial Council, UNRWA refugee camp clinics, local non-governmental organizations and line ministries related to the national referral system for gender-based violence service providers in the State of Palestine.

## **E. Power and decision-making**

57. During the reporting period, UN-Women enhanced women's political participation and leadership by providing technical assistance to 20 female local council members. Of these women, aged 25-45 years, 15 became active members in their councils and villages, voicing women's priorities and needs at local council meetings. In addition, UNDP established and institutionalized local economic development units in five medium-sized municipalities in Gaza, in which women have been assigned as specialists and focal points.

58. In UNRWA schools, 1,964 female students from 132 girls' elementary and preparatory schools participated in the school parliament programme. Female students discussed and engaged peers on a number of issues relating to gender equality, such as reproductive health and early marriage. In the West Bank, UNRWA conducted awareness-raising activities for 435 participants from local communities on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security.

59. In 2016, UNICEF and local partners reached 6,747 disadvantaged adolescents (48.5 per cent of whom were female) from vulnerable communities with life skills programmes. Nearly 80 per cent of adolescent girls and boys from UNICEF-supported life skills projects are involved in and leading community initiatives. These projects equipped girls with important leadership skills for their participation in decision-making and community life.

## **F. Institutional development**

60. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to support the State of Palestine in strengthening its capacity to implement and report under the seven human rights treaties to which it has acceded, while addressing gender-based discrimination as a cross-cutting issue. OHCHR support included technical assistance through training and bilateral discussions with line ministries on treaty provisions, general comments and reporting guidelines. UN-Women and OHCHR supported the State of Palestine and the Independent Commission for Human Rights with technical assistance and resources to hold a national consultation on the draft State party report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. About 140 representatives of civil society organizations from both the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip attended the consultation. OHCHR and UN-Women also conducted a training for civil society organizations in Gaza and the West Bank on their role in the human rights treaty reporting and implementation process, which included technical discussions on using national consultations and shadow reporting to advocate for and promote women's human rights.

61. With support from ILO and in consultation with tripartite constituents, the social security law for private sector workers and their family members was adopted, and signed by the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, on 7 March 2016. The law includes maternity protection insurance, which will support increased women's labour force participation and encourage employers to employ more women, by transferring the financial burden of covering maternity leave benefit from the employer to the social security fund.

62. In August 2016, the Ministry of Women's Affairs launched the national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Developed by the High National Committee for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and supported by UN-Women and ESCWA, among others, the plan establishes a comprehensive action framework in support of the efforts of the Palestinian Government, civil society and women's organizations to make the participation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and needs in peace, security and humanitarian processes a reality.

63. Under the joint rule of law programme, UNDP and UN-Women provided support to justice and security institutions to mainstream a gender perspective in policies and procedures, including in the area of legislative drafting. The Palestinian Civil Police were supported in developing the first police gender strategy in the Arab region; the Council of Ministers held a series of national consultations for the finalization of the Family Protection Bill, which addresses domestic violence; and the Attorney General formalized a unit of Specialized Prosecutors for Protection of Family from Violence and appointed 19 specialized prosecutors, who receive continuing support from the joint programme. The joint programme provided technical support to the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior for the review and development of the social protection, justice and security sector strategies as well as technical support to the State of Palestine in the reporting process to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It also supported the Palestinian Civil Police in the refurbishment of one of its buildings to become a centre for women and girls victims of violence.

#### IV. Conclusions and recommendations

**64. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, fragmentation of the territory, lack of Palestinian unity, restrictions on access and movement, increased settlement expansion and violence and the closure of Gaza continued to impact negatively on the situation of Palestinian women. In Gaza, the humanitarian situation remains dire. The slow pace of recovery from the 2014 conflict is concerning and has exacerbated many of the protection concerns and challenges faced by women and girls described in previous reports. These include increased psychosocial stress, high unemployment rates, lack of livelihood opportunities, food insecurity, limited access to basic services, poor access to water, sanitation and energy, high rates of violence against women and lack of access to justice. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the surge in demolitions of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures during the reporting period and the associated displacement aggravated existing protection concerns. Restrictions on the freedom of movement continued to impact negatively on women's and girls' access to basic services, education and livelihood opportunities.**

**65. The rule of law remains a significant issue across the State of Palestine, with women and girls continuing to face significant challenges in accessing justice, including as a result of laws that discriminate on the basis of sex. More effort is needed to bring legislative frameworks into alignment with international human rights instruments such as the Convention on the**

**Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.** The preparation of the Palestine State Party report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women presents an important milestone in support of increased accountability of national systems with regard to women's human rights and gender equality, and in identifying and addressing discrimination against women, both in law and in practice. Areas where legislative reform must clearly be undertaken in order to achieve substantive equality include: adopting the Family Protection Bill, which protects women from domestic violence; revising the personal status law to align with obligations under the Convention related to equality in inheritance, divorce and child custody, among other issues; and revising the penal code to remove all references to mitigating circumstances in sentencing for family-related killings (so called "honour killings") and to introduce sentences for different types of sexual and gender-based violence.

66. To advance the realization of women's human rights, continued technical support should be provided to Palestinian actors to fully engage with human rights treaty bodies and other relevant processes, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Human Rights Council and its special procedures, the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.<sup>19</sup> Technical support should be provided to women's organizations to facilitate their participation in human rights processes and to ensure stronger collaboration between women's organizations and mainstream human rights organizations in engaging with the Human Rights Council.

67. Violence against women remains a serious protection concern in the State of Palestine and the situation is particularly acute in Gaza. In support of the implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, the United Nations should build on efforts under way and continue to implement initiatives to improve women's access to justice and enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to violence against women. United Nations entities together with all key actors should support the implementation of a coordinated holistic, multisectoral approach to respond to violence against women and ensure availability of health care, psychosocial and legal assistance and counselling and economic empowerment, in line with the recommendations of the midterm review of the National Strategy.

68. United Nations system entities should increase prevention efforts, including initiatives aimed at mitigating the impact of the occupation and conflict on the increasing vulnerability and exposure of women and girls to violence, including settler violence, displacement, home demolitions and restrictions on movement.

69. Improving women's economic security and rights is key to supporting women's empowerment and protection at large. Policies aimed at expanding

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<sup>19</sup> In the context of the preliminary examination into the situation of Palestine, the Office of the Prosecutor has called upon interested parties to submit information on violations of women's rights in respect of crimes within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.



local production and creating jobs should support women's local production quality standards to enhance their potential to compete locally. Exploring opportunities for women's engagement in new economic sectors such as the information technology, manufacturing and tourism sectors would maximize opportunities for women's economic participation. As a further means of guiding young students and graduates away from an overcrowded professional sector, career counselling and technical and vocational education training services should be provided to enhance the attractiveness of technical careers. This should be coupled with making labour market information and job search mechanisms available to disadvantaged and marginalized female youth. In Gaza, given women's limited participation and economic opportunities to date, more attention must be paid to strengthening their participation in and opportunities generated by post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts.

70. Prospects of national and local elections continue to be a great challenge and women remain underrepresented in decision-making bodies at various levels of public life, the peace processes and national reconciliation efforts. It is therefore crucial to support long-term sustainable mechanisms to enhance the political representation and leadership of Palestinian women in a way that would set women's issues high on the national agenda. Consciousness of political rights and the building of transformative communities are significant conditions for creating an enabling environment that can influence the direction of politics and development in favour of women.

71. The United Nations continues to support the realization of a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The promotion of women's human rights and empowerment remains essential to these efforts. The national action plan on the implementation of Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women, peace and security, launched by the State of Palestine in 2016, establishes a comprehensive action framework for making the participation of women and the inclusion of their perspectives and needs in peace, security and humanitarian processes a reality. The United Nations should support the implementation and monitoring of the national action plan and, in addition, utilize the opportunities presented by Security Council resolution [2242 \(2015\)](#) for bringing violations of human rights and humanitarian law experienced by Palestinian women to the attention of the Security Council, including through the briefings of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

72. The overall increase in politically motivated violence during the reporting period is concerning, further threatening the prospects of peace. Finding a political solution to the conflict remains essential.



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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

### Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

#### Report of the Secretary-General\*\*

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2017/10](#), highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017, and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* [E/CN.6/2018/1](#).

\*\* The submission of the report was delayed in order to complete consultations among all relevant offices.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2017/10](#) on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2017/6](#)), and submit a report to the Commission on the Status of Women at its sixty-second session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2017 and reviews the situation of Palestinian women on the basis of information from the United Nations entities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

2. Unless otherwise indicated, the report is based on contributions and information submitted by entities of the United Nations system that provide assistance to Palestinian women. It includes contributions from the following United Nations entities: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It also reflects information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The report builds on previous annual reports on this topic and complements other reports on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people (see [A/72/87-E/2017/67](#), [A/72/368-S/2017/741](#), [A/72/90-E/2017/71](#) and [A/72/13](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

3. This section highlights political developments during the reporting period. The volatile political, socioeconomic and humanitarian situation described below has a profound impact on all Palestinians. Analysis and an understanding of the gender-specific aspects of the situation are essential for effective responses to security, development and humanitarian needs. As further detailed in section III below, the impact of the crisis on the everyday lives and the future of women, young women and girls is immense and compounded by prevailing discrimination in law and in practice.

4. During the reporting period, the international community continued efforts to preserve the possibility of a two-State solution and promote an enabling environment for final status negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council adopted its resolution [2334 \(2016\)](#), in which the Council reaffirmed that the establishment of settlements by Israel in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity, constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and remains a major obstacle to the

achievement of the two-State solution. The Council reiterated concerns regarding the continued construction and expansion of settlements, violence against civilians, including acts of terror, and acts of provocation and destruction. The Council also underlined that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations.

5. On 15 January 2017, at a conference hosted by France, participants from 70 countries reaffirmed their commitment to a negotiated two-State solution as the only way to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution of the conflict and enduring peace (see [S/2017/50](#)). Participants expressed their readiness to contribute to arrangements to ensure the sustainability of a negotiated peace agreement. During the reporting period, and as detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine ([A/72/368-S/2017/741](#)), the Russian Federation, Arab leaders under the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and the United States of America undertook efforts to restart negotiations and advance peace. For the first time in 2017, the Middle East Quartet convened in Jerusalem, on 13 July, at the envoy level to discuss efforts to advance peace in the Middle East as well as the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. The parties reached limited agreements and understandings covering electricity, water, communication and postal services.

6. There was an upward trend in settlement activities, and rates of demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures remained high during the reporting period. On 6 February 2017, following the order issued by the Israeli High Court of Justice for the evacuation and demolition of the illegal settlement outpost of Amona, the Knesset adopted the “regularization bill”, which effectively authorizes the appropriation of privately owned Palestinian land in the West Bank.<sup>1</sup> The law was adopted despite objections by the Attorney General of Israel that it is unconstitutional and in violation of international law (see [A/72/87-E/2017/67](#), para. 7). Since the beginning of the reporting period, plans for more than 12,000 housing units have been advanced, approved or tendered in Area C and in East Jerusalem, more than double the total for 2016. One such plan is for a new settlement deep inside the West Bank, which would further obstruct the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian State in any future peace agreement. Several petitions against the law are currently being considered by the Israeli High Court of Justice, and its implementation has been halted until the Court rules on its legality.

7. The reporting period was also marked by regular clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. During April and May, protests escalated in support of a hunger strike by Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, and, in July, events in and around the Aqsa Mosque in the Old City of Jerusalem led to several weeks of widespread unrest in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Following a deadly attack on two Israeli police officers at one of the entrances to the Aqsa Mosque on 14 July, tensions around the holy site and in East Jerusalem quickly escalated as Palestinians and Muslim religious authorities rejected Israeli measures taken in response to the attack; Palestinian worshippers refused to enter the compound. Clashes between protesters and police after Friday prayers on 21 July resulted in the killing of three Palestinians. Later that night, a Palestinian man entered a house in the Israeli settlement of Halamish and stabbed to death three members of an Israeli family

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<sup>1</sup> Following the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the 1995 interim agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the West Bank was divided into three zones, Areas A, B and C. Extensive responsibility was delegated by Israel to the Palestinian Authority in Areas A and B. Area C remained under full authority of Israel.

before he was shot and detained. At the height of the unrest, the President of the State of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas, announced a halt to all contact with the Israeli authorities, including for security coordination. Following regional and international mediation efforts, Israel removed all of the security measures and equipment that it had installed at the entrances to the Aqsa Mosque, and by 28 July Muslim religious leaders in East Jerusalem had called on worshippers to resume prayers inside the compound, thereby reducing tensions. Contact and security coordination between Israeli and Palestinian authorities have since been resumed.

8. During the reporting period, the ongoing Palestinian political divide continued to widen the chasm between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, impeded efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and worsened the already dire humanitarian situation for Palestinians living in Gaza and the West Bank. In a manifestation of this political division, Palestinians in Gaza were unable to participate in municipal elections. The elections, which were held on 13 May 2017, were limited to the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem). In Gaza, following the election by Hamas of a new leadership and the formation of an “administrative committee” in March 2017 to run governmental affairs in Gaza, the Palestinian Authority took a number of measures to stop subsidizing the de facto authorities in Gaza. This included making cuts related to salaries and allowances, stipends for former prisoners and electricity supply, as well as compelling Palestinian Authority employees in the Gaza Strip to take early retirement. For its part, Hamas arrested Fatah members, banned Fatah political activities in public and prevented Fatah senior officials from leaving Gaza. Hamas also appointed local judicial personnel and executed six alleged collaborators with Israel without seeking approval from President Abbas, as required under Palestinian law. The Palestinian Authority has consistently made three demands to Hamas aimed at resolving the current standoff: to dissolve the Administrative Committee; to allow the Government of national consensus, led by Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, to work in Gaza; and to hold general elections. On 17 September 2017, as a result of mediation efforts by Egypt, Hamas agreed to those demands, thereby raising hopes for an end to the Palestinian divide.

9. During the reporting period, the humanitarian situation in Gaza worsened owing to several factors, including the ongoing impact of the hostilities in July and August 2014, the closure of Gaza, the internal Palestinian divide and a long-standing electricity crisis affecting 2 million people in Gaza. The impact of the hostilities in 2014 continues to shape the current political, social and humanitarian context and, three years on, an estimated 25,500 people remain internally displaced. In mid-April 2017, the sole power plant in Gaza, which provided about a third of its electricity, was forced to shut down following the failure by the Palestinian Authority and Hamas to resolve a dispute over the payment of taxes on fuel. In May, the supply was reduced by 30 per cent after the Palestinian Authority had informed the Israeli Electricity Company that it would no longer pay in full for the electricity supplied to Gaza through Israel. As a result, Gaza receives only 4 to 6 hours of electricity a day, down from 8 to 12 hours before April, which has had a particularly grave impact on the delivery of essential health, water, and sanitation services.<sup>2</sup> The lack of power has also had a severe impact on sewage treatment. The raw sewage being poured into the sea is polluting the coastline and constitutes an unfolding environmental disaster. As

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<sup>2</sup> Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “2017 Gaza crisis: urgent funding appeal”, July 2017. Available from <https://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/2017-gaza-crisis-urgent-funding-appeal>.

women and girls bear the majority of household responsibilities in Palestinian society, they are disproportionately affected by the current impact of the electricity crisis.

### **III. Assistance to Palestinian women**

10. This section further outlines the gender dimensions of the situation of Palestinian women and details the United Nations efforts to respond to and deliver assistance amid complex humanitarian challenges. It provides updated information on the assistance provided by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Government of the State of Palestine, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women, young women and girls in the following areas: education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The volatile context and the constrained funding environment continue to pose operational challenges for the delivery of assistance and have an impact on the sustainability of the progress achieved.

11. Current priorities for the provision of United Nations support to the Palestinian people are outlined in a set of key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018–2022 for the State of Palestine, which is aligned with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda (2017–2022), the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2017–2022 and the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan, which outlines humanitarian needs and responses. In addition, the humanitarian community issued an emergency appeal to address the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

#### **A. Education and training**

12. Young women, young men, boys and girls continue to face distinct and gender-specific challenges in accessing education throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Lack of safe public spaces and routes to school for young women and girls, the risk for young men and boys of confrontations and involvement in clashes with security forces or demonstrations, and social and cultural norms within families and communities continue to have a negative impact and sometimes make safe and accessible education unavailable for young people and children. Young women and girls often have limited access to educational opportunities that are available or provided as a priority to young men and boys. Many young women and girls are often kept at home owing to a lack of safe public spaces, as well as to sociocultural norms.

13. Grave violations of children's rights continue at staggering levels. As reported by UNICEF, from October 2016 to September 2017, 4,107 incidents were documented, affecting 39,762 children. This included the killing of 19 Palestinian children (3 girls and 16 boys) and the injury of 570 children (32 Palestinian girls, 530 Palestinian boys, 1 Israeli girl and 7 Israeli boys). In addition, 283 incidents relating to access to education were documented. According to the latest data received from the Israel Prison Service on children in military detention, a total of 318 children (including 10 girls) were being held in detention at the end of June 2017. Children continue to be detained across the West Bank and East Jerusalem for security-related offences and through administrative detention (see [A/72/361-S/2017/821](#)).

14. United Nations entities continued to implement a range of initiatives to promote access for women, young women and girls to education and training and to improve

learning environments. During the academic year 2016/17, UNRWA operated 96 schools in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 267 in Gaza, serving more than 310,000 students, of whom half (49.9 per cent) are female. In addition to basic education, UNRWA continued to offer technical and vocational education and training. During the reporting period, 578 girls in Gaza (33.6 per cent of all students) and 587 girls in the West Bank (58 per cent of all students) participated in such training. UNESCO provided training to 3,646 female students to improve their management, language, life and research skills across 10 community libraries established by the agency in the West Bank and Gaza. The Right to Higher Education Advocacy Campaign was implemented in four of those community libraries, which addressed the right of women to enrol in higher education institutions.

15. UNRWA, through its education and community mental health programmes, also supported teachers and school counsellors, along with students and their families, to provide counselling and address gender-based discrimination and the underlying causes of school drop-out rates. To address the limited access of adolescents and young people to safe public spaces, UNICEF provided vulnerable adolescents with capacity-building on core life skills through its entrepreneurial and civic engagement programmes. Young people have applied the skills gained in those youth-led initiatives, which has enabled them to voice issues of concern to them and take an active role within their communities, as agents of positive change. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and UN-Women also began the implementation of a joint programme to support women and youth leadership in post-conflict recovery through the use of digital technologies to establish safe, accessible and gender-responsive public spaces in Gaza.

16. In the West Bank, UNICEF and partners continued to address the important need for safety in public spaces by providing schoolchildren with protection to and from school in locations where the Israeli military and settlers are present. This programme benefited approximately 8,000 children (43.75 per cent of whom were girls) and 400 teachers (75 per cent of whom were women). UNDP, through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, continued to provide education support to girls in Area C of the West Bank through mobile science and computer laboratory services in remote areas, which benefited 400 girls. A total of 220 girls benefited from the installation of a solar system to generate clean energy for schools and to relieve the schools of some of their operating costs.

## **B. Health**

17. Women and girls have the right to health and the right to receive non-discriminatory health-care services that are not only accessible and affordable, but also of good quality. Significant challenges in the provision and accessibility of health-care services remain throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, leaving many Palestinians deprived of those rights. Palestinian women face major and distinct barriers to access to adequate health care. Accessing care can often result in an unmanageable financial burden, including travel costs, the direct costs of care, associated costs of childcare and loss of income, when women need to travel to facilities far from their homes.

18. The public health system in Gaza remains overstretched as a result of ever-increasing demand, frequent power cuts and a lack of financial and medical resources owing to facility closures and the internal Palestinian political divide. Palestine refugees, who make up some 70 per cent of the population in Gaza, are increasingly

unable to pay fees at the facilities of the Ministry of Health, and it is even harder to pay at private clinics. The population relies heavily on UNRWA for primary health-care services. Demand for UNRWA health-care services has also increased owing to the decline of the health-care services provided by the Ministry of Health and the chronic shortage of medicines and medical supplies at the Ministry's central pharmacy.

19. The maternal mortality ratio in the Occupied Palestinian Territory stands at 25 (20 in the West Bank and 31 in Gaza) per 100,000 live births, according to the Ministry of Health.<sup>3</sup> Yet, challenges still remain in maintaining the low maternal mortality rates and preventing avoidable deaths, such as: limited access to basic health-care services for women and children; limited early detection of developmental delays and disabilities in children; lack of quality of care as a result of overcrowding in hospitals; lack of adequate equipment and supplies; and the early discharge of mothers after birth.

20. Lack of mobility, travel restrictions and the denial of travel authorizations also have an impact on the ability of Palestinians to seek, afford and receive the health care that they need. During the reporting period, the acceptance rate for patients from the West Bank who had applied to the Israeli authorities for permits to exit the Occupied Palestinian Territory remained relatively stable, at 80 per cent.<sup>4</sup> However, there was a significant overall decline in the acceptance rates for permits to exit Gaza for health-care purposes. In September 2017, the acceptance rate was 55 per cent.<sup>5</sup> During the reporting period, 12,698 female patients submitted requests for travel permits to exit the Gaza Strip through the Erez checkpoint for specialized medical treatment in other Palestinian medical facilities, hospitals in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and, to a lesser extent, Israeli hospitals. Of these requests, 6,986 (55 per cent) were approved, 286 (2 per cent) were denied and 5,426 (43 per cent) received delayed responses after the time of the patients' hospital appointments. The approval rate for applications from female patients was higher than that for male patients: from January 2017 to August 2017, 57.2 per cent of applications from women were approved, compared with 49.7 per cent for men. At least 164 female patients were asked to appear for an Israeli security interrogation as a precondition for consideration of their application in 2017.

21. While all residents of the Gaza Strip are exempt from health-care service fees under the presidential decision of 26 June 2007, patients who require a medical referral outside the Strip have been affected by procedural delays since mid-May 2017, with a decline in the number of referrals and a slowing of the process of issuing financial coverage documents for Gaza by the relevant authorities in Ramallah. In August 2017, 1,297 referral documents were issued for Gaza patients. This is 40 per cent lower than the monthly average in the first quarter of 2017 (2,149) and 34 per cent lower than the corresponding month of 2016.

22. In response, the United Nations continued its efforts to improve health-care services. UNRWA remained a major provider of primary health-care services for Palestine refugees, operating 22 health centres in Gaza and 42 in the West Bank. In Gaza, between October 2016 and July 2017, 1,893,030 medical consultations were conducted for Palestinian refugees, of which 60 per cent were for women. In the West

<sup>3</sup> State of Palestine, Ministry of Health, "National Health Strategy 2014–2016".

<sup>4</sup> During the reporting period, WHO monitored and analysed women's access to health-care services through an examination of permit data, disaggregated by sex, for patients seeking access to medical facilities outside Gaza and the West Bank, in East Jerusalem and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> WHO, "Health access for referral patients from the Gaza Strip", monthly report, September 2017.



Bank, including East Jerusalem, 503,545 medical consultations were provided, of which 61 per cent were for women. UNRWA also provided medical services through its emergency mobile clinics to approximately 26,050 women residing in various localities in Area C.

23. Maternal and child health care continued to be an essential component of assistance. In Gaza, UNRWA provided assistance to 36,750 newly registered pregnant women, antenatal care to 245,436 women and postnatal care to 32,558 women. More than 98 per cent of all pregnant women paid at least four visits to an UNRWA health centre during their pregnancy. To reduce neonatal mortality and introduce safe and evidence-based practices to save lives at birth, WHO supported the introduction of the early essential newborn care package in Gaza, making the Occupied Palestinian Territory the first place in the Eastern Mediterranean region to implement the package. Some 34,100 women and newborns have benefited from these services in the hospitals of the Ministry of Health. In addition, with support from WHO, the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health implemented a maternal and child health electronic registry, a customized interactive checklist that facilitates data collection and utilization to guide evidence-based interventions to improve the quality of service. The electronic registry was implemented in 77 primary health-care clinics in five districts in the West Bank. To address the limited access to good-quality newborn care services in Area C of the West Bank, UNICEF provided the Ministry of Health with three mobile clinics that will serve 10,000 children and their caregivers. A package of essential basic health-care services, including the provision of medication for acute diseases, and maternal and child health-care services are provided to these communities on a weekly basis. UN-Women trained approximately 1,108 women from 23 localities near the Bethlehem and Hebron Governorates on sexual and reproductive health and issues relating to sexual and gender-based violence.

24. Through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNDP continued to provide health-care services in East Jerusalem to female-headed households that lack formal health insurance. Through the Programme, 5,065 female patients were covered by the three Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem. UN-Women provided support to community-based organizations and women's organizations to strengthen their participation in humanitarian assistance. In Area C, some 30 women, including women with disabilities, benefited from counselling, legal and psychosocial services. In Gaza, some 50 women with disabilities received training to enhance their physical and psychological preparedness for emergencies.

### **C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods**

25. Women, including young women, continue to face serious challenges linked to economic empowerment and insecurity. In Gaza, the electricity crisis and its effects, described above, significantly disrupt daily life and have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who bear most of the household responsibilities in Palestinian society. The heavy care responsibilities and limited access to water and electricity reduce women's ability to engage in income-generating activities or to allocate time to their own needs.

26. There have been no improvements in the rates of food insecurity among Palestinian households since the issuance of the previous report. According to FAO, food insecurity affects 46 per cent of Palestinian households in the Gaza Strip and 17 per cent of Palestinian households in the West Bank. In the West Bank, the

prevalence of food insecurity among female-headed households is 10 percentage points higher than among male-headed households, while it is 3 percentage points higher in the Gaza Strip. When disaggregated by sex, the prevalence of food insecurity should be considered alongside the information available on the assistance received by households. The average value of the total support received by female-headed households is 30 per cent greater than that received by male-headed households.

27. The rate of labour-force participation for Palestinian women remains among the lowest in the region, at 19.1 per cent.<sup>6</sup> While female participation in the labour market has increased over the past few years, unemployment rates are higher among women than men. In the second quarter of 2017, the unemployment rate among women rose to a staggering 71.5 per cent in Gaza and reached 36.2 per cent in the West Bank.<sup>7</sup> The gender wage gap also persisted, with the average daily wage for Palestinian women reaching 83 new Israeli shekels (NIS), compared with NIS 114 for men.<sup>8</sup> The unemployment rate for youth aged 20–24 years continued to rise, reaching 46.3 per cent in the second quarter of 2017, with unemployment rates of 38.3 per cent among young men and 72.7 per cent among young women.<sup>9</sup> While Palestinian female jobseekers generally have relatively high levels of education in comparison with their male counterparts and with women in other developing countries, those qualifications, as previously reported, have not translated into higher levels of employment. Against this backdrop, United Nations entities continued to prioritize initiatives promoting women’s economic empowerment, improving food security and livelihoods in their programming.

28. UN-Women, FAO and the International Trade Centre (ITC) supported the functioning of a “one-stop shop” in Ramallah as a comprehensive hub of services to improve access to economic opportunities for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) run by Palestinian women. The one-stop shop provided a range of services to women entrepreneurs and start-ups, including services linked to business development, capacity development, trade facilitation, access to capital or finance and production support. FAO continued to provide training and coaching to enhance the capacity of its two retail shops in the northern and southern West Bank, which market agricultural products from more than 15 women’s cooperatives and two women’s associations, with a total of almost 700 members. Moreover, FAO provided direct support to 20 women’s cooperatives in successfully registering the trademarks of their products, and 15 women’s cooperatives received specialized training on marketing. UN-Women provided technical assistance to 43 women-led MSMEs in the West Bank and Gaza and financial assistance to 34 women-led MSMEs. Of the 43 targeted MSMEs, 35 reported having increased their sales turnover since the beginning of the programme in 2015, by an average of 42.8 per cent.

29. Through its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNDP supported the establishment of 174 women-led MSMEs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In addition, 640 women were employed through job placement activities, 225 women received capacity development packages to support their economic

<sup>6</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “International Women’s Day 2017”, press release, 7 March 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Results of the labour force survey second-quarter (April–June 2017) round”, press release, 7 August 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “International Women’s Day 2017”.

<sup>9</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Results of the labour force survey second-quarter (April–June 2017) round”.

endeavours and 35 women were supported in accessing external markets related to food processing, textiles, and light industries. According to a UNDP assessment, more than 85 per cent of the women interviewed declared that the capacity development interventions had enhanced their competencies and the success of their projects. Approximately 80 per cent of the women reported an improvement in their bargaining power within the family and improved relationships in their community. Moreover, women reported positive changes in their mobility, access to the market and ability to sell products.

30. The Microfinance Department of UNRWA disbursed 1,693 loans, valued at \$1,883,180, to women (44 per cent of the total number of loans), with the Women's Household Credit being the most common loan type. Most loans are for livelihood activities and to support the resilience of these women and their families. The microfinance programme is aimed at overcoming barriers related to access to financing by setting lower requirements than the formal banking system and regularly updating its product portfolio.

31. The UNRWA job creation programme employed 16,323 refugees, of whom 24.4 per cent were women. Most jobs offered by the programme require unskilled labour; however, owing to social and cultural barriers, the programme continues to face challenges in finding culturally acceptable jobs for unskilled women. Through a community outreach programme, which includes training and job placement, the UNRWA Gender Initiative is aimed at increasing opportunities for young women. During the reporting period, 817 young female graduates of the Young Women Leaders Programme<sup>10</sup> were provided with professional skills training and 235 benefited from a three-month work placement in the private sector or civil society organizations. Approximately 25 per cent of graduates were able to secure employment after completing the training and work placement.

32. United Nations entities continued to provide social safety nets to women in vulnerable situations. To support women's livelihoods in sustainable agriculture and enhance their resilience, FAO supported 16 women farmers in the West Bank through the establishment of rainwater collection cisterns and 12 women herders through the rehabilitation of community cisterns for livestock use, and facilitated land rehabilitation for five women farmers. UNDP provided economic assistance to 22 female-headed households awaiting family reunification in East Jerusalem. The assistance enables family members, especially women, to acquire income-generating skills while waiting for reunification. UNRWA continued to implement a social safety net programme, which benefited 2,558 female-headed households in Gaza (34 per cent of the total number of households targeted) and 2,558 female-headed households in the West Bank (34 per cent of the total number of households).

33. Through general food distribution and vouchers, WFP ensured increased food consumption and dietary diversity for 490,000 beneficiaries, of whom 242,500 were women. To raise awareness on healthful and appropriate nutritional practices, WFP conducted 24 sessions on nutrition, with training benefiting 2,953 food-insecure women and 991 food-insecure men who were beneficiaries of the WFP voucher programme in Gaza. WFP food vouchers empower beneficiaries and allow them to manage the needs of their household, as they have the freedom to choose their food commodities. Based on WFP monitoring, women make 92 per cent of decisions on the use of the voucher and the types of food commodities to redeem; by comparison, 4 per cent of decisions are made by men only and 4 per cent are joint decisions.

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<sup>10</sup> Participants in the Young Women Leaders Programme have completed university degrees.

34. ILO continued to promote entrepreneurship education in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, while mainstreaming a gender perspective and empowering female youth and women. ILO supported cooperatives by providing training to women's business groups, paying special attention to the integration of women into existing cooperatives and the creation of new women-only cooperatives and cooperative management. In Gaza, ILO supported capacity-building and business plan development for existing cooperatives, including the Gaza Saving and Credit Cooperative, which comprises 1,470 female members and seeks to empower women through the provision of financial capital. FAO trained 60 female employees of the Ministries of Agriculture, National Economy and Health on animal health and food safety to enhance government capacity to implement sanitary and phytosanitary measures. With the support of FAO, four women also enrolled in a new programme for a master's degree in biotechnology and rural development.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

35. Structural inequalities, poverty and discrimination have a significant impact on the access of women and girls to justice and security. Despite the existence of laws condemning violence against women, the limited jurisdiction of the Palestinian authorities limits enforcement in some areas. Palestinian women experience high levels of gender-based violence, are subject, directly and indirectly, to political and social violence and have limited access to water and electricity, housing, land and property, employment opportunities, higher education and health care, including prenatal and neonatal health care.<sup>11</sup> Psychosocial distress levels, which were already high among the Gaza population, have worsened significantly as a result of the conflict and will continue to require specialized support, specifically for children, adolescent girls and women.

36. Efforts to meet the obligation to prevent violence against women in Area C and East Jerusalem are severely constrained by the inability of the Palestinian authorities to access the populations. The political divide between the de facto authority in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority also hinders the application of the law. Palestinian women continue to face specific challenges in accessing justice, including laws that discriminate on the basis of sex, notably with respect to inheritance, child custody and other personal status issues; women's limited knowledge of their human rights and related procedures; economic dependency; and social pressures and stigma.

37. Gender-based violence in all its forms, including sexual violence, intimate-partner violence and forced marriage, remains a major protection and health concern. In Gaza, poverty and the absence of economic opportunities contribute to violence against women.<sup>12</sup> Pervasive impunity for violence against women means that perpetrators of violence rarely, if ever, face legal, criminal or social penalties. Moreover, violence against women in the context of marriage is not considered a crime in civil law, and salient family law in Gaza and dominant social norms prioritize the preservation of a marriage over the rights of victims. Survey findings demonstrate

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<sup>11</sup> UNFPA and the Culture and Free Thought Association, "Protection in the windward: conditions and rights of internally displaced girls and women during the latest Israeli military operation on the Gaza Strip", October 2014.

<sup>12</sup> UN-Women, "Navigating through shattered paths: NGO service providers and women survivors of gender-based violence — an assessment of GBV services in Gaza", research paper, September 2017.

the high value placed on “honour”, with 47 per cent of men and 38 per cent of women believing that women and girls deserve punishment from their families when “honour” is perceived to have been breached. Thirty-five per cent of men and 22 per cent of women also indicated that “honour” killings should not be punished by law.<sup>13</sup> In addition, one third of men and one quarter of women surveyed believed that some violence against women can be justified, and the majority of men and women believed that women should tolerate such violence. Owing in part to such beliefs, only 0.7 per cent of survivors seek help as a result of the lack of confidential and compassionate services and fear of stigma and reprisal.<sup>14</sup> Efforts to address such attitudinal beliefs are needed, alongside efforts to strengthen the rule of law, legal protection and women’s access to justice.

38. The joint UNDP and UN-Women programme on the rule of law supported the Government in strengthening the legal framework by improving the capacity of the justice and security institutions to mainstream a gender perspective into structures and services. A one-stop centre for women victims of violence was opened in Ramallah in 2017. The Civil Police Gender Strategy was launched in February 2017, which is the first gender strategy developed by a police force in the Arab States region. In October 2016, the number of specialized prosecutors dealing with family protection cases increased to 26, compared with 15 in the first quarter of 2014, when the first specialized prosecutors were identified. The partnership between UN-Women and the High Judicial Council was strengthened, and the Chief Justice announced the intention of the court under the Council’s jurisdiction to ensure the provision of specialized expertise relating to violence against women in cases across all levels of courts. The Chief Justice also announced an increase in the number of judges working on cases of violence against women from 12 in October 2016 to 29 in May 2017. From October 2016 to April 2017, approximately 13,000 women and 1,100 girls in the West Bank received legal support, including representation, advice, mediation, awareness-raising and training.

39. During the reporting period, UNFPA and partners identified 12,606 cases of gender-based violence. Of these, more than 10,000 cases resulted in one or more types of psychosocial, health and legal assistance. The United Nations and its partners established three local referral pathways, which include coalitions of 77 providers of health, psychosocial, legal and shelter services. In addition, 17,802 women and men at the community level, in both the West Bank and Gaza, participated in awareness-raising sessions on gender-based violence.

40. In Gaza, UNICEF, along with the Ministry of Social Development and other partners, provided psychosocial support services to 4,965 children (52 per cent of whom were girls) and child protection services to 5,986 children (47 per cent of whom were girls). In addition, 27 girls and 76 women in need of psychosocial support were identified through situation monitoring and referred to appropriate services. In Gaza, 82 girls and 62 women with disabilities were identified and referred for support, while 51 older women and 14 women victims of gender-based violence were identified and referred for support through the disability and gender-based violence working groups.

<sup>13</sup> Shereen El Feki, Gary Barker and Brian Heilman, eds., *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) — Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine)* (Cairo and Washington, D.C., UN-Women and Promundo, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, “Violence survey in the Palestinian Territory, 2011”, March 2012.

41. UNFPA and its partners established two new safe spaces for women and girls, in compliance with the National Referral System for Women Victims of Violence, in Qalqilyah city and in the old city of Hebron in the West Bank, while continuing to support, operate and develop the active safe space in Jabaliya camp in Gaza. The implementing partners of UNFPA conducted 365 outreach sessions on protection from and prevention of gender-based violence, reaching 6,457 community members, and provided 900 dignity kits for survivors of gender-based violence.

42. UNRWA continued to operate a gender-based violence referral service system in Gaza and the West Bank, providing services for Palestine refugees. During the reporting period, 1,404 cases of gender-based violence were identified in Gaza. In the West Bank, UNRWA identified 284 cases and referred 29 cases to other service providers, including both government institutions — such as the Ministry of Health, for specialized medical care, and the Ministry of Social Development, for protection and for financial assistance — and non-governmental organizations.

## **E. Power-sharing and decision-making**

43. While women participate in some areas of political life, they remain underrepresented in both elected and appointed decision-making positions. Women account for only 12.8 per cent of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.<sup>15</sup> During the seventh conference of Fatah (the ruling political party in the West Bank), of the 19 members elected to the Fatah central council, only one was a woman. In the current Government, women hold only two ministerial positions: the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Women's Affairs. Similarly, the most recent available data, from 2015, show that women accounted for only 5.8 per cent of Palestinian ambassadors, 17.2 per cent of judges, 16.7 per cent of prosecutors and 22.5 per cent of lawyers. Although women hold approximately 42.6 per cent of public sector positions, they tend to be towards the lower end of the decision-making hierarchy. For example, women held only 11.7 per cent of positions at the director general level.<sup>16</sup>

44. United Nations entities sought to enhance women's political participation and representation across these positions through several initiatives. UN-Women continued to provide technical assistance to 20 female local council members in the West Bank, who, in turn, through their engagement with local communities and community leaders, supported the development and implementation of nine women-led community-based initiatives. The initiatives were focused on voicing women's needs within the local community to encourage inclusive and gender-responsive decision-making in the local council. UNDP supported women in building their own awareness of rights in the context of the local elections in Tubas and Qalqilyah Governorates in the West Bank. This initiative reached more than 800 women, who were encouraged to participate actively in decision-making. As a result, two women's forums were established to facilitate increased networking and coordination among women and to build their capacity to advocate for their rights. WFP continued to promote and support women's active participation in the local committees that assist in the implementation of its assistance programmes. Through the local committees,

<sup>15</sup> Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University, Ministry of Women's Affairs of the State of Palestine and UN-Women, "Building ties: towards integrated strategies and policies for empowering Palestinian women", 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "International Women's Day 2017".

WFP and civil society partners ensured that women took a lead role in the management of food distribution and cross-checking of beneficiaries.

45. On 27 September 2017, UN-Women, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, organized an open day on women and peace and security in the State of Palestine, which included the participation of the Special Coordinator, senior United Nations and European Union officials, women's rights and human rights organizations, political leaders and international organizations. During the open day, the participants drew attention to a range of pressing concerns and priorities, including the rights of women refugees, the impact of settlements, the socioeconomic situation of women and girls in Gaza and Jerusalem and the situation and rights of women imprisoned by Israel. Under the theme of the open day, women's participation in the reconciliation process was stressed, as was the commitment of the United Nations to prioritizing the women and peace and security agenda in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

## **F. Institutional development**

46. The promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies, as enshrined in Sustainable Development Goal 16, cannot be achieved without gender-responsive policies and actions. Inclusive institutional development is an essential component of preventing conflict and sustaining peace and should promote women's ability to lead and participate in all aspects of development, humanitarian and peace and security efforts.

47. United Nations entities implemented a range of initiatives to promote women's meaningful leadership and participation within long-term institutional reform efforts. For example, UNESCO, together with the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Education and Higher Education and the European Union, launched the First Skills Forecasting Model, which provides quantitative projections on the supply of and demand for skills in the Palestinian labour market with a view to developing curricula, training programmes and employment policies. The model will offer essential insights to female students in choosing their educational path.

48. UNICEF and WFP jointly supported the Ministry of Social Development in the formulation of the Social Development Sector Strategy 2017–2022 to address the social and economic vulnerabilities of women and other groups. A key element of the Strategy is the introduction of a case management system in the West Bank that provides essential referrals based on clients' specific needs and vulnerabilities. ILO supported the establishment and training of 11 technical committees, including a gender committee, to produce policy papers supporting the adoption of reformed labour legislation. In July 2017, ILO and the Ministry of Labour signed an implementation agreement to support the establishment of the Palestinian Social Security Corporation, an independent institution that will enable the roll-out of the first social security system to cover private sector workers and their families in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

49. UNICEF provided technical and financial support for the development of a child protection information management system, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development and partners, which was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development in February 2017 and is used by service providers to document and follow up on cases. UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs in reviewing the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2014–2016 and in developing the strategy for 2017–2022. The process was focused on localizing the Sustainable

Development Goals within the strategy for long-term, transformative reform. In addition, UN-Women supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs in incorporating gender equality priorities into 12 sectoral strategies, namely with respect to education, health, culture, economic affairs, labour, agriculture, social development, water, housing, justice, security and local government.

50. OHCHR provided technical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, the Independent Commission for Human Rights and civil society in the West Bank and Gaza, including targeted assistance in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which the State of Palestine acceded in 2014. OHCHR, in collaboration with UN-Women, worked closely with all stakeholders to prepare the initial State party report of the State of Palestine on the implementation of the Convention. The report was submitted to OHCHR on 8 March 2017 and will be considered by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2018.

51. In February 2017, UN-Women held a regional exchange workshop in Amman to enhance the knowledge and advocacy skills of civil society organizations regarding the Convention to protect women's rights in the Middle East and North Africa region and to improve the technical capacity of government entities with regard to the rules of procedure of the Committee. Approximately 50 participants attended the workshop, representing 20 Palestinian non-governmental organizations from the West Bank and Gaza, as well as government entities. In preparation for the consideration of the report of the State of Palestine by the Committee, UN-Women, with support from OHCHR, organized a mock session for government representatives and the Independent Commission for Human Rights.

52. A number of initiatives supported by UN-Women, ESCWA and others were aimed at building institutional support and capacity for the implementation of commitments on women and peace and security, including the national action plan on women and peace and security for the State of Palestine for the period 2017–2019. For example, during the reporting period UN-Women organized a regional knowledge exchange between the State of Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia on the planning, monitoring and evaluation of national action plans on women and peace and security, which benefited 30 participants. This contributed to enhanced regional networking and partnerships with respect to data collection and advocacy.

#### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

53. Palestinian lives and livelihoods and the enjoyment of human rights by Palestinians continue to be seriously affected by more than 50 years of the military occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel, including a 10-year closure of the Gaza Strip, as well as by the Palestinian political divide. Women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by unstable political circumstances that systemically create gender-based vulnerabilities. They also experience multiple forms of violence, based on the continuing military occupation, human rights violations and a growing humanitarian crisis, compounded by conservative traditions and patriarchal norms. Limited access for women to employment opportunities and sustainable financial income, an overwhelming share of care responsibilities, and the marginalization imposed owing to geographical fragmentation and the related restriction of movement, exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence and limit their opportunities to access protection, justice and security services.



54. The accession of the State of Palestine to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is an important step towards greater recognition of the human rights of women. It is commendable that the State of Palestine submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The report is scheduled to be considered by the Committee at its seventieth session, to be held in July 2018. Relevant Palestinian authorities and the Government of Israel have a critical role to play in eliminating discrimination against women and upholding women's human rights, ensuring accountability, respect for the rule of law and women's full, equal and meaningful participation in governance processes. The State of Palestine is encouraged to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention as an accountability tool under international human rights law. There is an increased need for the availability of both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis on the situation of Palestinian women,<sup>17</sup> the gender-specific impact of the occupation and the lack of progress in finding just and enduring peace. However, data disaggregated by sex and age, as well as gender analysis more broadly, have not yet been sufficiently utilized to inform related reporting and briefings on the situation of Palestinian people to other intergovernmental bodies, including the Security Council. In addition, options for facilitating direct inputs from women's civil society organizations to discussions on related themes should be considered.

55. Increased efforts are needed to improve women's economic empowerment. There is a need to focus on the interlinkages between the supply and demand sides of the labour market. This requires the design of practical interventions that promote the demand for women's labour while continuing to address the institutional and market impediments facing women's participation in the labour market. Women are entering the labour force in increasing numbers, but face numerous barriers notwithstanding their advanced education. An important starting point would be to challenge cultural stereotypes according to which women work only in certain fields or are better off working at home, and to identify women's real needs when they seek to enter the workforce and find stable employment. Robust social policies that support those needs, such as childcare, flexible working hours, policies that support work/life balance, and public awareness campaigns in support of working women, are essential.<sup>18</sup> National institutions should also address the lack of affirmative policies that promote the hiring of women. Labour laws and regulations should address existing gaps with respect to women's right to work and rights at work to promote gender equality in all sectors of the workforce.

56. National institutions should be supported in adopting holistic approaches to education, health and social services. Enhancing education quality and relevance can be achieved through the adoption of a more proactive approach to gender mainstreaming and inclusive and transformative education. Giving priority to women's health can be achieved through a public health perspective that is not limited to maternal and child health but also addresses Palestinian women's health needs regardless of their age and marital status.

57. Building an accurate understanding of the patterns and drivers of gender-based violence cannot be isolated from the impact of the overall political, humanitarian and economic context created by the prolonged occupation and other political realities in terms of increasing the risk and vulnerability for gender-based violence. While global

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<sup>17</sup> These data have been included in the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women since the 1980s.

<sup>18</sup> ILO, *The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study* (forthcoming).

standards for addressing gender-based violence emphasize the need for effective national systems that guarantee security, justice and protection for women, Palestinian women are denied those guarantees in the Gaza Strip and in parts of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The Israeli occupation has severely limited the possibility of advancing protection through legal frameworks for addressing gender-based violence. The fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the closure imposed on Gaza have caused services, capacity and expertise to be made available only in certain areas. United Nations entities need to continue to work to strengthen services for survivors of gender-based violence and to address gaps in the quality, accessibility and sustainability of services. All actors should place greater focus on income generation for survivors of violence and on the provision of independent housing in which women survivors and their children may live free of abuse. The United Nations system should also support the institutionalization of violence prevention and response, particularly in areas most affected by conflict.

58. The United Nations humanitarian country team should continue to build on the foundation for a strengthened gender focus (in analytical, programmatic and institutional terms) in humanitarian action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to ensure the capacity to identify and respond to priority gender needs in the humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors should continue to ensure a shift in humanitarian approaches and mechanisms to guarantee effective protection and access to assistance for women and girls in humanitarian crises, including the full and meaningful participation and leadership of women in all stages of humanitarian action, as well as adequate funding for gender-sensitive response.

59. The promotion of gender equality, and the empowerment of women and their human rights, remain essential to efforts for the realization of just and durable peace and sustainable development in the Middle East. A strong normative framework is in place at the global level on women and peace and security, with regional and national policies and action plans providing additional guidance on its operationalization. Continued efforts should be made by the Palestinian Authority and all other actors to fulfil commitments relating to women and peace and security and to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, leaving no one behind.



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## Commission on the Status of Women

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters**

## Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution [2018/10](#), highlights the situation of Palestinian women for the period from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018 and provides an overview of the assistance provided by the entities of the United Nations system with regard to education and training; health; economic empowerment and livelihoods; the rule of law and violence against women; power and decision-making; and institutional development. The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

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\* [E/CN.6/2019/1](#).



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [2018/10](#) on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women, the Economic and Social Council expressed deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations. The Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to review the situation, assist Palestinian women by all available means, including those laid out by the Secretary-General in his previous report on the situation of and assistance to Palestinian women ([E/CN.6/2018/6](#)), and submit to the Commission on the Status of Women, at its sixty-third session, a report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report covers the period from 1 October 2017 to 30 September 2018 and provides a review of the situation of Palestinian women on the basis of information received from the United Nations entities that provide assistance to Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, unless otherwise indicated. Those entities include the following: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Volunteers, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO). It also reflects information provided by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). The report builds on previous annual reports on the topic (see [A/73/13](#), [A/73/35](#), [A/73/84-E/2018/72](#), [A/73/87-E/2018/69](#) and [A/73/346-S/2018/597](#)).

## II. Situation of Palestinian women

3. The reporting period was characterized by a rise in political tensions, violence and a continued deterioration in the humanitarian, socioeconomic and security situation in and around the Gaza Strip, including in the context of the protests held under the label “the Great March of Return”.<sup>1</sup> Despite diplomatic efforts for intra-Palestinian reconciliation, the continued divisions between the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority and Hamas authorities in Gaza compounded the impact of closures, deepening the economic hardships in Gaza and obstructing key infrastructure projects on water and electricity.<sup>2</sup> In parallel, settlement expansion, the destruction of homes, infrastructure and livelihoods and strict movement and access restrictions continued in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. All of those developments negatively affected the situation of Palestinian women in terms

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, “Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee”, 27 September 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. See also Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 20 September 2018. Available from <https://unsc.unmissions.org/security-council-briefings-0>.

of their safety and security, livelihood, access to education, health care and other services, employment and political participation.

4. Since 30 March 2018, Palestinians in Gaza have held weekly mass protests along the perimeter fence under the label “the Great March of Return”. By the end of September 2018, 161 Palestinians had been killed along the fence and over 22,409 Palestinians (20,456 men and boys and 1,953 women and girls) had been injured, including by tear gas inhalation.<sup>3</sup> One Israeli soldier was killed and another injured, and 37 Israeli civilians were injured by projectiles launched from the Strip.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, tensions remained in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Frequent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces resulted in 24 Palestinian deaths and 8,921 injuries, including by tear gas inhalation, with 274 women and 172 girls among those affected,<sup>5</sup> and acts of violence between and vandalism by Israeli and Palestinian civilians. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded a total of 236 violent incidents involving Israeli settlers that resulted in three Palestinian fatalities and 100 Palestinian injuries, with 11 women and 7 girls among those affected, as well as damage to Palestinian property. Six Israeli civilians and three members of Israeli security forces were killed in shooting or stabbing attacks by Palestinians.

5. Funding cuts to UNRWA, which affected UNRWA emergency services and programmes in particular, raised concerns about the ability of the United Nations to respond effectively to the deteriorating humanitarian situation, including its impacts on women and girls.<sup>6</sup> Some of those cuts were made up in part by other donors.<sup>7</sup> Several political developments also cast a shadow on the financial situation of the Palestinian Authority, at a time when external budget support has been on the decline. On 23 March 2018, the President of the United States signed into law the Taylor Force Act, which prohibits the provision of nearly all economic assistance to the West Bank and Gaza that would directly benefit the Palestinian Authority. In July 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed a similar law withholding tax revenues that Israel collects for the Palestinian Authority, in an amount equivalent to the total sum of those Palestinian Authority payments. These and other funding cuts constrained the operations of several organizations, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, which had an overall negative impact on Palestinian women and men.

6. In Gaza, the deteriorating humanitarian and socioeconomic situation, compounded by financial constraints, a worsened electricity and fuel crisis and related power cuts, has further restricted access to basic services, including services to survivors of gender-based violence. It has also placed higher demands on and intensified the unpaid care and domestic work carried out by women. Some hospitals were expected to close in order to preserve energy for the central hospitals, which would have a particular impact on pregnant women, adolescents, older persons, those with chronic illnesses and survivors of gender-based violence.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat.

<sup>4</sup> Mladenov, Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 20 September 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Data provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<sup>6</sup> Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 25 January 2018.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), “Ministerial meeting on UNRWA raises remarkable US\$122 million”, press release, 28 September 2018.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), “Gender alert: needs of women and girls in humanitarian action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”, 2018.

7. In the West Bank, ongoing settlement activities, demolitions, strict movement and access restrictions and limitations on planning and development continue to prevent entire communities, in particular in Area C, East Jerusalem and the H2 area of Hebron, from accessing essential services and have led to a heightened risk of displacement for many Palestinians.<sup>9</sup> According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 376 Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were demolished by Israeli authorities, displacing at least 471 people (90 households). UNRWA records indicate that 78 of the displaced individuals were Palestine refugee women and girls, including 36 girls under the age of 18, and 4 of the displaced households were headed by women. The situation of Bedouin communities such as Khan al-Ahmar is of particular concern, as they face the risk of impending demolition of structures and relocation.<sup>10</sup> When displaced, Palestinian women find themselves further constrained in their access to public spaces and livelihood opportunities, against a backdrop of increasing personal and family food insecurity and vulnerability. They also suffer an increase in domestic violence and often resort to negative coping mechanisms such as early marriage.

8. Circumstances in Area C are especially hard for women and girls, in the face of geographic isolation, poverty and conservative traditions and the absence of basic infrastructure and services. Few economic opportunities exist.<sup>11</sup> Restrictions on mobility are especially perilous for pregnant women. Women are at a high risk of suffering from psychosocial disorders such as anxiety and depression, compounded by a sense of failure to protect their children from violence. They are also at risk of violence in their homes or while tending to farmland or collecting water. Girls in the area have limited access to education and often drop out of school, which can lead to early marriage, early pregnancy and sexual abuse. In addition, women are often at risk of gender-based violence, exacerbated by the stresses and frustrations experienced by men. Few communities in Area C, especially Bedouin communities, have access to services such as police, health centres or shelters.<sup>12</sup>

9. Stereotypical attitudes relating to gender roles remain common in the State of Palestine. Men are largely viewed as heads of households, main providers and protectors of their families, while women are seen as responsible for care and domestic work relating to their often large and extended families with high numbers of children. The constant deterioration of the economic situation, combined with land confiscations and movement restrictions and exacerbated by intra-Palestinian political divisions, leaves many men unable to fulfil their traditional roles and women compensating for the absence of services and income.<sup>13</sup> Despite the increasing participation of women in higher education and the labour market, the division of work within the household continues to fall sharply along gender-specific expectations. However, there are signs of more equitable views, including in relation

<sup>9</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “2018–2020 Humanitarian response strategy: January–December 2018 humanitarian response plan – Occupied Palestinian Territory”, December 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Nickolay Mladenov, Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Briefing to the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, 18 October 2018.

<sup>11</sup> UN-Women, “Gender alert”.

<sup>12</sup> Nader Said-Foqahaa, *Caught Up between a Rock and a Hard Place: Occupation, Patriarchy and Gender Relations – A Case Study of Palestinian Women in Areas C and H2* (UN-Women and Arab World for Research and Development, forthcoming).

<sup>13</sup> UN-Women, “Gender alert”.

to the right to work, political participation and the sharing of care and domestic work, in particular among the younger age groups.<sup>14</sup>

10. A thorough analysis and understanding of the gender-specific aspects of the situation across the Occupied Palestinian Territory is essential for establishing effective responses to the multifaceted security and development challenges and extensive humanitarian needs. As further detailed below, the impact of the crisis on the everyday lives and the future of women, young women and girls is immense, and compounded by prevailing discrimination in law and in practice. The physical and longer-term emotional and societal impacts of all forms of violence remain of deep concern.

### III. Assistance to Palestinian women

11. This section further outlines the situation of Palestinian women and efforts by the United Nations to respond to and deliver assistance amid complex humanitarian challenges. It contains updated information on the assistance provided by the United Nations system, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority, donors and civil society, to address the specific needs and priorities of women, young women and girls. The volatile context and the increasingly constrained funding environment continue to pose operational challenges for the delivery of assistance and have an impact on the sustainability of the progress achieved.

12. Current priorities for the provision of United Nations support to the Palestinian people are outlined in a set of key documents, including the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2018–2022 for the State of Palestine, which is aligned with the Palestinian National Policy Agenda (2017–2022), the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2017–2022, the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women 2011–2019, the National Action Plan for the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security (2017–2019) and the 2018–2020 Humanitarian Response Strategy.

#### A. Education and training

13. Several challenges to children's access to education persist in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. These challenges often affect girls differently, for both security and sociocultural reasons. At age 5, about 1 in 10 children are excluded from education. A higher percentage of 5-year-old girls (11.9 per cent) are out of school, as compared with boys (8.8 per cent). Compulsory education in the State of Palestine begins the following year, at age 6, but the levels of exclusion from education increase rapidly as children progress through the compulsory grades. This trend is especially alarming for boys. For example, the estimated out-of-school rate for boys increases from 1.4 per cent at age 10 to 5.9 per cent at age 13, then jumps to a staggering 22.0 per cent at age 15. The rates of exclusion for girls start lower and increase less rapidly, with 0.4 per cent of girls out of school at age 10, 2.9 per cent at age 13 and 5.4 per cent at age 15.<sup>15</sup> This challenging situation is exacerbated by the electricity crisis, which restricts students' study time both at school and at home and increases dropout rates. In the West Bank, girls in Area C in particular have limited access to

<sup>14</sup> Shereen El Feki, Gary Barker and Brian Heilman, eds., *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa (Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Palestine)* (Cairo and Washington, D.C., UN-Women and Promundo-US, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, *State of Palestine: Country Report on Out-of-School Children* (2018).

education, owing to poor infrastructure, closures, permit restrictions and curfews, restricted mobility and the fact that they are required to help with household chores. They also often drop out of school, which can lead to early marriage, early pregnancy and sexual abuse. In the H2 area of Hebron, the impacts of economic hardship are especially hard on girls, who are the first to drop out of school.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, girls are often pulled out of school as a protective measure against harassment, violence and intimidation on their way to school in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> In a recent study, ESCWA highlights the low levels of educational attainment and literacy for Palestinian women with disabilities.<sup>18</sup>

14. UNICEF continued to facilitate safe access for 6,600 Palestinian schoolchildren (3,500 girls) and 400 teachers (300 women) on their way to and from school in high-risk locations, through protective presence and accompaniment past checkpoints and near Israeli settlements in the West Bank. UNDP built additional classrooms and sports facilities for six schools in marginalized communities in the West Bank, providing 1,075 female students with a better learning environment and creating more than 22 jobs for teachers in administrative positions. UNDP also supported improved learning for approximately 12,000 female students in East Jerusalem by enhancing physical infrastructure and supplying information and communication technology equipment and tools. In the Gaza Strip, UNDP completed the rehabilitation and reconstruction of 50 educational institutions, benefiting 50,686 female students and teachers (99,114 overall) and creating 1,284 job opportunities for women.

15. In the Gaza Strip, UNRWA provided basic education for 131,554 first- to ninth-grade students (48.4 per cent of whom were girls) and access to mental health support for students and their families to prevent students from dropping out. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNRWA schools enrolled 48,192 students (59 per cent of whom were girls). UNESCO promoted inclusive and child-friendly education through training for 33 school principals in the West Bank and 14 school supervisors and counsellors in Gaza, with a focus on establishing gender sensitivity in classrooms.

16. At the higher education level, enrolment by young women in colleges and universities continued to grow. In 2017, 53 per cent of all young women of higher-education age were enrolled in colleges and universities, compared with 32 per cent of young men in the corresponding age group.<sup>19</sup> Under the UNDP-supported Al Fakhoora Dynamic Futures Programme, 50 out of 100 full four-year scholarships to enable access to academic programmes were awarded to young women from underprivileged backgrounds.

17. UNRWA offered technical and vocational training, including to 640 female refugees in Gaza, where they made up 35 per cent of trainees, and 617 female refugees in the West Bank, where they made up 84 per cent of trainees. UNDP provided support to a vocational training centre and a nursing school in the East Jerusalem district to prepare students to enter the labour market. UNICEF helped over 10,000 disadvantaged adolescent girls to develop critical life skills through civic engagement and entrepreneurial programmes so they could continue their academic path, support their communities and enter the labour market.

<sup>16</sup> Nader Said-Foqahaa, *Caught Up between a Rock and a Hard Place*.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations country team, Occupied Palestinian Territory, *Common Country Analysis 2016: Leave No One Behind – A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine* (2016).

<sup>18</sup> Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Disability in the Arab Region 2018* (E/ESCWA/SDD/2018/1).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics database, available at <http://data.uis.unesco.org> (accessed in November 2018).



18. In partnership with Sharek Youth Forum, UN-Women promoted gender equality through mobile theatre in 10 boys' schools in Ramallah. Additional interventions included awareness-raising and social skills training for girls, women, boys and men in Jerusalem and Nablus and awareness-raising and civic education initiatives in 20 schools in Gaza. UNESCO carried out a radio and video spot campaign to promote diversity, gender equality, peace and development through sports media coverage. In addition, a theatre performance and an art exhibition were organized in partnership with Theatre Day Productions in Gaza in order to celebrate International Women's Day 2018 with women and men from rural areas, university students, members of youth organizations and representatives of women's organizations and international organizations.

## B. Health

19. Health services facilities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory face chronic shortages of medical supplies, affecting the availability and quality of health services for Palestinian women. In Gaza, the health system is on the verge of collapse as a result of the 10-year closures, the deepening intra-Palestinian political divide, the deteriorating energy supply, the inconsistent payment of public sector medical personnel and the growing shortages in medicines and disposables.<sup>20</sup> The ongoing crisis has led to high psychological stress levels. Despite the fact that psychosocial and mental health service providers are active in Gaza, social norms play a key role in hindering service uptake, especially for adolescent girls, as service users face a high degree of stigma and service use is often perceived to constrain marriageability. In the West Bank, restrictions on mobility as a result of the restrictive permit regime, poor infrastructure and threats by soldiers and settlers make the situation especially perilous for pregnant women who require prenatal, neonatal and other maternal care from hospitals.<sup>21</sup> In addition, facilities outside East Jerusalem completely lack certain treatment and diagnostic options, such as radiotherapy and nuclear imaging technology. That means, for example, that cancer patients, including women with breast cancer, are dependent on referrals to East Jerusalem or Israel and therefore require security permits from Israeli authorities to receive services.

20. United Nations entities continued efforts to improve access to and the quality of health-care services. UNDP began the second phase of upgrades to the chemotherapy department at the Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem, where direct support is provided to women with cancer. In the West Bank, UNDP provided two hospitals in the north and south with new structures, facilities and equipment and contributed to the construction of a new health clinic and medical laboratory that will benefit more than 1,660 people from the village of Tirah and the surrounding areas. UNFPA provided the Ministry of Health clinics in the West Bank with four advanced electrographic ultrasound machines to enhance breast cancer screening and detection. UNFPA also supported a mobile clinic for the early detection of breast cancer, enabling the clinic to provide mammogram screenings to 858 women in the northern West Bank, and provided subsidies for mammogram services to 180 women in Gaza.

21. In Gaza, UNDP constructed a service building for the visually impaired, benefiting 400 children (208 of whom were girls). Three hospitals and one primary health-care centre received photovoltaic renewable energy systems in order to provide sustainable operations. WHO procured and delivered equipment to the central stores

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "2018–2020 Humanitarian response strategy"; and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian bulletin: Occupied Palestinian Territory", April 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Nader Said-Foqahaa, *Caught Up between a Rock and a Hard Place*.

in Gaza, including 20 postnatal beds, 50 delivery kits, 5 ultrasound machines, 20 delivery beds and 50 bag valve masks.

22. During the reporting period, UNRWA provided 3.3 million medical consultations, 1.94 million (58 per cent) of which were to women and girls in Gaza and 1 million to women in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Between 31 March and 8 July 2018, UNRWA health centres received 2,588 requests for medical treatment (94 per cent involving men and boys and 6 per cent involving women and girls) resulting from violence associated with the demonstrations held under the label “the Great March of Return”. The UNRWA Community Mental Health Programme tended to patients and to family members of those killed and injured who required psychosocial and mental health support.

23. UNRWA provided substantial reproductive health care during the reporting period. A total of 31,358 Palestine refugee women were newly enrolled in preconception care services; 39,596 women in the Gaza Strip received post-partum care within six weeks of delivery; and 77,809 individuals received family planning services. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, UNRWA enrolled 13,559 women in antenatal care and provided 12,746 women with postnatal care services and 22,525 women with family planning services.

24. UNICEF provided postnatal home visiting services by skilled midwives or nurses to mothers and newborns within two days of birth following high-risk pregnancies, targeting hard-to-reach locations and vulnerable communities. Since October 2017, some 5,584 high-risk lactating mothers and newborns benefited from these targeted postnatal home visiting services; 16.9 per cent of those visits involved mothers under 18 years of age. UNICEF also supported capacity-building for 20 female staff members, community workers and volunteers in assessing child development and providing early intervention services for children with developmental delays and disabilities.

25. UN-Women supported the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association in providing services relating to sexually transmitted infections and reproductive tract infections, benefiting 292 people (245 of whom were women). A four-day training course was conducted to increase the capacities of 20 service providers with regard to HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and gender-based violence, and a three-day intervention was carried out with a total of 169 women (28 per cent of whom were under the age of 25) to sensitize women at high risk for sexually transmitted infections and to increase awareness about voluntary counselling, voluntary testing and sexual violence in Hebron and Bethlehem. UN-Women organized a two-day exchange visit between HIV-positive “champions” from Moldova and Palestinian health sector actors, service providers, youth volunteers and civil society representatives.

26. Through the Palestinian National Institute of Public Health, WHO continued the implementation of a maternal and child health electronic registry and a customized interactive checklist that facilitates data collection and utilization. By July 2018, 182 out of 427 maternal and child health clinics in the West Bank and Gaza had used the registry, helping to flag high-risk pregnancies and guide care providers in their clinical management. Through the Institute, WHO helped to improve mammogram protocols by expanding the risk factors assessed during breast cancer screening and supported the Ministry of Health in adopting and technically updating its protocols.

### C. Economic empowerment and livelihoods

27. Economic security is a challenge for Palestinian women. Their limited share of economic opportunities and agricultural holdings and the restrictions on their mobility constrain their ability to contribute to household resources and food security. A gap remains between educational attainment by women<sup>22</sup> and their participation in the labour force. In 2017, the rate of labour-force participation by women stood at only 19.0 per cent, compared with 71.2 per cent for men. In a worrying trend, the unemployment rate for women across the Occupied Palestinian Territory hit a record high of 47.1 per cent in 2017, an increase of 12 per cent over the past five years. By comparison, the unemployment rate for men was 22.2 per cent.<sup>23</sup> In a recent report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: developments in the economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (TD/B/65(2)/3), it was indicated that women with higher education (13 years of schooling or more) accounted for the largest share of those unemployed. In 2016, half of women with higher education were unemployed, compared with 19.1 per cent among their male counterparts.<sup>24</sup> Owing to limited employment opportunities, women remain overrepresented in unskilled or informal labour fields, putting them at risk of exploitation and unsafe working conditions.

28. UN-Women and ILO continued to promote equal access to decent work opportunities and the protection of women's labour rights through a "one-stop shop" programme in Ramallah that provides a comprehensive hub of services aimed at improving access to economic opportunities for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises run by Palestinian women. UN-Women and ILO also worked on enhancing equitable legislation, gender-sensitive policies and active labour market programmes. As a result of this cooperation, an awareness-raising campaign was carried out on women's right to decent work opportunities, a position paper was published on reviewing the labour law from a gender perspective and an assessment was conducted of the existing complaint mechanism of the General Directorate for Labour Inspection and Administration of the Ministry of Labour, which included recommendations for strengthening the mechanism with regard to gender-responsive data collection, analysis and reporting.

29. UNDP supported the economic empowerment of women in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through vocational training for 69 women, job placements for 131 women and business development services for 135 women. In Gaza, UNDP helped 98 young women to become entrepreneurs by facilitating access to financial and business development services. In the West Bank and Gaza, UNDP created 2,576 temporary workdays and 31 permanent jobs for women. It also helped 30 businesswomen and female workers in Gaza to become involved in efforts to revitalize the industrial sector.

30. The United Nations Volunteers programme secured 39 opportunities for national Volunteers, which benefited 26 young women and 13 young men. The Volunteers are assigned to different United Nations agencies and support various functions, including engineers, education officers and community development officers.

31. Throughout the West Bank, FAO contributed to a variety of livelihood activities, such as the construction of a livestock market in Hebron, which created a space for

<sup>22</sup> Data from UNESCO show that 39.6 per cent of women aged 25 years or more had completed at least a secondary-level education in 2016. See UNESCO Institute for Statistics database.

<sup>23</sup> Data refer to labour-force participation and unemployment rates for women and men aged 15 years or more. See International Labour Organization (ILO), "Statistics and databases", available at [www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases](http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases) (accessed in November 2018).

<sup>24</sup> ILO, Regional Office for Arab States, *The Occupied Palestinian Territory: An Employment Diagnostic Study* (Beirut, 2018).

women herders to sell their processed food products and animals. Some 200 women herders benefited from training on farm management, dairy processing, marketing, hygiene and safety; 30 women received training on food processing and food safety; 23 women farmers received training on vegetable garden and animal production units; and 14 women farmers benefited from in-kind support to diversify the varieties of the crops they cultivate. In addition, 24 women farmers benefited from the rehabilitation and construction of water harvesting cisterns. In the Gaza Strip, FAO provided 11 female beekeepers with treatments for varroosis, which affects honey bees and honey production, an important supplementary livelihood option for women.

32. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided life skills coaching sessions and business development services to 508 economically vulnerable women, of which 8 subsequently received grants to develop their own enterprises and 58 took vocational training courses. A total of 3,929 loans were granted to female clients, and 64 women received microcredit to establish income-generating projects. Entrepreneurial skills training and microcredit was also provided to women in the Gaza Strip. The Agency's social safety net programme assisted 2,510 female-headed households in the West Bank and 21,341 female-headed households in the Gaza Strip.

33. UN-Habitat, in partnership with civil society, established a safe and inclusive public space for the Palestinian community in the Wadi al-Jawz neighbourhood in East Jerusalem, benefiting around 17,000 residents. Safe public spaces meet the needs and aspirations of women in the neighbourhood and their children.

34. Economic insecurity is directly linked to continued high rates of food insecurity and malnutrition. As at November 2017, 40 per cent of households in the Gaza Strip and 13 per cent in the West Bank were estimated to be suffering from moderate to severe food insecurity. Female-headed households were found to be disproportionately affected, and pregnant and lactating women were especially vulnerable.<sup>25</sup> In order to increase food consumption and dietary diversity and raise nutritional awareness, WFP distributed food and vouchers to 354,970 beneficiaries, half of whom were women, and provided nutritional awareness sessions to food-insecure women and men in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, the majority of whom were women.

#### **D. Rule of law and violence against women**

35. Discrimination in law and in practice, a high prevalence of gender-based violence and a lack of access to justice and related services remain the reality for Palestinian women. High rates of violence against women are of particular concern among vulnerable communities in the West Bank and Gaza, such as the internally displaced, women in refugee camps and in Bedouin communities, within certain groups, such as women with disabilities and adolescents, and among those with limited access to multisectoral services.<sup>26</sup> As previously reported (E/CN.6/2018/6, para. 37), social acceptance of violence against women and underreporting due to stigma continue to be of concern.<sup>27</sup> The fragmentation of the legal system and the existence of laws that continue to allow for violations of women's human rights, including in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance, remain barriers to women's empowerment.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Occupied Palestinian Territory* (2017).

<sup>26</sup> UN-Women, "Gender alert".

<sup>27</sup> See also El Feki, Barker and Heilman, eds., *Understanding Masculinities*.

36. OHCHR and UN-Women trained members of the legislative harmonization committee on reviewing Palestinian law for compatibility with international human rights treaties to which the State of Palestine has acceded. In a positive development, a decree was issued in March 2018 abolishing the application of some articles of the Jordanian Penal Code that had provided for mitigating circumstances as exceptions to the prosecution of and/or judicial sentencing for offenses, including crimes committed in the name of honour and sexual violence offences when a perpetrator marries a victim.

37. UNDP, UNICEF and UN-Women supported the Attorney General's Office and the High Judicial Council in providing specialized services for cases relating to violence against women. A baseline study was conducted in partnership with the High Judicial Council to identify the needs of and gaps in the judiciary system and inform future interventions. Gender-responsive standard operating procedures were developed for specialized public prosecutions and endorsed by the Attorney General. Service providers within the justice and security system, including sharia court judges, were offered capacity-building training and awareness sessions on women's human rights, gender equality and ways to end gender-based violence. UNODC continued to provide support to the Palestinian criminal justice system to improve access to justice for women and girls who are survivors of violence. Seven forensic doctors trained by UNODC examined 89 cases involving victims of gender-based violence and produced forensic reports that constituted substantial evidence for the investigations by the Attorney General's Office into crimes relating to violence against women and girls. The doctors underwent additional training through individual work placements at the St. Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Manchester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

38. UNFPA supported the training of 233 health service providers on detection, documentation, response and referrals for cases involving gender-based violence. The Gender-Based Violence Sub-Cluster developed a directory mapping all services provided relating to gender-based violence and trained humanitarian specialists in the Gaza Strip and Hebron on how to conduct an initial detection and referral for cases of gender-based violence. In Hebron and East Jerusalem, UNICEF trained 100 school counsellors on gender-based violence referrals. In Gaza, 293 counsellors and 9,427 teachers were trained on the detection of gender-based violence and the referral of children with specific protection needs, including needs relating to gender-based violence.

39. A total of 19,403 survivors of gender-based violence received at least one type of service supported by UNFPA and its partners, and 457 outreach awareness sessions on protection from and the prevention of gender-based violence reached 7,995 beneficiaries. The Occupied Palestinian Territory Humanitarian Fund provided support to 34,178 vulnerable women and 7,025 girls, in particular survivors of gender-based violence, and helped women with disabilities to gain access to enhanced support and protection services in the Gaza Strip.

40. Access to quality services, including psychosocial counselling and referrals, was enhanced through a number of initiatives. UNFPA established two new safe spaces for women and girls in the Old City of Jerusalem and the Bureij camp in Gaza. UNFPA also equipped six primary health-care clinics and one hospital in the West Bank with furniture and medical tools for detecting cases of gender-based violence and treating survivors and supported the establishment of seven community protection networks across the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

41. UN-Women provided multisectoral services to 2,406 women and 474 men in Gaza. This included case management support for 288 women who are survivors of gender-based violence, awareness-raising on the incidence of gender-based violence

and information on associated services to 1,746 women and 474 men, support for health and reproductive health services to 320 women and referrals for 52 women. Moreover, 1,480 adolescents (1,050 girls and 430 boys) in Gaza were provided with psychosocial support, reproductive health services and grants for adolescent-led initiatives. UN-Women provided legal and psychosocial support to 160 women in conflict with the law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including at least 90 Bedouin women.

42. UNRWA addressed the risks of gender-based violence through community outreach interventions to Palestine refugees, awareness-raising activities and community protection mechanisms. Awareness-raising sessions delivered through the Agency's Relief and Social Services Programme reached 7,213 women and 2,796 men in the Gaza Strip.

43. UN-Women implemented the regional "Because I am a Man" campaign, which challenges gender stereotypes surrounding household roles and responsibilities, fatherhood and violence against women, among other issues, and raises awareness of the positive roles men can play in achieving gender equality. As part of the campaign, UN-Women implemented community events with university students and displayed billboards in Ramallah, Nablus and Bethlehem, featuring images of men advocating gender equality in their daily lives. In addition, UN-Women supported a media and advocacy campaign on ending violence against women run by Al-Muntada, a coalition of non-governmental organizations committed to ending violence against women, which promoted a gender-responsive family protection bill. UNICEF worked with 1,000 adolescent boys and 1,000 girls in the West Bank to develop their knowledge on and skills in dealing with gender-based violence and bullying in schools. In Gaza, 3,256 adolescents (50 per cent of whom were girls) were provided with training on gender-based violence, the prevention of bullying and life skills to enable them to combat violence and advocate positive change in their communities.

## E. Power and decision-making

44. While the contribution of Palestinian women to political life is widely acknowledged, women continued to be underrepresented in decision-making bodies and processes at various levels of public life. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there are significant gender disparities in favour of men in the public sector. The proportion of women in political leadership and decision-making positions is only 11.7 per cent, with women representing only 12 per cent of directors general and 16 per cent of deputy ministers.<sup>28</sup> Women have also been largely excluded from formal dialogue efforts to end the intra-Palestinian political division. For instance, no women participated in the talks that led to the signing of the agreement between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo in October 2017. No women are represented on the technical committees that were subsequently established to work out the details of the reconciliation arrangements.<sup>29</sup> To address some of those challenges, the Palestinian Authority adopted a national action plan to promote the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), in which it recognized the significant role of women and girls in the peace and security agenda and their agency in responding to the impacts of the conflict on their lives.

45. To support the empowerment of young Palestine refugee women and their participation in leadership and decision-making, UNRWA provided 495 women

<sup>28</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "International Women's Day 2017", press release, 7 March 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Willemijn van Lelyveld and Wafaa Al Kafarna, "Women's participation in the reconciliation process: perspectives from Gaza", *This Week in Palestine*, Issue No. 239 (March 2018).

graduates from different fields with training on leadership and management skills, project cycle management and business orientation and facilitated work placements for 274 women graduates in the Gaza Strip. UNRWA also supported training on advocacy and lobbying skills on gender equality and women's human rights, targeting 350 women and a number of community-based organizations. Subsequently, 115 women and girls organized advocacy campaigns on combating gender-based violence in the Gaza Strip. UNESCO provided 40 young Gazan women with an orientation session on Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth and peace and security to help to integrate the theme into the plans and programmes of youth-led organizations.

46. In the West Bank, UNRWA provided 673 Palestine refugee women with training and activities within the framework of the United Nations women and peace and security agenda. Training for female employees of women's programme centres in camps were aimed at increasing the number of women engaged in the centres' activities and developing mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of women's voices in decision-making forums. UNRWA and local partner organizations conducted a leadership training programme for 63 young women, focused on social innovation, public speaking and volunteerism. Supported by UNDP, 54 young women attended a winter leadership camp on civic leadership, which has led to the design and implementation of 12 community initiatives.

47. WFP set up guidelines to ensure that 50 per cent of its local food committee participants were women, and UN-Habitat reported that more than one third of the representatives on community representative committees were women, giving them an important role in shaping the building of their communities in the coming years.

## F. Institutional development

48. At its seventieth session, held in July 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women considered the initial report of the State of Palestine on its implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (see [CEDAW/C/PSE/1](#)). This was the first report presented by the State of Palestine before one of the treaty bodies. UN-Women provided support to the Non-Governmental Women's Coalition for the Implementation of the Convention, led by the General Union of Palestinian Women, in preparing the first-ever shadow report on the initial report of the State of Palestine. In preparation for the constructive dialogue, UN-Women organized a workshop with four ministries and five civil society organizations, in collaboration with the organization Musawah,<sup>30</sup> to further strengthen their capacity to implement the Convention, in particular article 16. OHCHR produced a radio spot that was broadcast three times a day for five days prior to the meeting, in order to raise awareness and thereby enable civil society and interested individuals to watch the constructive dialogue, which was held in Geneva, through a live broadcast.

49. In its concluding observations on the initial report of the State of Palestine ([CEDAW/C/PSE/CO/1](#)), the Committee recommended that the State of Palestine fully incorporate the provisions of the Convention into its national law and ensure its implementation across the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Committee also recommended, inter alia, that the Palestinian Authority take concrete steps to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention, publish the Convention in the Official Gazette and train members of the judiciary, including judges of sharia courts, legal

<sup>30</sup> See [www.musawah.org](http://www.musawah.org).

professionals and law enforcement officers, on the Convention, on the Committee's jurisprudence under the Optional Protocol and on its general recommendations.

50. The Ministry of Women's Affairs, with technical support from UN-Women, finalized a plan of action to advance the implementation of the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy 2017–2022. UN-Women supported the Ministry in aligning and localizing Sustainable Development Goal indicators with the Strategy and the Palestinian National Policy Agenda (2017–2022). UN-Women also helped to enhance the capacity of the national gender-responsive budget technical team, through a workshop for senior staff of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, providing tools and approaches to promote accountability with regard to women's rights and public transparency.

51. UNICEF continued its efforts to increase the capacity of the Ministry of Social Development, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other institutions to undertake quality research and prepare analyses on child rights, gender equality, evidence-based social policies and social protection reforms. UN-Women initiated a partnership with the Bureau for the regular generation of data and information on gender equality for advocacy and policy development, including support for the publication of a situational analysis of trends and statistics on women and men in the State of Palestine across different sectors.<sup>31</sup>

52. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UN-Women began the implementation of a new joint action plan for 2018–2020 for gender-responsive humanitarian action in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Under the framework of the plan, gender focal points and cluster coordinators were trained on the new Gender with Age Marker of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.<sup>32</sup>

#### IV. Conclusions and recommendations

**53. The continued lack of a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues to negatively affect the daily lives of Palestinian women and men. This is compounded by the continued impact of the military occupation, including more than 10 years of closures on Gaza, political divisions and repeated cycles of violence. Recent escalating political tensions and violence have resulted in increased stress on women and girls, as societal protection mechanisms have suffered damage and coping mechanisms are being exhausted. Women's rights and priorities within the peace and security framework remain unaddressed. During the reporting period, the United Nations has continued to provide tailored and holistic assistance to Palestinian women and girls across a broad range of areas, including in bridging the development-humanitarian divide and in leveraging the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

**54. All stakeholders should, however, increase their efforts, in a holistic manner, to improve the economic empowerment of women and their access to economic and productive resources. The Palestinian Authority should address existing gaps in labour laws and regulations with respect to women's right to work and their rights at work and expand decent work opportunities for women.**

**55. Stakeholders should also expand initiatives to address and transform discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, including through changes**

<sup>31</sup> Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Men in Palestine: Issues and Statistics, 2017* (Ramallah, State of Palestine, 2017). Available at [www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2343.pdf](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Downloads/book2343.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> See <https://iascgenderwithagemarker.com/en/home>.



to school curricula, education and public media campaigns and alliances with male gender equality advocates.

56. Governmental and non-governmental actors must expand efforts throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory to improve women's access to justice and support services. Steps to enhance the capacity of institutions and personnel to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls, including by addressing the particular needs of adolescent girls and women with disabilities, are especially necessary in that regard.

57. Stronger efforts by the Palestinian Authority and other duty-bearers are also needed to bridge the gap between policy commitments on gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the enjoyment of their human rights and the translation of those commitments into law and practice. The Palestinian Authority should, in particular, make use of the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women as a road map for action. Key frameworks, such as the Cross-Sectoral National Gender Strategy, must be adequately resourced and accompanied by structural and institutional changes at the social, political and economic levels to ensure their full implementation. The national action plan on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) should be fully implemented, including through the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources and enhanced cooperation with civil society organizations, as well as with the international community and relevant United Nations agencies.

58. Efforts by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and other actors to collect and use quantitative and qualitative data and analyses on the situation of Palestinian women should continue and should inform all policymaking, planning and programming initiatives in the State of Palestine, including by guiding the peace process and reconciliation and humanitarian efforts.

59. Efforts by UNRWA to maintain services have been made more difficult in view of its funding crisis. Enhanced efforts by donors to ensure continued and sustained support are needed to improve access to maternal and child health care, safe reproductive health-care services and services for survivors of gender-based violence.

60. Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to the realization of peace in the Middle East. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions, an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel. It is only by realizing the vision of two States living side by side in peace, security and mutual recognition, with Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and Palestine, and all final status issues resolved permanently through negotiations, that the legitimate aspirations of both peoples will be achieved.

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**General Assembly  
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Fifty-eighth year****Promotion and protection of the rights of children****Children and armed conflict****Report of the Secretary-General****I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 1460 (2003).
2. The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations at Headquarters and with country teams, peacekeeping missions, regional groups and non-governmental organizations.

**II. Advances made towards the protection of children affected by armed conflict**

3. In the course of the past few years, important advances have been made in the efforts to ensure more effective protection of children exposed to armed conflict.
4. Since 1998, when the issue of war-affected children was formally placed on the agenda of the Security Council, the progressive engagement of the Council has yielded significant gains for children. These include four resolutions devoted to the issue (resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003)) an annual debate and review, an annual report submitted by the Secretary-General, the incorporation of child-specific concerns into the briefs of Security Council fact-finding missions, an important contribution to monitoring and accountability through the listing of parties to conflict that violate the rights of children and the stipulation for the systematic inclusion of sections devoted to children in country-specific reports.

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\* Reissued for technical reasons.

5. Child protection has been integrated into the mandates and reports of peacekeeping missions and the training of personnel. A significant innovation has been the creation of the role and deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions.

6. The scope of international instruments has been strengthened and expanded. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which has been ratified by 63 States, sets an age-limit of 18 for compulsory recruitment and participation in hostilities and a minimum age of 16 for voluntary recruitment. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court for the newly established International Criminal Court (ICC), which has been ratified by 92 States, classifies the enlistment and use of children under age 15 in hostilities, intentional attacks on hospitals and schools, rape and other grave acts of sexual violence against children as war crimes. The International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 (1999), which has been ratified by 143 States, declares child soldiering to be one of the worst forms of child labour and prohibits forced or compulsory recruitment of children under the age of 18 in armed conflict. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which has been ratified by 31 States, is the first regional treaty to establish 18 as the minimum age for all compulsory military recruitment and participation in hostilities.

7. These instruments, together with the relevant provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the four resolutions of the Security Council, constitute a strong and comprehensive body of standards. In addition, a number of concrete commitments have been obtained from parties on the protection of children.

8. The central challenge now is to ensure the application of these standards on the ground.

9. Children's issues have been incorporated into peace negotiations and peace accords, such as the 1998 Good Friday Agreement on Northern Ireland; the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord on Sierra Leone; the 2000 Arusha Accords on Burundi; and the recent Accra Peace Agreement on Liberia. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is currently working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations to ensure the inclusion of similar provisions into the ongoing peace processes in Sri Lanka and the Sudan.

10. Over the past several years, my Special Representative as well as non-governmental organizations have conducted extensive public advocacy and awareness-raising activities. Today, there is broad public and official awareness about the plight of children exposed to armed conflict.

11. Non-governmental organizations and other civil society groups have played an indispensable role in the development of the agenda for war-affected children. They have developed global advocacy and significant operational programmes on the ground. International campaigns by networks of non-governmental organizations on such issues as child soldiers, small arms, landmines, and ICC have played a key role in strengthening international standards.

12. Working with Governments and non-governmental organizations, my Special Representative has developed important dialogue and cooperation with regional organizations, resulting in the integration of child protection into their advocacy,

policies and programmes. Examples of the European Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) illustrate this experience.

13. In the context of European Union institutions, this cooperation has led to several important initiatives, including funding of projects for the benefit of war-affected children, guidelines for action on children and armed conflict and specific provisions for child protection and post-conflict rehabilitation in the Cotonou 2000 Partnership Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States and the States members of the European Union. The European Parliament has been engaged in active child protection advocacy, particularly in support of the campaign for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

14. Over the past few years, ECOWAS has progressively integrated child protection into its policies and institutions, including the adoption of the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action on War-Affected Children in 2000, the establishment of a Child Protection Unit in the ECOWAS secretariat in 2002 and the endorsement by the ECOWAS summit in January 2003 of an agenda for action for war-affected children in West Africa, proposed by my Special Representative. The organization is now developing a framework for a peer review programme focusing on child protection, in collaboration with my Special Representative and UNICEF.

15. Similarly the protection of war-affected children has now been taken up for action by the Group of Eight, the Human Security Network, the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Organization of American States.

16. Many local initiatives for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation have been developed. My Special Representative has been advocating the establishment of national commissions for war-affected children, especially in post-conflict situations, to ensure that the concerns of children are fully integrated into priority setting, resource allocations, programme planning and policy making. Such a commission has now been instituted in Sierra Leone, and a Commissioner for Children and Young People has been appointed in Northern Ireland to fulfil a similar role. In 2000, legislation was enacted in Rwanda that would allow girls, who headed some 40,000 households following the genocide in that country, to inherit farms and other family properties. The "Sudanese Women for Peace", a non-partisan, grass-roots organization, was created to advocate for peace and children's concerns. In Sri Lanka, "Children as a Zone of Peace", a local network for advocacy and protection, was launched in 1998.

17. In efforts to end impunity for those involved in child-related war crimes, a framework has been developed for the protection and participation of children in judicial tribunals and truth-seeking processes. This has resulted, for example, in guidelines for the Special Court and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Sierra Leone, and relevant provisions in the ICC rules of evidence and procedure.

18. Efforts to curb illicit exploitation of natural resources, which rob children of their birthright, have gained momentum. The Security Council has taken concrete measures in connection with Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone. An important step has been taken in the campaign to stem trade in "conflict diamonds", with the establishment of the Kimberley Process certification scheme.

19. Children and young people themselves have become participants in this movement. War-affected youth have participated in the deliberations of the Security Council and other important forums. The “Voice of Children” project, an initiative of my Special Representative, has been established in Sierra Leone under the auspices of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to provide radio programmes for and by children. Similar programmes have been proposed for other conflict areas. Under the sponsorship of the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, adolescents in war-affected countries have carried out research and advocacy on the impact of conflict on young people in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Uganda. Local children’s groups involved in active advocacy include the Colombian Children’s Movement for Peace and the Children’s Forum Network in Sierra Leone.

20. Efforts to mainstream the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children are taking hold in many institutions and mechanisms, within and outside the United Nations. In post-conflict situations, children are now receiving higher priority, focus and resource allocation.

21. The recent ending of conflicts in Angola, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka represent a great relief for children who have suffered horribly from those protracted wars, even while the tasks of rehabilitation and healing remain daunting.

22. In spite of these developments, the general situation for children remains grave and unacceptable on the ground. Parties to conflict continue to violate children’s rights with impunity. In the course of 2003, this trend has been underscored by the particularly tragic experiences of terror, deprivation and utter vulnerability faced by children in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Indonesian province of Aceh, Iraq, Liberia, the occupied Palestinian Territories and northern Uganda.

### **III. Follow-up to Security Council resolution 1460 (2003)**

23. The present section provides specific information requested by the Security Council in paragraph 16 of its resolution 1460 (2003), namely assessment of particular violations of the rights of children; assessment of progress made by parties in ending child-soldiering; best practices in integrating the specific needs of children into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, assessment of child protection advisers, assessment of negotiations aimed at ending the recruitment or use of child soldiers and specific proposals on ways to ensure more effective monitoring and reporting.

#### **A. Assessment of particularly egregious violations and abuses against children in situations of armed conflict**

24. Children continue to be the main victims of conflicts. Their suffering takes many forms. Children are killed, made orphans, maimed, abducted, deprived of education and health care, and left with deep emotional scars and trauma. Forced to flee from their homes, refugees and internally displaced children are especially vulnerable to violence, recruitment, sexual exploitation, disease, malnutrition and death. Children are being recruited and used as child soldiers on a massive scale. Girls face additional risks, particularly sexual violence. These egregious violations of children’s rights take place in a pervasive climate of impunity. The nature and scope of the most egregious violations are described in the present section.

## **1. Killing and maiming of children**

25. Children in war zones have been deliberately killed or maimed by parties to conflict, often in extremely brutal ways. During the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, thousands of children were massacred. In the massacres of Srebrenica in 1995, young Muslim boys were particularly targeted. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone carried out a systematic campaign of terror, which included cutting off limbs of both adults and children. In the Ituri district of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many children have been brutally killed or maimed by armed groups; at the end of 2002, for example, 24 children were summarily executed by the Mouvement national de libération du Congo (MLC) and the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-National (RCD/N) soldiers in Mambasa, and nine children were killed by the Union des patriotes congolais (UPC) soldiers in Nyankunde. In Colombia, an increasing number of street children, many of whom have been displaced from the countryside by war, have become victims of arbitrary killings, known locally as “social cleansing”.

26. During the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, there were widespread massacres and torture of children. In post-conflict situations in both countries, the easy availability of small arms, estimated at more than 3 million, has led to intensified violence and insecurity, with children and youth as the main victims. Some 370 children and young persons under the age of 23 were killed in Guatemala City during the first half of 2003, more than 100 of the victims, mostly street children were under 18, some as young as 12. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda has used killings and mutilations to terrorize the civilian population. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian Territories has reported that, since September 2000, over 400 Palestinian and 100 Israeli children have been killed and thousands seriously injured in the ongoing conflict.

## **2. Sexual and gender-based violence against children**

27. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to sexual violence in times of heightened armed conflict. They are raped, abducted for sexual exploitation and forced into marriages and prostitution. Refugee and internally displaced women and children are especially vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation by armed forces and groups, and sometimes even peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

28. Reports from Iraq and southeast Afghanistan indicate that fear of sexual violence is keeping girls out of schools. During her visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in May 2003, the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator reported on the situation of over 250 women and girls in South Kivu who required surgical interventions to repair the ravages of rape. Similarly, in Burundi, hundreds of girls have been raped, either as a means of ethnic cleansing or because violators believe that children are less likely to transmit diseases.

29. There is a correlation between the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and sexual violence and the exploitation of girls and women in corridors of wars. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that rates of HIV among combatants are three to four times higher than those among local populations. And when rape is used as a weapon of war, the consequences for girls and women are often deadly. Armed conflict also exacerbates other conditions in which HIV/AIDS thrives, such

as extreme poverty, displacement and separation. Programmes for HIV/AIDS awareness, care and support in both peace operations and humanitarian programmes should be continued and strengthened.

30. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse has proposed six core principles to be incorporated into codes of conduct for all humanitarian workers. These principles have now been incorporated into codes of conduct in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and UNAMSIL. My forthcoming bulletin will extend the application of the six principles to all United Nations personnel.

31. The Rome Statute of ICC defines rape and other grave sexual violence as a war crime. Everything must be done to bring to justice those responsible for this particular war crime.

### **3. Abduction of children**

32. The incidence of the abduction of boys and girls has significantly increased in recent years. Parties to conflict have used this practice in systematic campaigns of violence against civilian populations in such countries as Angola, Nepal, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Uganda. Abduction of children was prevalent in the conflicts in the 1980s in Central America, often leading to permanent “disappearance”.

33. Children are often abducted from their homes, schools and refugee camps. They are exploited for forced labour, sexual slavery and forced recruitment and have been trafficked across borders.

34. Abducted children are subjected to brutal treatment and other egregious personal violations. In northern Uganda, LRA has abducted thousands of children and forced them to become child soldiers and to commit atrocities. The case of the girls abducted in 1996 from Aboke secondary school has particularly brought the situation of abductions in northern Uganda to the attention of the international community. In Colombia, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) have kidnapped hundreds of children for ransom and as a means of terrorizing civilian populations; 215 children were kidnapped in 2002 and another 112 during the first half of 2003. In early 2003, the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist) conducted large-scale abductions, mostly of school children. While many of the children were returned within days, others still remain unaccounted for, and some of the girls released have reported sexual abuse.

35. In Angola, the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) abducted many children during the long civil war. In Sierra Leone, in January 1999, over 4,000 children were kidnapped during the incursion of RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) into Freetown; 60 per cent of those abducted were girls, most of whom were sexually abused. In the Sudan, there has been a long history of abductions, particularly by the *murahleen* militia, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and the former Sudan People's Democratic Front (SPDF).

#### **4. Impact on children of illicit exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones**

36. The illicit exploitation of natural resources, in particular diamonds, gold, columbite-tantalite (coltan) and timber, in zones of conflict, has a direct and significant bearing on children. This practice of plunder is deliberately robbing children of their birthright to education, healthcare and development. They are exploited as cheap labour and forced to work in unhealthy and dangerous conditions. Moreover, this has become a principal means of fuelling and prolonging conflicts in which children suffer the most.

37. My Special Representative has especially highlighted this connection, particularly in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, calling for urgent measures to curb these activities.

38. Actions by the Security Council, which have included the application and monitoring of sanctions in Angola, Sierra Leone and Liberia, and mandated investigations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, have made a notable impact. The application of further targeted measures by the Security Council would reinforce their impact.

39. The independent panels of experts established by the Security Council to investigate violations of these sanctions found that diamonds played a uniquely important role in perpetuating the conflict in Angola, and discovered in Liberia a strong link between the continued trading in conflict diamonds and trafficking in small arms by both the Government and the rebel groups.

40. The legacy of these practices continues even after the end of conflict. During his visit to Sierra Leone in February 2003, my Special Representative witnessed and highlighted the continued exploitation of children, many of them ex-child soldiers, as labourers in the appalling conditions of the diamond-mining pits in the Koidu and Kono districts. He has called for enhanced public advocacy and the development of viable economic and vocational alternatives for these children, whose situation has also been documented in a study by World Vision.

41. The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme for Rough Diamonds, which came into effect in November 2002, represents an important step towards curbing trade in “conflict diamonds”. It is important now to agree on and establish an effective monitoring mechanism for the application of this scheme. Full implementation of the Kimberley Process would also entail legislation, periodic audits and a voluntary system of warranties by suppliers of rough diamonds.

#### **5. Impact on children of illicit trafficking of small arms, landmines and unexploded ordnance**

42. Most conflicts today are fought with small arms and light weapons. Their easy availability is directly linked to the dramatic rise in violence, the exacerbation of conflicts and the phenomenon of child soldiers. This is evident in the conflicts in Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone where illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is financed by the proceeds from the illicit exploitation of natural resources. The trans-regional dimension of illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated the conflicts in the Great Lakes region. Data has been collected by United Nations agencies that connect trafficking in small arms to trafficking in children and women in southeast Asia, in particular in the border areas of Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar.



43. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons not only impedes provision of humanitarian and protection assistance but also undermines peace-building and reconstruction efforts that aim to strengthen security and the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict situations, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Central America. To minimize the disastrous effects of small arms and light weapons on children requires coordination at all levels, as set out in the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Examples of regional efforts to address the issue of small arms and light weapons and their impact on children include the Southern African Development Community Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and Other Related Materials, the OSCE Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons, and the Andean Plan to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

44. According to the United Nations Mine Action Service, approximately half of the 15,000 to 20,000 annual victims of landmines and unexploded ordnances in 90 countries are children. In Colombia, about 40 per cent of mine victims from 1990 to 2003 were children. So far in 2003, in northern Iraq, the casualty rate due to mines or unexploded ordnances has increased dramatically, by 90 per cent. Children in Iraq have also fallen victims to unexploded ordnances and munitions abandoned by Iraqi forces in schools and residential areas. In addition, cluster bombs indiscriminately impact and debilitate civilians, in particular children. Landmines and unexploded ordnances impede post-conflict development and reconstruction, blocking access to land and other resources and posing risks to returnee and internally displaced children. Mine risk education and securing stockpiled munitions remain the most effective short-term solution to keeping children safe.

**B. Assessment of progress made by parties in ending recruitment or use of children in armed conflict**

45. Progress made by the parties listed in the annex and named in the body of my previous report (S/2002/1299) has been assessed with respect to whether they have engaged in dialogue with my representatives in the field, made commitments to stop recruiting or using children, ended the recruitment or use of child soldiers, developed action plans for the demobilization of child soldiers and have begun to demobilize child soldiers. I have also taken into account efforts made prior to the reporting period. At the end of the current report, I have annexed two lists: the first contains an updated list of parties annexed to my previous report and the second contains a list of parties named in the body of my report last year. Both lists include new parties that have been found to be recruiting or using children in armed conflict.

**1. Information on progress made by parties listed in the annex to the previous report, including new situations**

46. In Afghanistan, factional fighting groups continue to recruit and use children. The National Security Council issued a decree in early 2003 instructing the military not to recruit persons younger than 22 years of age. Over the past year, efforts by the United Nations country team have focused on supporting a child-specific component as part of the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme. In preparing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the country team has engaged in dialogue with local commanders and military units throughout the country.

47. In Burundi, a national child-specific disarmament, demobilization and reintegration structure, with a decentralized system of representation in the provinces and military units, has been established following the October 2001 agreement between UNICEF and the Government for the demobilization of child soldiers. Participating in this structure are Parti de libération du Peuple Hutu/Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU/FLN) faction of Alain Mugabarabona and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD/FDD) faction of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye. Moreover, the Arusha Peace Accords of 2000 as well as the Ceasefire Agreement of December 2002 include provisions against the use of child soldiers. Despite these steps, all parties to the conflict mentioned in the annex of my previous report continue to use or recruit child soldiers. In addition, armed opposition groups have recruited children from refugee camps in the western part of the United Republic of Tanzania.

48. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following the 2001 five-point commitment to end child-soldiering to my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, both the Government and the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD/G) developed action plans for the demobilization of child soldiers. Since December 2001, over 650 child soldiers have been demobilized through the National Office for Demobilization and Reinsertion (BUNADER) and the RCD/G Inter-Departmental Commission for the Demobilization of Child Soldiers. At the beginning of 2003, the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Kisangani/Mouvement de libération (RCD-K/ML) allowed access to some camps and released scores of children to a local non-governmental organization, Let's Protect Children, for their reintegration into the community. Many cases of informal ad hoc demobilization of children by individual commanders have taken place as a result of advocacy efforts by MONUC, UNICEF, Save the Children (United Kingdom) and local partners.

49. Despite these developments, all parties mentioned in my previous report continued to recruit or use children. With the intensification of the conflict in the Ituri district of the northeastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (in May 2003), there was a significant increase in the recruitment and use of child soldiers by all parties to the conflict.

50. In Liberia, during the escalation of conflict in June and July 2003, there was a marked increase in the recruitment of children by all parties. Children were recruited from displaced camps by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) recruited children from refugee camps in Côte d'Ivoire, and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) recruited children from displaced camps in Liberia and from refugee camps in Guinea.

51. The Accra Peace Agreement of 18 August 2003 provides for the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children and calls upon my Special Representative and UNICEF to assist in mobilizing resources for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.

52. In Somalia, all parties to the conflict continued to recruit children into their forces. According to a recent study, a large number of children have either carried a gun or been involved in militia activities. A local non-governmental organization — the Elman Peace Center — initiated a pilot project which rehabilitated and

reintegrated some 120 former child soldiers in Mogadishu; this project will be extended to Mogadishu, Kismayo and Merca.

53. Child-soldiering in Côte d'Ivoire represents a new development since my previous report. All parties to the conflict recruited or used children in armed conflict. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported on the recruitment of refugee children, in particular from the Nicla camp in western Côte d'Ivoire, and noted that these recruits became part of the *force supplétive* called LIMA forces, operating alongside the Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). The Mouvement pour la paix et la justice (MPJ), the Mouvement populaire ivoirien pour le Grand Ouest (MPIGO) and the Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) all recruited or used child soldiers. In Bouaké, the identification of child soldiers is in progress, while in Man and Korhogo, UNICEF has set up committees for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers.

## **2. Information on progress made by parties mentioned in the body of the previous report**

54. In Colombia, in December 2002, the paramilitary Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) declared a unilateral ceasefire and stated that it would release all children under the age of 18 from its ranks. As of June 2003, 81 children, including 6 girls, were demobilized from AUC, through the Catholic Church as an intermediary. Since 1999, over 1,000 children have been demobilized from armed groups under a programme of the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF).

55. Despite these developments, approximately 7,000 children remain within the ranks of armed groups and an additional 7,000 children are involved in urban militias, many of which are associated with these armed groups. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and AUC continued to recruit or use children as soldiers. Fear of recruitment has led many families to flee their homes in rural areas.

56. In Myanmar, children continue to be forcibly recruited by government armed forces and armed groups. The United Nations has documented cases of child soldiers fleeing Myanmar into Thailand. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict had planned to visit Myanmar early in 2003; however, this had to be postponed owing to developments in the country. The situation remains unchanged since my previous report, in which I cited the findings of Human Rights Watch (S/2002/1299, para. 42).

57. In Nepal, CPN-Maoist continues to recruit or use children. Following the ceasefire agreement signed in January 2003, many children were released without the benefit of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

58. In Northern Ireland, since the visits of my Special Representative in 2000 and 2001, attempts have been made to obtain commitments from the armed groups to refrain from recruiting or using children in the conflict. These efforts were hampered by the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly in October 2002. Continuing competitive recruitment of young people by all paramilitary groups has been reported in the context of various feuds and the emergence of dissident groups.

59. In Sri Lanka, the commitments made in 1998 by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to my Special Representative, to stop recruiting children under the

age of 17 and using children under the age of 18 in hostilities, have been reiterated in the ongoing peace negotiations by the chief negotiator of LTTE. With the support of the Government of Sri Lanka and UNICEF, LTTE has now agreed to develop an action plan for children affected by war, which includes specific reference to this commitment. Although LTTE has advised all its officials to end the recruitment of children, and there has been an overall decrease in recruitment, UNICEF has received reports of new recruitments.

60. In the Philippines, reports indicate the continued recruitment and training of children by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the New People's Army (NPA) in contradiction of the NPA stated policy not to recruit those under 18. Similarly, reports indicate that the Abu Sayyaf group continues to recruit and use children.

61. After his visit to the Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation in 2002, my Special Representative reported that insurgency groups continued to enlist children and use them to plant landmines and explosives. This situation remains unchanged.

62. In the Sudan, although many child soldiers have been demobilized in the south since 2001, thousands of children remain within the ranks of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), many of whom have been re-recruited. Several thousand children are also serving with the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM). SPLM/A has committed itself to releasing a further 2,000 children by the end of 2003, and the Government of the Sudan has created a task force on the demobilization of children.

63. In Uganda, over the past year, LRA abducted over 8,000 children. This represents the highest level of abduction in 17 years of conflict. The Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and its allied Local Defence Units (LDUs) recruit and use children. UPDF has also re-recruited children who have escaped or been rescued from LRA. In a UNICEF/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs screening, 120 recruits in the UPDF Lugore military training camp were reported to be children under the age of 18, some of whom had been demobilized.

## **C. Assessment of best practices and lessons learned**

### **1. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

64. Children are uniquely vulnerable to military recruitment and manipulation into violence because they are innocent and impressionable. They are forced or enticed to join armed groups. Regardless of how they are recruited, child soldiers are victims, whose participation in conflict bears serious implications for their physical and emotional well-being. They are commonly subject to abuse and most of them witness death, killing, and sexual violence. Many participate in killings and most suffer serious long-term psychological consequences.

65. Although disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are now an integral part of peacekeeping operations, the specific needs of child soldiers have not yet been sufficiently addressed within the overall planning and implementation of these programmes. While there is no single model for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children, nonetheless, important lessons are

emerging from the experiences to date. The following overarching considerations should inform future disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for children:

(a) The demobilization of child soldiers should be sought at all times during conflict and special measures should be taken to prevent re-recruitment or reprisal;

(b) Children who escape, are released or captured from any armed forces or groups should not be considered or treated as enemy combatants;

(c) The protection and rehabilitation of children, including their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, should be integrated into all peace negotiations and resulting peace agreements;

(d) In disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, separate and child-specific programmes should be organized for demobilized children; children should not be required to hand in weapons to be eligible for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and benefits;

(e) All children associated with armed forces and groups should be included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. From the start of the process, there should be a clear definition of who is a child, and of the criteria for eligibility of children for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Eligibility criteria should be broad enough to ensure that all children associated with fighting forces, including combatants, cooks, porters, messengers, “concubines” and camp followers, have access to the programme;

(f) In the interest of rebuilding a healthy society, reintegration programmes need to take an integrated community approach; interventions that single out former child soldiers may result in their being further stigmatized. In some situations, such as in Mozambique, traditional “cleansing” ceremonies to facilitate reintegration have proved very effective;

(g) Monitoring and follow-up of demobilized children are important to ensure successful reintegration and delivery of benefits;

(h) Local civil society groups, such as elders and religious leaders, play a vital role in negotiations for the release of child soldiers from fighting groups as well in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; they should be provided with more support and resources;

(i) Child protection and rehabilitation is a process that goes beyond disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Donor support and commitment to longer-term community reintegration is required to prevent recruitment and re-recruitment. Progress for demobilized children must represent a viable alternative to military life;

(j) Special attention must be given to the specific needs of girls and their stigmatization, including those heading households, sexually exploited, combatants and those with children. Particular attention must also be given to the special needs of children with disabilities.

## **2. Child protection advisers**

66. My Special Representative has continued to advocate for the deployment of child protection advisers and strengthening of their role in peacekeeping missions in order to effectively integrate the rights, protection and well-being of children in

peacekeeping and peace-building processes. The Security Council, in its resolutions 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), has expressed support for the role and deployment of child protection advisers. The role of child protection advisers is to ensure that the situation of all children affected by conflict is adequately addressed in peace missions, by promoting advocacy, mainstreaming, collaboration, training, monitoring and reporting. In doing so, child protection advisers work closely with the United Nations country team, in particular UNICEF. Currently, 2 child protection advisers are deployed with UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, 10 with MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 1 with the United Nations Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI). One child protection adviser was deployed with the United Nations Mission in Angola (UNMA) until the close of that mission in early 2003.

67. Child protection advisers have been effective in mainstreaming child rights and child protection into the work of peacekeeping missions. In MONUC, child protection advisers have played a critical role in the adoption of a code of conduct for peacekeepers, provided guidance on quick impact projects and participated in the operations for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and repatriation and resettlement of ex-Rwandan combatants. In UNAMSIL, child protection advisers contribute directly to the mission's priority-setting and policy formulation; they advise the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on child-protection concerns to be raised in negotiations with the Government, fighting forces, the National Commission for War-Affected Children and other key actors.

68. The training of both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel in child protection and child rights has been a priority task of child protection advisers. In UNAMSIL, the child protection advisers have ensured the incorporation of child protection into induction training for all incoming force contingents, and instituted a comprehensive training of trainers programme and conducted joint training activities with human rights officers. In MONUC, child protection advisers participated in the training of military observers, United Nations civilian police and national police.

69. Child protection advisers have also been very effective in promoting networking and collaboration. Child protection advisers have worked closely with personnel from the military, human rights, humanitarian and gender sections of peacekeeping operations. In MONUC, child protection advisers participated in the investigations led by the human rights section. In UNMA, the child protection adviser ensured that children's issues were included in both the protection plan of the human rights division and the inter-agency human rights committee. In UNAMSIL, the child protection advisers have worked closely with colleagues from civil affairs, particularly in the context of the UNAMSIL Trust Fund and the UNAMSIL Personnel Conduct Committee.

70. Child protection advisers have also developed close working relationships with United Nations agencies, and child protection local and international non-governmental organizations. In MONUC, the child protection advisers have collaborated closely with local non-governmental organizations and church networks to obtain information on recruitment of child soldiers. In UNAMSIL, child protection advisers and UNICEF have worked out an effective division of labour based on comparative advantages, capacities and expertise on such crucial issues as juvenile justice reform and children's involvement in the transitional justice mechanisms. In UNMA, the child protection adviser was able to include the issue of abducted girls, the situation of girls in transit camps and the need for psychosocial

recovery in both the United Nations and non-governmental organization protection strategy for the country.

71. Child protection advisers have contributed to the prioritization of children's concerns, through advocacy, and enhanced monitoring and reporting by serving as interlocutors and facilitating the flow of information between the various components of the missions, the United Nations country teams and child protection non-governmental organizations. The work of child protection advisers has led to the greater and more systematic inclusion of child protection concerns in mission reports.

72. Child protection advisers have played an important role in ensuring the integration of child protection concerns into the policies and activities of peacekeeping missions. To consolidate these tangible gains and incorporate further child protection in all aspects of peace operations, serious consideration should be given to the deployment of child protection advisers in all United Nations peace operations. Where possible, child protection advisers should also be involved in aspects of mission planning, pre-deployment assessments and pre-deployment training.

### **3. Engaging in negotiations with parties to conflict**

73. Over the years, United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, usually through their field staff, have undertaken ad hoc negotiations with parties in conflict, sometimes directly with local commanders, for specific humanitarian purposes. UNICEF has developed the concept of "days of tranquillity" into operational arrangements for humanitarian ceasefires that allowed for activities such as immunization and feeding of children in zones of conflict. Similarly, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs have conducted negotiations to secure access and protection for vulnerable and displaced populations.

74. Since the establishment of his mandate, my Special Representative has developed a systematic practice of eliciting and obtaining concrete commitments from parties in conflict, Governments and insurgency groups. He has obtained some 60 commitments from 15 parties to conflict, covering concerns such as child soldiering, landmines, humanitarian ceasefires and access and abductions.

75. These commitments have become important benchmarks for advocacy, monitoring and follow-up by United Nations country teams and non-governmental organizations. In several situations, such as Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, these commitments have constituted the framework for negotiating operational plans of action by United Nations country teams, particularly UNICEF, and peacekeeping missions. Despite the repeated calls of the Security Council and local pressure, many of the commitments remain unobserved.

76. There is extensive experience of negotiations and commitments specifically concerning ending recruitment and use of child soldiers. In Sri Lanka in June 1998, LTTE agreed not to use children under 18 in combat and not to recruit those under 17. In Colombia in 1999, during the visit of my Special Representative, the President announced an immediate end to all recruitment and discharge of soldiers under 18; by the end of that year, this was, in fact, realized. In Sierra Leone in 1999,

my Special Representative secured commitments from RUF to permit humanitarian access to and release of abducted children and child soldiers, while civil defence forces committed to non-recruitment and demobilization of child soldiers; these commitments were subsequently successfully monitored by UNAMSIL and UNICEF. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2001, my Special Representative and the Executive Director of UNICEF obtained commitment from all parties for ending child soldiering; MONUC and UNICEF have continued to follow-up on this commitment.

77. Several observations can be drawn from past dialogues with and commitments obtained from parties to conflict, concerning ending child soldiering:

(a) Commitments to end the recruitment or use of child soldiers should be part of child protection concerns included in peace negotiations and peace accords;

(b) Dialogue about child soldiers should take place, whenever possible, at all stages of conflict, with all parties concerned;

(c) More effective monitoring and reporting is needed to provide reliable information for action;

(d) There is need for more systematic monitoring and follow-up to Security Council resolutions and commitments made; this is best done by United Nations country teams and peace missions, who should develop effective frameworks for this purpose;

(e) When parties continue to violate the rights of children, in breach of their obligations and commitments, it is critical to apply graduated and targeted pressure. Such action is best taken by institutions and actors with necessary influence, such as the Security Council, regional organizations and concerned Governments;

(f) Establishing dialogue with parties to armed conflict is a long-term process, which requires gaining their confidence;

(g) The role of civil society actors, such as religious leaders, elders and teachers, is critical in sustaining community pressure on parties to comply with commitments and prevent recruitment;

(h) Commitments by parties serve as useful benchmarks and reference points for advocacy and monitoring;

(i) Subregional approaches and initiatives should be developed to combat child-soldiering;

(j) Separation of civilians and armed elements and the civilian character of camps for displaced persons should be maintained as important protection measures.

#### **D. Proposals for systematic monitoring, reporting and action**

78. In my previous report to the Security Council, I stressed the importance of embarking on the “era of application,” encompassing the key components of advocacy, dissemination, and monitoring (S/2002/1299, paras. 3-6). In resolution 1460 (2003), the Council endorsed the call for the “era of application” and requested specific proposals on monitoring and reporting.



79. My Special Representative has devoted particular attention to these issues, and put forward the following proposals to ensure more effective monitoring and reporting within the United Nations system.

**1. Standards constituting the basis for monitoring and reporting**

80. A credible monitoring and reporting system must be based on specific and clear standards. In relation to the protection, rights and well-being of war-affected children, the standards to be applied have been set out in detail in section II of this report. These standards are specific and provide well-defined yardsticks for monitoring and reporting on the conduct of parties to conflict.

**2. The most egregious violations to be monitored**

81. A number of especially egregious violations against children should receive priority attention in monitoring operations. In particular, these should include: recruiting and use of child soldiers; killing and maiming of children; rape and other grave sexual violence against children; illicit exploitation of natural resources; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access to children.

**3. United Nations entities that should undertake monitoring, reporting and action**

82. The proposals by my Special Representative are designed to facilitate the development of a monitoring network composed of various bodies and actors, each of whom brings the value-added represented by their respected areas of jurisdiction, competence and expertise, and to strengthen ongoing monitoring activities. The respective roles of the key United Nations actors are discussed below.

**Security Council**

83. The annual review and debate by the Security Council on this issue should be mainly devoted to a comprehensive review of the state of compliance on the ground. Its review should encompass all situations of conflict and the most egregious violations against children, as indicated above. In this context, the Secretary-General's annual report to the Council should serve as an important channel for conveying information gathered through the monitoring framework.

84. A similar review of compliance should take place whenever specific country situations are under consideration. In this context, the Security Council's stipulation for child protection sections in country reports should be fully implemented. In addition, the Council needs to receive, on a regular basis, country-specific information emanating from the monitoring framework.

85. Above all, information received by the Council should serve as trigger for action. Such action might range from calls for compliance, to condemnation of violations, to the application of targeted measures. In order to end impunity, it is critical that persistent violations lead to concrete measures by the Council.

86. Security Council fact-finding missions should include a checklist of specific compliance concerns in their briefs.

### **United Nations field presence**

87. United Nations peace missions and United Nations country teams are present and active in virtually all conflict-affected countries and situations. Their presence, expertise and ongoing activities provide unique opportunities for advocacy, monitoring and reporting.

88. Advocacy, monitoring and reporting on child protection should constitute core functions not only for child protection advisers, but also for human rights officers and military observers in peace missions. Within the United Nations country teams, these functions depend particularly on UNICEF, UNHCR, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, with UNICEF, as the lead agency for children assuming a special role and responsibility. The capacities of the field offices need to be strengthened for those functions.

89. In carrying out their respective roles, a specific framework of collaboration, based on complementarity, should be developed between peace mission staff and the United Nations country team, particularly UNICEF, in countries with peace missions.

90. To facilitate these functions, child protection should be included in the mandates of all peace missions.

91. The United Nations field staff should work to strengthen local networks and capacities for child protection.

92. Heads of field missions should take concrete steps to ensure that country reports contain specific sections on child protection, in accordance with the stipulation of Security Council resolution 1460 (2003).

93. Specific initiatives and steps need to be taken by United Nations field staff to ensure effective follow-up to specific Security Council resolutions and concrete commitments made by parties.

94. Field manuals should have sections devoted to child protection and monitoring.

### **United Nations human rights regime**

95. The United Nations human rights regime provides an important monitoring and reporting framework that should be used with a more systematic and stronger focus on issues of child protection.

96. Whenever special rapporteurs prepare reports on particular war-affected countries, they should include sections on egregious child rights violations. It is also important that they apply the standards and norms as a basis for proactive advocacy for child rights protection.

97. The Committee on the Rights of the Child should use the occasions of country reports and reviews to promote monitoring and accountability.

98. The Commission on Human Rights should use the various fact-finding mechanisms as well as its annual deliberations and resolutions, to promote advocacy and demand accountability.

### **International Criminal Court**

99. The establishment of ICC is important both for deterrence and the prospect of actual prosecution. The deterrence role of ICC needs to be actively promoted through proactive advocacy and public information.

100. Concrete steps should be taken to ensure the earliest possible prosecution of persons responsible for war crimes against children.

### **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict**

101. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has a key role in facilitating and coordinating the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism:

(a) Conducting consultations with all stakeholders with a view to establishing an appropriate mechanism;

(b) Ensuring significant inclusion of monitoring information in the annual reports on children and armed conflict, addressed to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights;

(c) Monitoring and follow-up on specific Security Council resolutions and concrete commitments, in particular in the context of field visits;

(d) Outreach for broad dissemination of the standards;

(e) Promoting mainstreaming activities on the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children, within key institutions and mechanisms, to ensure long-term sustainability.

102. In conformity with the specific request of the Security Council, the roles outlined above have been confined to United Nations-based actors. An effective and concerted monitoring system will necessarily engage important participants outside the United Nations system; in particular, the roles and contributions of national governments, regional organizations, and non-governmental organizations and various civil society actors, will be crucial to the success of this enterprise.

103. An effective monitoring mechanism, which must lead to action, is at the core of the “era of application” campaign. The proposals above have been put forward as a basis for broad consultations among stakeholders. In particular, it is crucial to develop a coordinated framework to ensure the effective flow, integration and reporting on information gathered.

104. The development of these proposals will constitute a particular priority and focus for my Special Representative, devoting his advocacy, convening, and reporting functions to facilitating the translation of these ideas into a systematic, integrated monitoring and reporting mechanism.

### **E. Recommendations**

105. In order to deepen and render sustainable progress achieved to date, and to strengthen the foundation for the “era of application”, it is critical to put in place several measures, including the following:

(a) Children's issues should be systematically incorporated into all peace negotiations and peace accords and should constitute a central component of post-conflict programmes;

(b) Child protection should systematically be included in the mandates of all United Nations peace operations;

(c) It is critical to develop a systematic and concerted monitoring and reporting mechanism, to provide objective, regular and accurate reports on violations committed against children by parties to conflict;

(d) In order to incorporate and mainstream child-protection into all aspects of peace operations, serious consideration should be given to the deployment of child protection advisers in every peace operation;

(e) Regional organizations should be encouraged to strengthen their activities for war-affected children, particularly advocacy, cross-border initiatives, monitoring and peer-review;

(f) Targeted measures should be taken against parties responsible for and other actors complicit in illicit exploitation of natural resources. In this context, it is important to establish an effective monitoring mechanism for the application of the certification scheme under the "Kimberley Process";

(g) The Security Council should take concrete steps where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties in accordance with its resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003). Such measures could include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, a ban on the export or supply of small arms, a ban on military assistance, and restriction on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned;

(h) The listing of parties that recruit or use children in armed conflict should be updated annually and include all situations where such practice persists;

(i) Specific steps should now be taken to ensure that persons responsible for crimes against children will be among the first to be prosecuted in ICC;

(j) Greater and more concerted efforts should be deployed to end ongoing conflicts, which are destroying the lives of millions of children, and to addressing the key factors that facilitate the occurrence and recurrence of conflicts.

## Annex I

### **Updated list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **The situation in Afghanistan**

Factional fighting groups

#### **The situation in Burundi**

1. Forces armées burundaises (FAB)
2. Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD/FDD)
  - (a) Wing of Pierre Nkurunziza<sup>a</sup>
  - (b) Wing of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye<sup>a</sup>
3. Parti de libération du peuple Hutu/Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU/FNL)
  - (a) Wing of Agaton Rwasa<sup>a</sup>
  - (b) Wing of Alain Mugabarabona<sup>a</sup>

#### **The situation in Côte d'Ivoire**

1. Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI)<sup>a</sup>
2. Mouvement pour la paix et la justice (MPJ)<sup>a</sup>
3. Mouvement populaire ivoirien pour le Grand Ouest (MPIGO)<sup>a</sup>
4. Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI)<sup>a</sup>

#### **The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées congolaises (FAC)
2. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD/G)  
Local defence forces associated with RCD/G<sup>a</sup>
3. Mouvement national de libération du Congo (MLC)
4. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Kisangani/Mouvement de libération (RCD-K/ML)
5. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-National (RCD-N)
6. Hema militias
  - (a) Union des patriotes congolais (UPC)
  - (b) Parti pour l'unité et la sauvegarde du Congo (PUSIC)<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> New parties.

7. Lendu/Ngiti militias
  - (a) Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI) (Lendu)<sup>a</sup>
  - (b) Front populaire pour la réconciliation de l'Ituri (FPRI) (Ngiti)<sup>a</sup>
8. Forces armées populaires congolaises (FAPC)<sup>a</sup>
9. Mai-Mai
10. Mudundu-40<sup>a</sup>
11. Masunzu's Forces
12. Ex-Forces armées rwandaises (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe

**The situation in Liberia**

1. Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)
2. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)
3. Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)<sup>a</sup>

**The situation in Somalia**

1. Transitional National Government
2. Juba Valley Alliance
3. Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council
4. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA)

## **Annex II**

### **Other parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in armed conflict**

#### **Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation**

1. Chechen insurgency groups

#### **Colombia**

1. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)
  - (a) Autodefensas Unidas del Sur del Casanare (AUSC)
  - (b) Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Uraba (ACCU)
  - (c) Autodefensas de Magdalena Medio (ACMM)<sup>a</sup>
  - (d) Autodefensas del Meta<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)
3. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

#### **Myanmar**

1. Tatmadaw Kyi (government army)
2. Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>a</sup>
3. Karenni National Liberation Army (KNLA)

#### **Nepal**

1. Communist Party of Nepal (CPN-Maoist)

#### **Northern Ireland**

1. Paramilitary groups

#### **Philippines**

1. New People's Army (NPA)
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
3. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)
4. Abu Sayyaf

#### **Sri Lanka**

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

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<sup>a</sup> New parties.

**Sudan**

1. Government-allied militia, the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM)<sup>a</sup>
2. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)

**Uganda**

1. Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)<sup>a</sup>  
Local Defence Units (LDUs) allied to UPDF<sup>a</sup>
  2. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)
-



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Security Council**Distr.: General  
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**General Assembly  
Fifty-eighth session**

Agenda item 113

**Promotion and protection of the rights of children****Security Council  
Fifty-eighth year****Children and armed conflict****Report of the Secretary-General****Corrigendum****Paragraph 1**Paragraph 1 *should read*

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 16 of Security Council resolution 1460 (2003). In addition to situations of armed conflict as may be understood within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (common Articles 2 and 3) and the 1977 Additional Protocols thereto, my Special Representative has also pursued his mandate for the protection of children in other situations of concern affecting children.

**Paragraph 9**Paragraph 9 *should read*

9. Children's issues have been incorporated into peace negotiations and peace accords, such as the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord on Sierra Leone; the 2000 Arusha Accords on Burundi; and the recent Accra Peace Agreement on Liberia. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is currently working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and non-governmental organizations to ensure the inclusion of similar provisions into the ongoing peace processes in Sri Lanka and the Sudan.

**Paragraph 16**Paragraph 16 *should read*

16. Many local initiatives for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation have been developed. My Special Representative has been advocating the establishment of national commissions for war-affected children, especially in post-conflict situations, to ensure that the concerns of children are fully integrated into priority setting, resource allocations, programme planning and policy making. Such a

commission has now been instituted in Sierra Leone. In 2000, legislation was enacted in Rwanda that would allow girls, who headed some 40,000 households following the genocide in that country, to inherit farms and other family properties. The “Sudanese Women for Peace”, a non-partisan, grassroots organization, was created to advocate for peace and children’s concerns. In Sri Lanka, “Children as a Zone of Peace”, a local network for advocacy and protection, was launched in 1998.

**Paragraph 45**

Paragraph 45 *should read*

45. Progress made by the parties listed in the annex and named in the body of my previous report (S/2002/1299) has been assessed with respect to whether they have engaged in dialogue with my representatives in the field, made commitments to stop recruiting or using children, ended the recruitment or use of child soldiers, developed action plans for the demobilization of child soldiers and have begun to demobilize child soldiers. I have also taken into account efforts made prior to the reporting period. At the end of the current report, I have annexed two lists. The first contains an updated list of parties annexed to my previous report (annex I). The second contains a list of parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern (annex II).

**Paragraph 58**

Paragraph 58 *should read*

58. In Northern Ireland, though the situation is not an armed conflict within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, since the visits of my Special Representative in 2000 and 2001, attempts have been made to obtain commitments from the armed groups to refrain from recruiting or using children. Continuing competitive recruitment of young people by all paramilitary groups has been reported in the context of various feuds and the emergence of dissident groups. A Commissioner for Children and Young People was appointed in 2003.

**Annex II**

The title *should read*

**Parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

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**Fifty-eighth session**  
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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**  
**Fifty-eighth year**

**Children and armed conflict**

**Report of the Secretary-General**

**Corrigendum**

**1. Paragraph 61**

For the existing text *substitute*

61. After his visit to the Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation in 2002, though the situation there is not an armed conflict within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, my Special Representative reported that illegal armed groups continued to enlist children and use them to plant landmines and explosives. This situation remains unchanged.

**2. Annex II**

Under the heading Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation the entry *should read*

1. Chechen illegal armed groups
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**General Assembly**  
**Sixty-first session**  
Agenda item 63 (a)

**Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**  
**Sixty-first year**

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution and resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004), providing information on compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the Council's request, the report also includes information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans (called for in paragraph 5 (a) of resolution 1539 (2004)); information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers; and findings and recommendations of an independent review on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the report covers compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, such as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals.

#### II. Current issues of concern

3. Although progress has been made with respect to the protection of children in a number of situations of armed conflict covered in my previous report (A/59/695-S/2005/72), new situations have arisen that are of great concern. The recent



escalation of violence in the Middle East, in Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, has resulted in thousands of child victims. Concerted efforts by all parties must be undertaken to mitigate and prevent further violations through dialogue and active participation of all stakeholders interested in the protection of children.

4. New evidence suggests that the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations are beginning to “migrate” within regions. The movement of rebel groups across borders to prey upon vulnerable children needs further attention and adequately developed monitoring expertise to effectively address the problem. Of particular concern are the Mano River and Great Lakes regions of Africa. Another preoccupying phenomenon is the use of children by mercenaries and mercenary groups. Though adequate data has yet to be gathered systematically, reports from the field indicate that this is a growing concern.

5. Insecurity and a lack of access to affected areas by the United Nations often preclude access to information, especially when non-State actors operate in isolated areas. For example, insurgents and rebel groups in Iraq and Afghanistan operate in a clandestine manner and often in inaccessible areas, posing a challenge in obtaining evidence on recruitment practices and other grave violations against children.

### **III. Other challenges**

6. In other situations, such as Northern Ireland, there are still concerns about the existence of youth wings of paramilitary organizations, such as the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association, which continue to engage persons under 18 years of age.

7. In the Chechen Republic of the Russian Federation, there has been no specific information on the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups. However, the United Nations has received information from non-governmental sources that children have been subject to abductions and hostage taking by illegal armed groups.

8. The widespread availability of illicit small arms and light weapons in conflict areas continues to be a major factor in enabling the recruitment of child soldiers. These weapons are simple to operate and carry, therefore easily placed in the hands of children who can be quickly trained to use them.

9. Recent experience with regard to demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration points to the need to recognize the special concerns of girl combatants and girls associated with armed groups. This should be taken into consideration when developing and implementing policies, programmes and action plans.

### **IV. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations being committed against children**

10. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from November 2005 to September 2006. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task

Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, peacekeeping missions and country teams, as well as with Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. United Nations country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams were the primary sources of the information contained in the report. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict initiated the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and facilitated this process in close collaboration with agencies, countries concerned and with the cooperation of United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams. This resulted in the set-up of country-level monitoring and reporting task force teams, and the establishment of dialogue with a number of parties within the framework of the resolution towards the preparation and implementation of time-bound action plans to prevent and end the violations for which they are cited.

11. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II to the present report, and named in the body of my 2005 report, has been assessed with respect to whether the parties have engaged in dialogue with United Nations country-level task force teams or other United Nations field representatives as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) and whether through this dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes or the signing of peace agreements, they have developed action plans to end the use of child soldiers. Progress made by the parties is also assessed with respect to whether they have ceased recruiting and using child soldiers, and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children.

12. The present report does not seek to make any legal determination as to whether situations included herein are or are not armed conflicts within the context of the Geneva Conventions and the additional protocols thereto, nor does it prejudge the legal status of the non-State parties that might be involved in these situations. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of concern, rather than seeking to define “armed conflict” from a legal perspective.

## **A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

### **Developments in Afghanistan**

13. There has been a significant increase in violence and attacks by insurgents, including Taliban militias and other armed groups, Afghan armed forces operations and international military forces present in the country throughout 2005. There have been isolated reports, including statements by United States military officials that Taliban forces have recruited and used children in combat. However, in the reporting period, the United Nations country teams could not obtain specific and reliable information on which illegal armed groups may have continued to use children owing to a lack of access to affected areas. No commitments have yet been made by any of these illegal armed groups to end this practice. There have also been no reported cases of recruitment of children into the Afghan national army.

14. A growing concern is the marked increase of attacks against schools, attributed mainly to insurgents, including Taliban militias and other armed groups, which has spread from the south and south-eastern regions to all the provinces. Since late 2005, incidents have included the burning or bombing of schools, the assassination of principals, teachers and officials and threats to students. These attacks have led to the closure of all schools in six districts and the closure of a substantive number of schools in 10 other districts of the southern region. From January to July 2006, over 100 violent incidents against schools, teachers or pupils were recorded, compared with 60 during the whole of 2005; and 105,000 children in the southern region were reported to be denied access to education because of insecurity. It is also reported that ideological opposition to the education of girls appears to motivate some of these attacks.

15. In the southern region, including Panjwai district and the Hilmand province, civilians are increasingly falling victim to an upsurge in fighting between Taliban insurgents and Government and United States-led Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. A particularly egregious incident on 11 April 2006 resulted in the death of six children and the wounding of 14 other people when a rocket fired by Taliban elements exploded in the Salabagh School in Asadabad, Kunar. On 22 May 2006, the aerial bombardment by the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan of a residential area of Taloqan village in Panjwai district, where alleged Taliban were presumed to be in hiding resulted in the deaths of approximately 35 civilians, including at least 9 confirmed children. Children have also been injured in incidents involving suicide bombers targeting foreign military forces.

16. In parallel to the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, a United Nations-backed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiative, a child-specific demobilization and reintegration programme, is led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). As of July 2006, a total of 7,444 children associated with armed groups and affected by armed conflict had benefited from various reintegration support activities in 34 provinces of the country since the start of the programme in February 2004. Despite this progress, there are still some children who remain associated with local commanders in rural areas of the north, north-east and central regions.

### **Developments in Burundi**

17. Progress has been made in the negotiations between the Government of Burundi and the armed rebel group, Forces nationales pour la libération (FNL/Agathon Rwasa). On 7 September 2006, a comprehensive ceasefire agreement was signed by the two parties in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania.

18. FNL continues to use children as combatants and for various logistical duties. Currently, hundreds of children are estimated to be active in the ranks of FNL. Ongoing recruitment of children by FNL continues to be a grave concern. From January to July 2006, 75 cases of recruitment of children into the two remaining factions of FNL, FNL/Agathon Rwasa and its splinter group, FNL/Jean Bosco Singayigaya, were reported in Bujumbura, Bujumbura Rural, Bururi, Bubanza, Makamba, Rutana and Gitega Provinces. In the central Burundian town of Gitega, alleged recruitment by FNL was reported in Mutaho and Bugendana Communes. This is of particular concern as incidents of recruitment seem not only to have increased in number in the western part of Burundi, but are spreading to the centre

of the country. Owing to the sensitive nature of the information, and perceived danger to the lives of investigators and informers, it has been difficult to verify most reports of child recruitment. In addition, there are also reports of former FNL child soldier presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for which further investigations are in progress.

19. Since November 2005, 55 incidents of killing and 93 incidents of maiming of children by FNL or State authorities were reported to the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB). Some of them were killed during fighting between the Parti nationale pour la libération du peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-FNL and the national military, Force de la défense nationale (FDN). Other children were accused of participating in the rebellion and were arrested and tortured during their detention. In one case, four children were shot dead and two were injured during crossfire between FDN and FNL. In another case, in Muramvya, Bujumbura Rural, a 17-year-old student was found dead by the riverside, badly beaten, and his hands manacled. Two policemen were detained on charges of murder and were awaiting trial at the time of reporting. Violence between FDN and FNL escalated in June and July 2006, when at least eight children were killed by grenade explosions during fighting.

20. From November 2005 to July 2006, a total of 381 cases of detained children were reported to ONUB. Of those cases, 174 were related to the illegal detention of children by FDN, the Police nationale burundaise, Police de sécurité intérieure or the Service national de renseignement, including one nine-year-old child, being detained under suspicion of association with FNL. Some of the children from this group are used by the police and military as informers on FNL activities. Further, in mid-April 2006, the Government reopened Randa, a former demobilization centre in Bubanza Province, to house former FNL combatants who had either been captured or had surrendered. As of July 2006, there were a total of 454 detainees in Randa, of whom 25 were children between the ages of 15 and 17, including one girl. Many of these children remain traumatized from their experiences as FNL combatants. They have yet to be separated from former FNL adult combatants and officially recognized as former child soldiers, a prerequisite set by the Government, prior to receiving demobilization benefits and assistance. The status of these children will probably remain uncertain in the absence of a political agreement between the Government and FNL.

21. From November 2003 to July 2006, the demobilization, reintegration and prevention of recruitment of child soldiers programme supported by UNICEF and the Multi-country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme led by the World Bank, demobilized and reintegrated 3,013 former child soldiers (Partis et mouvements politiques armés, 639; Forces armées burundaises, 885; Gardiens de la paix, 1,383; and Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie, 106) to their families and communities. By June 2006, around 560 former child soldiers were back in school, and 1,800 were undertaking vocational training. A technical committee was formed in January 2006 to ensure the smooth handover of the child soldier project to the Government, integrating it with the Programme national de démobilisation, réinsertion et réintégration, implemented by the Executive Secretariat of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration. The technical committee is currently developing the procedures and mechanisms to demobilize former child soldiers from FNL. In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO), through its International



Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour, has reintegrated 898 former child soldiers and has prevented the recruitment of 452 children at risk.

22. A child protection network was set up by UNICEF and its partners in December 2005. In August 2006, ONUB and UNICEF established a task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

23. Children are associated with armed groups both in the Government-held territories and in areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles. There is currently no tangible evidence of children in the ranks of Government armed forces, Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). Children are however associated with armed militia groups close to the ruling party, Front populaire ivoirien (FPI). These militias, which include the Front de libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO), the Mouvement ivoirien de libération ouest de Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI), the Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé) and the Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO), are active in Government-controlled areas, notably in the West. The Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (FAFN) and other associated militia groups recognize that children are associated with their fighting forces. FAFN committed to an action plan in November 2005, and has made significant efforts in the implementation of the action plan. The FAFN efforts are acknowledged and its removal from the annex List will be considered in the next report, subject to a full implementation of the action plan.

24. Children are also often used in violent mass demonstrations by the Young Patriots, a pro-FPI party, in territories under the control of the Government, where they run the risk of being maimed or injured. For example, in January 2006, a mass demonstration in Guiglo, during which United Nations peacekeepers were also attacked, five Ivoirians, including two children aged 14 and 16, were killed.

25. Although there are no official figures reflecting the true scale of grave sexual violence occurring, reliable reports establish that sexual violence is a prevalent security problem encountered by women and children, particularly in areas under FAFN control and in the Zone of Confidence. Further, children in detention in areas controlled by FAFN, where the administration of justice has collapsed, also remain exposed to grave abuses. FAFN issued a command order on 30 April 2006, triggered by the report of an alleged rape of a 14-year-old girl by FAFN elements in Bouaké, instructing an end to the detention of children pending restoration of the administration of justice.

26. A major cause for concern remains the seizure and forced occupation of schools by pro-Government militia. From 12 to 17 June 2006, over 100 members of the pro-Government militia group, the Groupement patriotique pour la paix (GPP), occupied a children's centre, the Centre d'écôte pilot d'adjame in Abidjan. No children were found on the premises at the time of the seizure, although the incident had prevented children's access to the centre during this period.

27. During the reporting period, 327 children associated with fighting forces in areas under the control of the Forces nouvelles were demobilized, of whom 251 were officially handed over by FAFN. Currently, UNICEF facilitates the rehabilitation and reintegration of 1,194 former child soldiers and another 600 self-

demobilized children in Danané, who received military training from pro-FAFN Liberian fighters. Further, FLGO, MILOCI, APWé and UPRGO in West Guiglo released 400 children who are currently benefiting from rehabilitation programmes sponsored by UNICEF. However, reflecting a disturbing trend in the region, child protection partners in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have reported new and re-recruitments across the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire by armed groups active in Côte d'Ivoire.

28. On 20 September 2006, a task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was inaugurated in Côte d'Ivoire.

### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

29. Reports on the presence of children among Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) troops continue, notably in North Kivu. In April 2006, the presence of children among the 84th and the 85th non-integrated Brigades (former Mai-Mai) was registered (respectively 20 children with Colonel Akilimali and about 150 children with Colonel Sami). Reports of re-recruitment by FARDC also continue.

30. From January to June 2006, 22 children were reportedly killed or maimed by FARDC. For example, in May 2006, three children died as a result of a gunshot fired at close range by military forces of the 23rd Battalion of FARDC as they stormed into huts during clashes between FARDC and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in Nyamilima, Rutshuru Territory, North Kivu. Child protection actors in North and South Kivu Provinces continue to register a number of abductions and recruitments of children by FDLR. In the same period, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) monitored a total of 61 children, allegedly victims of rape by members of FARDC. For example, on 27 March 2006, when moving to Nindja in South Kivu with his troops, FARDC Captain Indi-Mulenga allegedly took five girls with him.

31. International warrants for the arrest of Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebutsi were issued by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 21 December 2004, in connection with the Bukavu crisis of May/June 2004 that resulted in dozens of killings, rapes of adults and children, as well as widespread looting. However, until now, no steps have been taken to execute the warrants. In North Kivu, elements of the non-integrated 81st and 83rd brigades of FARDC considered loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda continue to harass, threaten and re-recruit children formerly associated with the military and now reunified with their families in parts of Masisi and Rutshuru territories. It is estimated that since July 2005, 70 children were recruited into Nkunda's ranks in the Masisi and Rutshuru territories. In February 2006, there were allegations of recruitment of about 20 children by Nkunda's forces in the Masisi area. Abductions and attempted abductions of 16 children in June and early July 2006 in North Kivu were reported. Thirteen of the children were abducted on 22 June 2006 near Kitchanga, Masisi territory, by dissident FARDC elements of the 83rd Battalion. The children, on their way to being reunified with their families, were recognized for having been formerly associated with that unit when their vehicle was stopped by military. Some of them escaped, but others were detained and released only after MONUC

intervention. Children reported that they had been submitted to severe beatings while in captivity.

32. In the course of 2005, the Forces armées populaires congolaises (FAPC) was completely disbanded through the Ituri disarmament and community reinsertion process and is consequently not openly active in Ituri. Hundreds of children associated with FAPC, including a relatively high number of girls, joined the Ituri process. A number of FAPC elements reportedly moved to Uganda in the course of the first half of 2005 in order to avoid the disarmament and community reinsertion process. There are no estimates of how many children remained in these groups.

33. Allegations of re-recruitment and use of children by the Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI) continued in 2005. On 20 November, MONUC received allegations that young people, including children, were being recruited by FNI commander Peter Karim Udaga, to reinforce his militia who were in conflict with FARDC in Mahagi. On 13 July 2006, following negotiations led by the Government with the facilitation of MONUC, Mr. Udaga agreed to join the disarmament and community reinsertion programme in Ituri. As of 25 July 2006, 87 children had been demobilized from the Udaga troops.

34. The Mai-Mai groups are mostly present in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga provinces. Most of them have now joined FARDC. In the course of 2005, a large presence of children in former Mai-Mai groups continued to be observed in North Kivu. In South Kivu the presence of children among former Mai-Mai groups also continued. At least 78 children (all boys) were demobilized from armed groups between March and May 2006; of these, 49 children associated with Major Abdou Panda, a renegade Mai-Mai commander operating in the Ruzizi plain, and 29 children associated with the 111th brigade of Colonel Nyakabaka. Further, large parts of Katanga, especially the northern and central areas, are still under the control of various Mai-Mai groups who remained outside the official disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. On 12 May 2006, however, an important breakthrough was made when Kyungu Mutanga, a Mai-Mai leader known as Gédéon, operating in Katanga Province, surrendered in Mitwaba. He was accompanied by more than 150 combatants, 76 of whom were children. It is estimated that between 2,000 and 4,000 of his followers still remain at large, a significant number of them thought to be children.

35. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the former leader of the political and military movement, the Union des patriotes congolais (UPC), was arrested by the Congolese authorities in March 2005 in connection with the assassination of nine United Nations peacekeepers. On 10 February 2006, the International Criminal Court issued a warrant for the arrest of Mr. Lubanga for the war crime of "conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 years and using them to participate actively in hostilities". On 17 March 2006, Mr. Lubanga was transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. As a result of the disarmament and community reinsertion process in Ituri, the UPC-Kisembo (UPC-K) wing ceased to exist in the course of 2005. Further, in March 2006, Jean Pierre Biyoyo of the armed group known as Mudundu 40, was condemned to five years' imprisonment for the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of children and child recruitment committed in South Kivu in April 2004. However, he escaped from prison during the Bukavu Central Prison outbreak in early June 2006 and remains at large.

36. Reports have shown that Congolese refugee children in Rwanda have time and again been subjected to “voluntary” and forced recruitment by elements of the former Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD/G), and latterly, rebel groups loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda, and also transferred from Rwanda to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage in active combat.

37. The current operational framework for children’s disarmament, demobilization and reintegration was launched by the Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion in cooperation with UNICEF, ILO and non-governmental organization partners in July 2004. As at 30 May 2006, 18,524 children had been released from the armed forces and groups through the official process; of that number, 16 per cent were girls. Thousands more, the majority of whom are girls, have escaped from fighting forces on their own and are returning to civilian life.

### **Developments in Haiti**

38. A range of armed groups control territory in Haiti, in particular in the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other cities such as Gonaïves, and are involved in political as well as criminal activity. Such groups fall under a number of categories such as:

(a) Popular Organizations, composed primarily of youth and children under 18 years, with strong links to political leaders and parties and used by them to political ends;

(b) Baz Armes, typically youth groups formed around sports or cultural activities and used for various purposes by political or criminal elements;

(c) Armed criminal gangs involved in organized crime, often also with links to political elements;

(d) Front de résistance (paramilitaries) composed of former military known as “armé cannibal” and civilians who toppled the Government of Jean Bertrand Aristide in 2004 and contested the February 2006 elections as the Front de reconstruction nationale;

(e) Random organized criminal and political opposition groups comprised of excommunicated members of the Haitian police or criminal gangs. For example, on 7 July 2006, the United Nations documented four children killed and two maimed in Martissant, as a result of violence between the armed groups, *Lame ti machet* and *Grand ravine*.

39. Widespread and systematic rape and other sexual violence against girls are of particular concern. From interviews and investigations by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, it is estimated that up to 50 per cent of girls living in conflict zones such as *Cité Soleil* have been victims of rape or sexual violence, and in areas such as *Carrefour*, *Martissant* and *Les Cayes* the phenomenon of collective or “gang” rape is widespread. Also of grave concern are reported violations against children by the National Haitian Police, including the illegal detention of children and sexual abuse of female children while in custody, as well as the reports of execution and mutilation of street children during police operations early in 2006.

40. The establishment in September 2006 of the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration represents a positive development, and it will be important to ensure that adequate provision is made for children in this framework.

### **Developments in Iraq**

41. The current situation in Iraq has not allowed for the systematic collection of child protection information regarding the effects of violence and insurgency on children. In the current security context, it is also very difficult to determine the number of children who have been victims of and/or involved in the violence.

42. Many children have been killed and/or maimed as a result of large-scale suicide attacks or roadside bombs by various terrorist and criminal groups, or in military and security operations by the Iraqi police and Special Forces acting alone or in association with the Multinational Force in Iraq. On 15 March 2006, a raid by the Multinational Force in the outskirts of Al-Isshaqi District in Balad caused the death of a family of 11, including 5 children between 7 months and 5 years of age. In two separate incidents, on 19 March and 2 April 2006, 4 children were reported killed in fighting between the Multinational Force and the insurgents. In mid-March 2006, five Multinational Force soldiers were charged with the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl and the murder of her family, including her 5-year-old sister, in Mahmoudiyah, south of Baghdad.

43. The recent rise in sectarian violence, exacerbated by the bombing of the Al Askari shrine in Samarra, resulted in thousands of civilian casualties, many of whom were children. On 29 April 2006, 2 children were wounded when a mortar round landed on a home in Ta' Afar; on 26 June 2006, 10 children were killed in targeted explosions on two markets in Hilla and Ba'qubah; and on 2 August 2006, a bomb buried in the middle of a football pitch exploded, killing at least 12 people, most of whom were children. According to figures provided by the Ministry of Health, which include counts from hospitals in all governorates, excluding the three northern governorates of Kurdistan, from 1 January to 31 August 2006, 139 children were killed and 395 were wounded.

44. Of particular concern are reports of attacks involving children as combatants. On 1 November 2005, a boy said to be aged between 10 and 13 years carried out a suicide bombing targeting the police commander in the city of Kirkuk. Later in the same month, two boys aged 12 and 13 years, reportedly carried out attacks against patrols of the Multinational Force in Iraq in Fallujah and Hweejah.

45. Abductions of children by Iraqi armed groups related to the sectarian violence have increased significantly, in addition to the number of children abducted for ransom. A survey conducted by several local non-governmental organizations in Baghdad indicates that approximately 20,000 people have been kidnapped throughout the country since the beginning of 2006, 50 per cent of whom are women and children. In one case, the corpse of an abducted and sexually assaulted 12-year-old boy was found by the Iraqi police wrapped in a plastic bag even though his family had paid ransom. In another case, on 17 May 2006, the entire Iraqi Tae Kwan Do team composed of 15 children, between the ages of 12 and 15 years, from Al Sadr City were kidnapped near Ramadi. Recently, increasing concerns have been expressed by international and national non-governmental organizations that Iraqi children, both girls and boys, are being abducted and trafficked for purposes of

sexual exploitation. The rise of armed criminal groups has contributed to this phenomenon.

46. The ongoing violence and exposure to violence in schools and threats of abuse, kidnapping and/or injury by armed groups has contributed to non-attendance in schools. For example, on 26 March 2006, a schoolboy was killed while entering his school in Al Basrah. There have also been incidences where children have witnessed the killing of educators. In mid-2006, also in Al Basrah, the dean of the Al Basrah Abdullah Bin Om Kalthoum School was assassinated inside the school in front of his students. The targeting of teachers for ransom and violence has also seriously affected the delivery of education in schools. The national primary school drop-out rate is 3.6 per cent and the attendance rate is 76 per cent. However, this does not take into account the special arrangements between schools and parents where children are only present in school during final examinations.

47. The Government has, through the Commission of Child Care, begun to address the challenges confronting children in Iraq. The Commission has designated a committee, which has recommended that the Government sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Government of Iraq has repeatedly called upon the international community and all relevant United Nations agencies to offer their support and assistance in reinforcing their efforts in securing and protecting the welfare of children in Iraq.

#### **Developments in Lebanon and Israel**

48. The conflict involving Lebanon and Israel which began on 12 July 2006 has resulted in more than 1,109 Lebanese civilians killed and 4,405 injured, and 43 Israeli civilians killed, including 7 children, and 200 civilians injured. It is estimated that one third of the dead and wounded in Lebanon are children. For example, on the second day of hostilities, Israeli forces killed 38 civilians, among them 20 children, in four different attacks. Further, on 30 July, the Israeli air force bombed the village of Qana, in southern Lebanon, killing 28 civilians, including 16 children. On several occasions, Israeli forces attacked individual vehicles and convoys of civilians fleeing their villages after Israeli warnings that the villages would be bombed. For example, on 15 July, an Israeli air strike hit a civilian convoy fleeing the village of Marwahin, killing 21 people, including 14 children.

49. About 975,000 people, constituting approximately one quarter of the Lebanese population, were displaced during the hostilities. More than a third of these are reported to be children. As at 30 September 2006, 200,000 people had still not yet been able to return to their homes, while others had returned to their destroyed homes and villages. It is estimated that 30,000 homes were destroyed throughout the country, particularly in southern Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut.

50. During the conflict, indiscriminate Hezbollah rocket attacks in northern Israel killed seven children. A large number of civilians in northern Israel, including a significant proportion of children, were also displaced, having sought safety further south or spent lengthy amounts of time in crowded shelters. Further, the Hezbollah rocket attacks also damaged and destroyed at least 6,000 homes as well as over 30 schools and day-care centres. Four Israeli hospitals also incurred serious damage. On 18 July 2006, a rocket hit a hospital in Safed, northern Galilee, wounding eight people.

51. The war also caused extensive damage to schools and hospitals in Lebanon. In Baalbek, the main hospital, with an estimated population of 80,000, was reportedly severely damaged during ground and air military operations in north-east Lebanon. In southern Lebanon, Ghandour hospital in Nabatiyeh was also extensively damaged. All hospitals in the affected areas are also encountering serious shortages of drugs, fuel, electricity and water supplies. Rapid assessments of the losses in the education sector indicate that between 40 and 50 schools were totally destroyed, while around 300 schools need repair. For instance, on 20 July 2006, in Bint Jbeil, the Vocational School building, used to shelter hundreds of refugee families, was subjected to Israeli bombardment.

52. Children in Lebanon were also denied access to humanitarian assistance owing to an Israeli military blockade of Lebanon's borders, seaports, bombing of roads and Beirut's airport. Bombardments of electricity plants and water bores also resulted in power cuts and water shortages, increasing food and health insecurity of children particularly. The water systems in both urban and rural areas in southern Lebanon, Beqaa Valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut were totally destroyed or partially damaged, with at least 1.7 million people, of whom up to 40 per cent were children, suffering either temporary breaks or full stoppage of water supply to their households. Further, in at least two cases, Israeli forces fired on humanitarian convoys and Red Cross ambulances.

53. Since the cessation of hostilities on 14 August until 28 September 2006, 12 civilians, including 2 children, were killed, as well as 98 civilians, including 39 children, injured by unexploded ordnances. The presence of a large number of unexploded munitions, including an estimated 1.2 million cluster bombs, 90 per cent of which were apparently fired in the last three days of the conflict, poses a special threat to children by heavily contaminating the destroyed infrastructure, school grounds and agricultural lands.

### **Developments in Liberia**

54. The inauguration of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in January 2006 after winning pivotal elections in November 2005 has ushered in a new era of peace and justice for Liberia. President Johnson-Sirleaf took a landmark step when she formally requested Nigeria to surrender former President Charles Taylor to face trial. Former President Taylor has been transferred to The Hague, where he is awaiting trial for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the use of child soldiers, abduction and forced labour.

55. As of July 2006, there is no known group that uses or recruits child soldiers or former child soldiers. Although there are allegations of such activities in connection with the volatile political situation in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, these have not been confirmed by United Nations joint monitoring missions, subregional peacekeeping operations or United Nations operations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), however, has continued to facilitate the repatriation of foreign former child combatants. As of June 2006, a total of 55 former child combatants (11 Ivorians, 29 Guineans and 15 Sierra Leoneans) or children associated with the fighting forces have returned to their countries of origin. ICRC has also started to repatriate Liberian children associated with the fighting forces from countries neighbouring Liberia. The situation in neighbouring countries needs

particular attention and is subject to ongoing monitoring by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), in close cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) and other actors. UNMIL and ONUCI carry out coordinated border patrols to deter any attempts to recruit Liberians, while UNICEF and other child protection agencies have responded by putting in place a mechanism for prevention of re-recruitment through increasing reintegration programmes along the borders.

56. Between 2004 and 2005, UNMIL disarmament and demobilization programme has been relatively successful, resulting in 10,963 children demobilized. Of these, 77 per cent were boys and 23 per cent girls. On 13 April 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf signed executive order No. 4, which extended the mandate of the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration for another year. UNICEF, UNMIL and other key partners are continuing to conduct follow-up monitoring of former child combatants through family and community-based interaction.

### **Developments in Myanmar**

57. There are reliable reports of continued forcible recruitment and training of children for the Government armed forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) and non-State armed groups. However, owing to access limitations, the United Nations country team has not been able to systematically verify these allegations. Despite the difficulties in obtaining information, since the beginning of 2005, at least 12 detailed and credible allegations of forced recruitment of children aged between 12 and 17 into the national army were received by a United Nations partner. Myanmar's written law states that the Government army is all voluntary and the minimum age is 18. In early October 2004, the Government-established Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-age Children developed a plan of action, which included provisions for the discharge of children under 18 years from military service and their reintegration into their families and communities. The Committee was reinstated on 3 February 2006, and has been stepping up efforts to promote awareness among the military establishments, training institutions and local communities. On various occasions over the past few months, UNICEF held discussions with the Government on the need to further develop and operationalize this national plan of action to prevent the recruitment of child soldiers, including a high-level meeting between the UNICEF Deputy Executive Director and the Secretary One of the State Peace and Development Council, who is also the Chairman of the Committee on the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-age Children. While concrete cooperation on this issue is yet to be fully forthcoming, the authorities propose to deepen their collaboration with UNICEF to review progress on the issue. The United Nations country team is aware of some cases of children being released from army service but is unable to verify the effectiveness of the Committee's plan of action or whether all children are being screened out of the Government armed forces.

58. Reports of abductions of children for forced labour or to serve in the armed forces by Government forces and non-State armed groups continue. However, the United Nations country team is hampered from accessing many areas controlled by both State and non-State actors. The country team has also been hindered from providing detailed information by a Government decision to prosecute parties who make false allegations of forced labour against the Government.



59. Access to communities in conflict zones and the special zones for humanitarian actors is a fundamental problem in Myanmar. Although assistance actors can work in many areas of the country, in some critical areas, where children are believed to be in very vulnerable situations, humanitarian assistance and protection is denied owing to Government restrictions on movement, allegedly for “security reasons”. These areas include part of Kayin State and Bago Division, as well as parts of Shan and Kayah States, where civilians, including children, are being displaced owing to military activity. Access for humanitarian actors to some other non-conflict areas and ceasefire areas is also denied by the Government.

60. There are reports that the Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) continue to use and recruit children into the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karenni Army (KA), respectively. There are also allegations of recruitment from the Thai refugee camps. There is a long-standing practice that children go from the refugee camps across the border to the KNLA and KA for military training. Some children living in the refugee camps also provide logistical support to nearby military bases. In June 2006, leaders of KNU and KNPP assured United Nations representatives in Thailand that both armies had policies in place prohibiting the recruitment of children under 18 years although they conceded that those policies were not always followed by the local commanders. On 31 July 2006, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict received a letter from KNU stating that it would no longer use or recruit children; would monitor its units and take action to ensure that no children were within its ranks; and would cooperate and allow unhindered United Nations access to monitor and verify compliance to non-recruitment. Further, given the KNPP desire to be removed from the list, it has requested United Nations technical support on monitoring and enforcing the KNPP policy on non-recruitment. There are also reports of recruitment of child soldiers by the United Wa State Army.

61. Former child soldiers from the Government forces seeking protection in Thailand as army deserters face the threat of forcible return to Myanmar under a current practice by Thai authorities. The Thailand Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict has sought clarifications on this practice from Thai Government officials who stated they were not aware of the situation. However, the Thai Government has agreed to cooperate and address the problem of child soldiers through a common strategy with the Thailand Working Group.

62. There are also challenges in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, especially with respect to former child soldiers from the non-State armed groups who seek refuge in Thailand. No formal demobilization is possible and former child soldiers must be integrated into Thai refugee camps. Sending children back to their villages or families would put them and their families at risk of persecution.

#### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

63. The plight of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, has become more precarious since the previous reporting period, as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict intensified, with hostilities focusing on the Gaza Strip in mid-2006. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, an estimated 93 children, 83 in Gaza and 10 in the West Bank, were killed by Israeli forces. Between 28 June and 30 September 2006, since the start of the Israeli

“Operation Summer Rains”, United Nations agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory estimate that 289 Palestinians were killed, of whom 65 per cent were children, and over 1,261 injured in the Gaza Strip, of whom 189 were children, with 42 children killed in July alone. United Nations agencies have documented reports of children being killed and injured by Israel Defense Forces gunfire. For example, on 19 February 2006, a boy was injured by a bullet fired from the Balata Basic Girls’ School, Nablus, which the Israel Defense Forces had occupied that morning. On 3 March 2006, during a large-scale Israel Defense Forces incursion into Camp No. 1 in Nablus, a boy was shot in the face and killed by Israeli sniper fire. Further, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that from 28 June to 22 August 2006, at least 4,809 Israeli artillery shells were fired into the Gaza Strip. Palestinian armed groups also launched a total of 367 rockets into Israel during the same period.

64. Two Israeli children were reported killed as a result of separate Palestinian attacks on civilian areas in March 2006. Additionally, communities living close to the Gaza Strip border, particularly the city of Sderot, endure regular, often daily, home-made rocket attacks by Palestinian militants. For example, in September 2006 alone, 45 Qassam rockets were launched into Sderot. These rockets damaged homes and schools, landed in public places frequented by children, such as playgrounds, and caused high levels of prolonged anxiety among children residing there.

65. As at 30 September 2006, 389 Palestinian children, including two 12-year-old boys, had been detained by the Israeli army in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, often following transport of the children out of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and into Israel. A field survey of former child detainees, provided by a United Nations agency, estimated that 60 per cent of the children interviewed were reported to have been subjected to physical coercion or inducement to collaborate with Israeli authorities.

66. Recent incursions and shelling as well as direct military attacks have damaged schools and health facilities. Restricted access to health-care providers has resulted in the serious deterioration of health and health services and, consequently, the health status of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. For example, on 2 July 2006, in the West Bank, the Israel Defense Forces forcibly entered four Palestinian hospitals in search and detain operations, and, during one of the operations, in Nablus City, the hospital premises were used as cover by the Israel Defense Forces to fire live ammunition; while on 17 July 2006, Israel Defense Forces bulldozers demolished the boundary walls of the clinic operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Beit Hanun, Gaza. Direct air attacks on schools caused extensive damage and injury; shrapnel landed inside schools and school compounds during operations in the vicinity of schools; and Israel Defense Forces soldiers forcibly entered schools, causing destruction and detaining students and teachers in schools. For example, on 5 December 2005, during clashes between the Israel Defense Forces and Aida camp youths in the West Bank, the Israel Defense Forces used live rounds, tear gas and plastic-coated bullets in the vicinity of the UNRWA Basic Girls School, which resulted in tear gas inhalation by over 100 pupils in the first to third grades; while from 19 to 21 February 2006, the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli Border Police entered Balata refugee camp’s Basic Girls School and used it for three days as a detention centre and firing position, causing extensive damage. In the Gaza Strip, from 19 to 21 July 2006, the military operations of the

Israel Defense Forces in Maghazi refugee camp left dozens of bullet holes in the Maghazi Elementary and Preparatory School buildings. Further, the prohibition on the entry of construction materials into Gaza has prevented repairs to schools damaged by the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli Air Force, restricting access of Palestinian children to education.

67. The Barrier and its associated regime, such as the Seam Zone permit system, and checkpoints, which restrict the freedom of movement of Palestinians, has deepened concerns about Palestinian access to medical services and schools within the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and between East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. For example, the East Jerusalem's Augusta Victoria Hospital, which serves West Bank Palestinians, had the number of beds reduced owing to a decrease in patient numbers by 30 per cent, resulting from the Barrier and associated restrictions on the movement of people. Similarly, most students and teachers who are living behind the Barrier face long delays, resulting in regular missed classes and longer commutes to schools.

68. There is an increased exposure to unexploded ordnance owing to the recent military operations by the Israel Defense Forces. The number of Palestinians killed and injured, including children, more than doubled between January and April 2006, from 15 to 36 people. The most affected districts are Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin in the West Bank and northern Gaza.

#### **Developments in Somalia**

69. The Union of the Islamic Courts (ICU) seized control of Mogadishu on 4 June 2006, after four months of conflict with a coalition of warlords calling themselves the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT). At peace talks held in Khartoum on 22 June 2006, ICU and the Transitional Federal Government agreed on a number of principles, including a cessation of media and military campaigns, and the pursuit of dialogue and talks without preconditions in a framework of mutual recognition, which were subsequently reaffirmed during second round of talks, held from 2 to 4 September 2006.

70. Numerous cases of children being recruited by force by elements of ICU and ARPCT have been reported, both in Mogadishu and the Hiran region. ARPCT was very active in recruiting street children for its militia. ICU was reported to have recruited children from madrasas with promises of spiritual rewards for martyrdom, while there has also been widespread clan-based recruitment with families receiving financial incentives. As the United Nations country team only has limited presence in the country given the high level of insecurity, access to precise and updated information is therefore not readily available. After ICU took control of Mogadishu, reports continue that suggest that children between 10 and 16 years of age are being enrolled by force for military training by ICU in Dabble, near Kismayo, in Mogadishu and the Hiran region.

71. From March to June 2006, the heavy fighting between ICU and ARPCT was marked by grave human rights violations against children. Thousands of children, with their families, have been displaced from Mogadishu, and have been victims of shelling and gunfire in the capital. In May 2006, it was reported that 19 children had been wounded and 5 killed in the conflict.

72. In May 2006, armed Somali fighters from ARPCT occupied a major Mogadishu hospital run by ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent Society, in a clear violation of international humanitarian law. Humanitarian access in Somalia remains critical, in particular to the large vulnerable population in the southern and central region, including Mogadishu, Lower and Middle Shabelle and Hiran, which faces severe food shortages or are internally displaced. The political tension, which has escalated since June 2006 after ICU took control of these areas, continues to pose serious security and access concerns.

### **Developments in the Sudan**

73. The various armed forces and groups that are parties to the conflict in the Sudan have a long history of using children for military purposes, and their complex links with the Government make it difficult to determine precisely the accountability for the violations of children's rights. In southern Sudan and Khartoum, responsibility for the recruitment and use of children rests with the Sudan Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA, part of the Government of Southern Sudan), as well as their Joint Integrated Units, made up of both legal forces and militias known as other armed groups, such as the White Army. Additionally, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is also responsible for the recruitment and use of children. Children were recruited between May and July 2006, in Khartoum, Jonglei and Bahr al-Ghazal by the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA. For example, on 16 May 2006, the Sudan Armed Forces, SPLA and the new Joint Integrated Units were all reported to be involved in recruiting children in Nasser, Upper Nile State. In the same month, child soldiers were seen in a newly incorporated Sudan Armed Forces unit near Nasser, and there were reports of approximately 50 uniformed and armed SPLA soldiers aged between 14 and 16 years in the same area. In the same period, SPLA attacked the White Army in Motot, Jonglei State, and reportedly killed 113 White Army youth. The White Army, a livestock defence force linked to the Lou clan of the pastoralist Nuer ethnic group, is made up largely of males aged between 15 and 20 years, with some much younger. These forces were sometimes used by larger groups to carry out military tasks. Further, LRA units present in southern Sudan have recruited and used both Sudanese and Ugandan children.

74. In Darfur, SAF, Janjaweed militias, the faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) led by Minni Minawi that signed the Darfur Peace Agreement, other SLA factions that refused to sign the agreement, as well as paramilitary forces that are part of the Government, such as the camel police, are responsible for the recruitment and use of children. The Chadian opposition forces are also responsible for the recruitment and use of children. It is estimated that thousands of children are still associated with armed forces and groups in Darfur and were actively involved in the conflict between May and July 2006. The security situation, access limitations and the delayed implementation of the Darfur Peace Agreement impede the ability to monitor the recruitment and use of children. Monitors have confirmed that the SLA (Minawi) commanders were forcibly recruiting boys in Gereida in May 2006, and that many child soldiers were also witnessed in Gereida at the end of June 2006. G19, a breakaway faction of SLA (Minawi), claimed in interviews at the beginning of June that SLA (Minawi) had abducted 108 children for use as soldiers on 10 May 2006. On 15 May 2006, interviews by United Nations staff of people displaced after Janjaweed attacks on villages near Kutum, Northern Darfur, confirmed that there

were many armed child soldiers among the Janjaweed militiamen who attacked them; and in June 2006, in Western Darfur there were further reports of many boys less than 18 years of age recruited into the camel police, a group used to mediate and control disputes between pastoralists and farmers. On 24 May 2006, a 17-year-old Tama boy was abducted from Geneina, southern Sudan, by Chadian opposition forces. This is indicative of the ongoing problem of abduction of youth from the Tama ethnic group for recruitment to the Chadian opposition.

75. In southern Sudan, 38 children were killed from May to July 2006. Some of them were reportedly participating in hostilities when they were killed. For example, in the fighting between the White Army and SPLA in Ulang and Akobo, Jonglei State, from 24 April to 15 May 2006, 33 children were killed. In Darfur, over 51 children were reported killed in the same period. However, these reports do not cover all of the areas of fighting in Darfur and many reports of civilian deaths are not age-disaggregated. On 5 July 2006, a breakaway faction of SLA led by Abdul Wahid reported that SLA (Minawi) forces had killed 16 children on their way to school in Dalil, Northern Darfur. There were also killings by Government allied militia in Darfur. For example, in Gereida, 150 children were missing after attacks on villages around Gereida in March 2006 by Government-allied militia. By the end of May 2006, 30 of those children had been found dead in different locations between Joughana and Gereida.

76. There have been numerous reports of abductions throughout the conflict in southern Sudan. Between May and July 2006, in Jonglei State, children were abducted; however it has been difficult to ascertain the exact numbers or responsible parties owing to access restrictions. In Darfur, there are abductions of children by Janjaweed militias, SLA (Minawi) and the Sudan Armed Forces. Girls are often abducted for short periods for sexual purposes. Many abductions are also linked to recruitment. Between May and July 2006, 18 cases of abduction were reported to the United Nations. For example, on 26 May 2006, six armed men in Sudan Armed Forces uniforms reportedly abducted a 13-year-old boy from Wadi Saleh, Western Darfur, while on 21 June 2006, Janjaweed militia abducted two boys in an attack on Abuderesa camp, Southern Darfur.

77. In Darfur, the practice of ethnically targeted sexual violence against girls and women continues, particularly in areas of displaced populations. Some 40 per cent of the victims have been under 18 years of age. Many of the attacks are carried out by uniformed men. Girls have been targeted in inter-ethnic conflicts as a deliberate form of humiliation of a group, and as a means of ethnic cleansing. For example, on 24 May 2006, a group of about 25 armed men in SLA uniforms threatened, beat and robbed six separate groups of women and girls in Hajar Jalanga, Western Darfur. One of the victims was a 15-year-old girl, who was sexually assaulted. Further, on 15 May 2006, Janjaweed militia attempted to rape women and girls displaced from villages near Kutum, Northern Darfur.

78. Humanitarian access worsened between May and July 2006 with the upsurge in violence that followed the peace agreement. On 6 June 2006, the rebel SLA (Wahid) faction reported that the Sudan Armed Forces checkpoint at Kass, Southern Darfur, had denied access to trucks carrying food into areas under their control. Further, in May 2006, three cases of hijacking of humanitarian convoys by armed men suspected to be affiliated to Government militias were reported in Western and Southern Darfur. From March to June 2006, the Government authorities imposed

access restrictions on United Nations agencies in eastern Sudan. Food assistance for about 110,000 refugees and internally displaced persons, 50 per cent of whom are children, was suspended in March but resumed in June 2006. The protection activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for the refugee population in Kassala state were also seriously hampered during that period.

## **B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Chad**

79. The overall security situation remains volatile in eastern Chad, especially with the ongoing fighting between the Government forces and the armed opposition, and the presence of Sudanese rebels of a faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). There are reports of forced recruitment by SLA of children from the Breidjing, Treguine, Djabal and Goz Amir refugee camps in eastern Chad. The children are reportedly taken into the Sudan. From 17 to 19 March 2006, SLA rebels loyal to Commander Khamis Abdullah Abaker entered the Breidjing and Treguine camps. According to UNHCR, an estimated 4,700 refugees, some of them children, were recruited, some forcibly. All of the 4,700 refugees returned to the camp in weeks subsequent to the recruitment, except for 104, who as of 31 May 2006, were reported by refugee leaders and their families not to have returned to Breidjing and Treguine. According to the leaders, the missing refugees were either with the rebels or in hiding in neighbouring villages for fear of being targeted again by recruiters. Some children were reported to have been recruited in Goz Amir and Djabal camps as well, although many refugee youth interviewed by UNHCR indicated that they had joined SLA voluntarily. In Djabal and Goz Amir camps, teachers were among the recruiters. There is compelling evidence that some Chadian authorities were aware but not able or willing to prevent the recruitment taking place in these refugee camps. UNHCR, in coordination with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, is looking into the possibility of strengthening security arrangements in and around refugee camps in Chad.

80. Although it is difficult to obtain the exact number of victims, hundreds of Chadian displaced people, including children, have been killed, raped and abducted in attacks on sites for internally displaced persons throughout eastern Chad since January 2006. Displaced women and girls are also targeted for sexual violence by members of armed groups, including the Janjaweed. It was reported to UNICEF that 33 women and girls from the Bildigue and Haraza tribes in the Koubigou internally displaced person site had been raped during the past four months.

### **Developments in Colombia**

81. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) continues to recruit and use children. There is no information of recent child recruitment by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), which is presently involved in talks with the Government. However, from November 2005 to September 2006, at least 56 children who had been demobilized through the Government demobilization programme declared that they had been part of ELN.

The United Nations country team believes that there are still children in ELN. The United Nations has received information that children also continue to be recruited by other right wing illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process begun in late 2004 with the Autodefensa Unidas de Colombia (AUC), such as the Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare and the Frente Cacique Pipinta.

82. Although there has been a marked decrease in the number of child abductions compared with recent years, the practice of abducting children continues among illegal armed groups. According to reliable sources, 137 children were abducted in 2005 and 2006 by illegal armed groups.

83. FARC-EP, ELN and other illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process also continue to be responsible for acts of sexual violence, including rape and torture, against girls. According to a report on Colombia prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), there has also been an increase in the number of allegations of acts of sexual violence against girls, in particular by members of the security forces.

84. The presence of landmines laid by FARC-EP and ELN and unexploded ordnance on school premises, in local water sources and on rural access roads represent a grave and growing concern, claiming many child victims. Some 30 per cent of civilian victims of anti-personnel landmines are children. Although there has been a reduction in comparison with previous years, forced displacement of civilians, 40 per cent of them children, has continued as a result of armed confrontations among parties to the conflict.

85. The Government has been relatively successful in its efforts with regard to the demobilization process of AUC. Since 12 December 2005, all 11 AUC groups have been demobilized in 17 collective demobilization sessions. However, there are concerns about the demobilized groups regrouping into criminal groups, as well as the emergence of new illegal armed actors or the strengthening of existing groups in areas already evacuated by demobilized groups. Since 1999, the National Institute for Family Welfare has undertaken a comprehensive programme to provide proper care to children and adolescents demobilized from illegal armed groups, which had involved 2,916 children from all groups up to June 2006 and 440 children from November 2005 to September 2006. Significant State resources have been applied to this programme, with progressive improvement in its quality. Child beneficiaries of this programme have largely been individually demobilized or captured, with the exception of approximately 300 formally handed over by AUC since the end of 2004 during the formal AUC demobilization process. Concerns in this regard have been expressed by the Procurador General de la Nación, considering that this illegal armed group is likely to have only released a portion of the children associated with its armed group.

### **Developments in Nepal**

86. The change in Government in April 2006 and the subsequent ceasefire announcements by the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) have halted military actions throughout the country. However, the peace process remains fragile. Reciprocal ceasefires have been declared without a formal ceasefire agreement being signed, and the issue of removing children from armed groups and their reintegration has not been the subject of agreement. Despite the efforts of child protection stakeholders, the 25-point code of conduct for the ceasefire signed by

both parties in May 2006 did not include any specific provisions for the protection of children.

87. There is increasingly strong evidence of the presence of children with the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the military wing of CPN-M, and that they are used as combatants, informants and in various logistical capacities. While CPN-M repeatedly denies the recruitment and use of children for military purposes, UNICEF has documented reports confirming the presence of numerous child soldiers in PLA. Some 295 cases of recruitment, 39 per cent of them girls, have been documented, out of which 137 are still active since the ceasefire. Prior to the April 2006 ceasefire, there were special recruitment campaigns, such as the "one family, one member for the party", where children were recruited, forcibly or voluntarily. Some children who have escaped from CPN-M, are afraid to return to their homes for fear of re-recruitment by CPN-M and of arrest by the State security forces. There are also reports that clearly suggest that the CPN-M cultural groups are largely composed of children used as community mobilizers, to attract other children in the CPN-M affiliated movements. In April 2006, CPN-M released a statement of commitment to respect the rights of children, stating that CPN-M would not make use of children below the age of 18 years. However, to date, no substantial progress has been noted to prevent the use of children or to release children.

88. There is also cursory evidence of children being used as informants and messengers by the State security forces, to spy on and identify CPN-M cadres. However, more information is needed to determine if this is a systematic practice.

89. The State security forces and CPN-M have consistently failed to take all necessary measures to protect civilians during attacks on military targets. For example, in January 2006, in Nepalgunj, a 15-year-old girl was killed while she was inside her home as a result of indiscriminate firing by a police patrol. Further, investigations conducted by OHCHR into 13 military operations or clashes that took place between the end of the CPN-M unilateral ceasefire and the beginning of March 2006 showed that two children had been killed and six others injured as a result of aerial bombardments by the Royal Nepal Army. Since the ceasefire, there have been no reports of children killed or injured as a result of military operations by either party.

90. Mass abductions of thousands of individuals, mostly students and teachers, to participate in political demonstrations and mass rallies took place throughout the reporting period. National human rights organizations reported over 8,000 abductions, including 3,000 children between 3 September and 2 December 2005. Most of the children were released after short periods of political indoctrination. Since May 2006, there has been a significant decrease in abductions by CPN-M, although the party and its affiliated bodies continue to take civilians into captivity, including children, as part of their investigations into alleged offences as part of their "law enforcement" activities. For example, on 20 June 2006, in Nawalparasi, 6 children between 14 and 16 years of age were among 10 persons abducted and accused of theft.

91. There is widespread practice of forced closure of private and community schools by CPN-M and its student wing in all regions of Nepal, with a notable increase from September to December 2005 in the rural areas of the eastern region. The use of school buildings as army barracks or temporary shelters by both the



security forces and CPN-M, the destruction of schools during military operations and the actual killing of teachers and students impede children's access to education in Nepal. Schools were sometimes attacked when students were present, or attacks were initiated from schools by CPN-M, leading to further retaliation. For example, in January 2006, members of PLA in Syangja District who were being attacked by the Royal Nepalese Army took refuge in a school while 130 children and 5 teachers were present. During an aerial attack in March 2006 in Sindhupalchowk District, bombs were fired from helicopters by the Royal Nepalese Army in a civilian area with extensive damage caused to school buildings and classrooms. Since the ceasefire, military attacks in and around schools have stopped. However, some schools continue to be occupied by security forces and CPN-M in various parts of the country such as Khotand, Myagdi, Syangja, Tanahun, Bara, Kathmandu, Rukum, Banke and Sindhuli districts.

92. The newly established Government has publicly announced that all detainees held under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance have been released, including children detained because of their previous association with CPN-M. However, the United Nations country team believes that some children still remain in detention, under different charges such as detention for possession of arms and explosives, and murder.

#### **Developments in the Philippines**

93. Children continue to be targeted for recruitment, allegedly by the New People's Army (NPA), the armed wing of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), despite the stated policy by CPP prohibiting the recruitment of anyone under 18 years of age into NPA. NPA claims that it assigns children to self-defence and non-combatant duties. From January 2005 to June 2006, the United Nations country team, in collaboration with child protection actors on the ground, documented 22 cases of children affiliated with NPA. During the last quarter of 2005, NPA allegedly stepped up recruitment in the Visayas provinces, including Negros Occidental. There have also been reports that children from indigenous communities in Northern Luzon and many parts of north-eastern and southern Mindanao have been joining NPA. In all these areas the actual number of children being recruited is difficult to determine.

94. The Abu Sayyaf Group still recruits children to fight, although the number of fighting forces is reported to have greatly diminished after the joint Philippine-United States military exercises in Basilan. There are also known cases of recruitment by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the rebel group in Mindanao, with whom peace talks are presently under way. It is estimated that 13 per cent of the 10,000 elements of MILF are children. The increased numbers of children joining MILF in Maguindanao Province is based on the assumption by MILF that the children would benefit from the socio-economic package offered in the event of the conclusion of the peace agreement. Despite sporadic fighting in Mindanao, the Government of the Philippines and MILF remain committed to continuing their talks with the hope of achieving sustainable peace in southern Philippines within a year. The positive state of the peace talks has also encouraged MILF to cooperate with civil society groups. Members of MILF have participated in two training programmes on child protection, international human rights and humanitarian law.

95. In some provinces such as Bohol and Negros Occidental, child recruitment is also reportedly being conducted by Government paramilitary forces such as the Citizen's Armed Forces Geographical Units (CAFGU), although current reports do not indicate that recruitment is systematic in nature. In 2005, the Commission on Human Rights Region VI Office learned that two children had been recruited into the CAFGU in Murcia, Negros Occidental. It immediately called the attention of the commander of the 12th Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, and the company commander sent the two under-aged recruits home. Such isolated reports of recruitment into CAFGU continue, despite a directive from AFP strictly setting the age of recruits at 18 years and above. The Armed Forces of the Philippines, however, continues to be vigilant in ensuring that no children are involved in CAFGU. The presence of independent authorities such as the Human Rights Council appears to provide protection against these isolated violations.

96. From November 2005 to May 2006, the Joint Secretariat of the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines (Joint Monitoring Committee) and United Nations partners received reports and affidavits that documented 5 children killed and 45 children maimed in incidents related to armed conflict, and 9 children abducted, with some allegations against members of the Philippine Army and Scout Rangers. For example, on 25 November 2005, during a clash between the Philippine military and rebel forces in Sariaya, Quezon, a 15-year-old boy was injured, and on 31 January 2006, two 17-year-old boys were reported to have been taken by members of the 71st Infantry Battalion of the Armed Forces of the Philippine in Sta. Ines West, Tarlac Province, and were later found dead.

97. In response to the protection needs of children affected by armed conflict, the Government of the Philippines continues to implement a presidential order establishing a comprehensive programme for children involved in armed conflict, a framework that tasks relevant agencies of the Government, including the Department of National Defence and the Philippine National Police, on specific protection mandates for affected children.

#### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

98. The ceasefire agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been seriously hampered by heightened levels of violence. Since early December 2005, violence has escalated dramatically, including military confrontations in the north and east; suicide bombings and claymore mine attacks in all parts of the country; and increased death and injury of civilians. On 29 May 2006, the Council of the European Union added LTTE to the Union's list of terrorist organizations.

99. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, UNICEF received reports of 513 children recruited or re-recruited by LTTE. These figures only represent the number of cases reported to UNICEF, and there were indications that the prevailing security situation might be deterring families from reporting cases. The overlap between children recorded on the UNICEF database and children who left LTTE (released, ran away or returned home) is approximately 36 per cent, suggesting that UNICEF figures reflect approximately one third of total cases of recruitment. On the basis of cases reported to UNICEF, the average age of child recruits during this period was 16 years. Some 68 per cent of recruits were boys and 32 per cent were

girls. From 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, most cases were reported from Kilinochchi district, with 26 per cent of the total number of children recruited or re-recruited occurring in the district; Batticaloa reported the second highest number of cases, with 23 per cent. During the same period, LTTE officially released 91 children and another 25 children are known to have escaped or run away. In most cases, LTTE did not follow the agreed release procedures as children were often transferred to a residential vocational training facility in Kilinochchi, or to the human rights body of LTTE, the Northeast Secretariat for Human Rights. UNICEF expressed concerns at this practice as children were placed in the institutions without parental consent, and there were verification difficulties owing to limitations in accessing the institutions.

100. Concerns have also been expressed regarding the civil defence training provided by LTTE to civilian communities throughout the north and east. UNICEF received reports of children as young as 16 years being included in the training programmes. School principals and teachers were also required to attend, affecting children's schooling. Reports were received from Batticaloa, Ampara, Trincomalee and Kilinochchi districts of children not returning after attending the training programmes and it is suspected that they have been recruited.

101. As at 30 September 2006, UNICEF had received 128 reports of children being recruited by the Karuna faction. In the space of one week in mid-June, UNICEF received 30 reports alleging that children had been abducted by the Karuna faction in the areas of Santhiveli, Kiran, Mankerni, Valachchenai and Iruthayapuram (Manmunai North). Only boys were taken. All of the cases involved forced recruitment and abduction, in some cases by armed men who openly identified themselves as members of the Karuna faction.

102. During the period from 1 November 2005 to 30 September 2006, the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission received 195 complaints of child abductions, including 110 complaints against LTTE, 79 complaints against a non-ceasefire agreement entity (the Karuna faction) and 6 complaints against the Government of Sri Lanka.

103. Bombing raids were conducted by the Sri Lankan air force against LTTE positions as part of retaliatory actions of a limited duration, causing death and injury to children. On 25 April 2006, following a suicide bomb attack on the army chief, General Sarath Fonseka, at army headquarters in Colombo, the Sri Lankan armed forces launched retaliatory strikes on LTTE positions around Sampur and Mutur in Trincomalee District. In this bombing raid, 4 children aged 4, 14, 15 and 16 years were killed and 14 children, ranging in age from 3 months to 17 years, were injured. On 14 August 2006, a bombing raid on a compound, which LTTE claimed was an orphanage and the Government claimed was a military training ground, killed a number of schoolgirls and injured many others.

104. In Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara districts, school attendance rates have decreased in many places because of fear of recruitment and the general security situation. Schools are also being occupied by internally displaced persons and damaged by air and artillery attacks by fighting forces. On 25 April 2006, a pre-school and the science laboratory of Chenaiyoor Central College were damaged by Government air and artillery strikes around Mutur in Trincomalee district. In Batticaloa, the Karuna faction opened a political office of the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) next door to St. Cecilia's Girls High School, exposing children to the danger of attack.

105. The escalation in violence since July 2006 has curtailed access to civilians affected by the conflict in the north and east of Sri Lanka, restricting the delivery of humanitarian assistance and raising concerns about the security of humanitarian personnel, especially after the killing of 17 aid workers from the French non-governmental organization, Action Against Hunger, on 5 August 2006 in Trincomalee. Further, as at 30 September 2006, according to UNHCR, 209,672 people (56,739 families) had been displaced since 7 April 2006 owing to the rapid escalation of the conflict. The vast majority of the displacement has occurred since August 2006 in Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee and Batticaloa districts, affecting thousands of children.

106. A task force on monitoring and reporting on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) has been established in Sri Lanka. The inaugural meeting of the task force was held on 26 July 2006.

### **Developments in Uganda**

107. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to abduct children for use as combatants and as sexual slaves in northern Uganda, although the total number of abductions has significantly reduced over time. The total number of abductions since January 2005 is estimated to have been approximately 1,500, significantly reducing to 222 over the first six months of 2006. For example, in May 2006, all 17 children reported to the United Nations country team to have been abducted were released within 48 hours. On 13 October 2005, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for LRA leader Joseph Kony and four others. The five are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, abduction, sexual enslavement, mutilation and forced recruitment of children. In May, June and July 2006, Mr. Kony met with southern Sudanese mediators attempting to broker an end to the hostilities between LRA and the Ugandan Government. The LRA leader reportedly said that he was committed to the peace process. Although President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni had given LRA leaders until 31 July 2006 to surrender and receive amnesty, on 15 July, Uganda's representatives agreed to send a delegation to meet with the LRA delegation in Juba, southern Sudan, and began negotiations. On 29 August 2006, a ceasefire between the Government of Uganda and LRA came into force. LRA has since begun to assemble in the Ri-Kwangba and Owiny Ki-Bul camps at the border with southern Sudan, and has agreed to release all women and children present in the group.

108. Although the Government of Uganda does not have an official policy to recruit children, children are present among the local defence units and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). There are also no signs of the release of the 1,128 children reported to have been mobilized into local defence units in late 2004 in Kitgum, Pader and parts of Teso. During the recent visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict to Uganda, the Government agreed to enter into an action plan and to strengthen the implementation of existing legal and policy frameworks on the recruitment and use of children.

109. Children were among the 131 civilians reported to the United Nations country team as having been killed by LRA between August 2005 and June 2006 in ambushes on roads and attacks on persons found outside internally displaced person camps. For example, in January 2006, a boy was killed by LRA after he was

captured close to Amida camp in Kitgum district. Children have also been killed by UPDF soldiers and local defence units. For example, in February 2006, an 8-year-old girl was killed by soldiers in Ngomoromo in Kitgum district, and 4 children were among 10 civilians killed by local defence units at Ogwete camp in Lira district in May 2006.

110. There are also many reported cases of sexual exploitation and sexual violence against girls by Government military personnel in internally displaced person camp settings. For example, in January 2006, a UPDF soldier was reported to have been responsible for the rape of a 17-year-old girl outside Pagal camp in Gulu district and in February 2006 a 17-year-old soldier was arrested and charged with rape in Lira Palwo in Pader. The Government has made a commitment to putting in place enforceable guidelines and training of military personnel to prevent such cases from recurring.

111. In June 2006, a monitoring and reporting task force on child's rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) was inaugurated in Uganda, co-chaired by UNICEF and OHCHR.

### **C. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel**

112. Building on the work of my Adviser on sexual exploitation and abuse, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations, efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel continue. The Secretariat, with the support of Member States, has developed a comprehensive strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse. Mandatory training for personnel and awareness-raising for the local population on sexual exploitation and abuse are key aspects of the prevention strategy. United Nations peacekeeping operations are reporting a high coverage of personnel trained with over 90 per cent of all personnel having received mandatory training in some missions.

113. To strengthen the Organization's ability to respond effectively to allegations of abuse, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations established a conduct and discipline team at its headquarters and in eight peace operations in November 2005. The headquarters team provides oversight on the state of conduct and discipline for all categories of United Nations personnel in all peace operations led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Conduct and discipline teams in peace operations provide advice to the head of mission on preventing and responding to all conduct and discipline issues involving all categories of personnel in the mission. Mission conduct and discipline teams play a key role in receiving allegations of misconduct, tracking misconduct cases and assisting the mission to develop and implement measures to prevent misconduct, enforce United Nations standards of conduct and provide remedial action to victims. For instance, child protection advisers assist the work of the mission team by incorporating messages on sexual exploitation and abuse in training tools on the rights of the child for contingent personnel, directing allegations of sexual misconduct from child rights and human rights organizations to the mission team and helping disseminate information on United Nations standards of conduct through their civil society contacts. Further, to provide support and assistance to victims of abuse by United Nations personnel, I

issued a draft policy statement and comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff. This policy provides for victim advocacy, referral systems and funding. It should be highlighted that the responsibility of troop-contributing countries to discipline their peacekeeping personnel is critical in this regard.

114. It is unfortunate that despite these efforts abuses continue. From 1 January 2004 to 18 August 2006, investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving 313 United Nations peacekeeping personnel resulted in 17 civilians being dismissed or their contracts not renewed and 17 police and 141 military peacekeeping personnel being repatriated on disciplinary grounds. As of 18 August 2006, 85 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving civilian (29), police (8) and military peacekeeping personnel (48) were reported to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations during 2006, and these cases are pending investigation.

115. Further, on 18 August 2006, the international media reported on allegations of a prostitution ring run by soldiers, and involving young girls, some as young as 15-years old, in the South Kivu area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is believed that some of these soldiers are United Nations peacekeepers. Investigations into these allegations are currently being conducted and disciplinary action will be taken against any United Nations personnel implicated.

## **V. Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism**

116. In its resolution 1612 (2005), the Security Council called for the implementation, within existing resources, of the monitoring and reporting mechanism outlined in my report (S/2005/72). It also requested an independent review of the mechanism to be reported to the Security Council by 31 July 2006. I have requested the Office of Internal Oversight Services to carry out this independent review. The review is ongoing and key partners are fully cooperating with the exercise. I will present the results of this review to the Security Council in November 2006.

117. In the year since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), steady progress has been made in establishing the monitoring and reporting mechanism in the seven situations that were designated as priorities for the first phase of implementation, namely, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia, the Sudan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The country-level task forces received significant guidance from United Nations Headquarters to facilitate implementation, including reporting templates, definitions of grave violations and other relevant technical materials. In addition, several country visits have been undertaken to brief and facilitate the start up of the work of these task forces. I have sent information from the monitoring and reporting mechanism through reports to the Security Council on the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan; and through the United Nations Secretariat "horizontal" reports on situations of concern to the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

118. The Working Group has been established and has held five formal meetings. The terms of reference of the Working Group and its workplan for 2006 were

adopted in May 2006. To date, the Working Group has considered reports on situations of concern in relation to children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Sudan, and has issued recommendations with respect to the report of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Council and other bodies within the United Nations system.

119. There have been significant challenges in undertaking such a complex multi-stakeholder initiative. These include serious difficulties of safe and unhindered access of United Nations and other humanitarian personnel for monitoring and reporting; ensuring buy-in and clarity on division of labour and complementarity of roles of partners within and outside the United Nations system; adequate levels of child protection expertise within United Nations entities and other partners; and adequate level of resources for sustainable long-term response and intervention programmes for children affected by armed conflict. Although country specificities, capacities and expectations of major stakeholders vary at country level, all possible efforts have been made to ensure provision of reliable, accurate and objective monitoring reports.

## **VI. Information on progress made in the development and implementation of the action plans**

120. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), calling for parties to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and reaffirmed by the Council in resolution 1612 (2005) calling for the parties concerned to develop and implement action plans without delay in close collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams, action plans and/or advocacy efforts have been made with the parties in the following situations of armed conflict.

121. In Burundi, there have been no official negotiations with FNL to halt the use and recruitment of children. However, the ONUB presented a document to FNL during the ceasefire negotiations in June 2006, requesting FNL to prioritize the demobilization of children. FNL has not signed the document. Further, in a note verbale dated 9 August 2006, ONUB requested the Government to release former FNL child combatants from the Randa detention centre, for immediate demobilization. As of the beginning of September 2006, the child combatants were still being held in Randa. Discussions with the Government continue on the need to release these children into the reintegration programme.

122. In Côte d'Ivoire, on 26 November 2005, FAFN committed to an action plan to handover all demobilized children to UNICEF and to prevent the recruitment and association of children with its forces. FAFN also agreed to designate focal points for the identification and demobilization of children in the camps as well as approve unimpeded access to camps, checkpoints and military barracks to verify the presence of children. FAFN has agreed with UNICEF to establish an independent verification commission to ensure compliance with the action plan. The work of the verification commission will be complemented by the regular monitoring activities of United Nations peacekeeping personnel. So far, FAFN has made all efforts to comply. Additional resources are required for the rehabilitation and reintegration programme for demobilized children. The other militia groups, FLGO, MILOCI,

APWé and UPRGO, with the exception of the armed civil defence groups in the west and GPP in Abidjan, have also engaged in dialogue with the United Nations, for the establishment of an action plan to end the use of child soldiers in government-controlled territories. On 14 September 2006, all four militia groups signed a regional action plan to end the use and recruitment of children. They have agreed to release all children within their ranks; cooperate with the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme on children's issues; take specific measures to prevent recruitment of children, define time-bound benchmarks for measuring progress and compliance, and to allow unhindered access for monitoring and verification of the action plan.

123. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF and MONUC met with FARDC in March 2005 in order to raise issues of the recruitment and use of children. Following this meeting, all regional commanders of FARDC were given instructions prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, stating that perpetrators would be prosecuted. FARDC military tribunals have also begun prosecuting cases of child recruitment by FARDC officers. Further, dialogue with militia leaders aimed at completing the withdrawal of all children present in military groups continue in the context of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan.

124. The submission of my country report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on 13 June 2006 (S/2006/389) was received positively by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Working Group made recommendations to the Security Council to consider targeted sanctions on the leaders of the Mouvement Révolutionnaire du Congo (MRC) for repeated violations of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict; and have referred rebel leader Laurent Nkunda to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations country task force, is currently engaged with its national institutions in implementing the recommendations outlined in the country report, a progress to be commended.

125. In Nepal, in June 2006, the United Nations country team met with the Government and CPN-M and requested the parties to nominate focal points to discuss monitoring and reporting on grave violations affecting children within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The nomination of focal points is still pending. To date, CPN-M has yet to engage in substantive dialogue on the release of children associated with their forces.

126. In Sri Lanka, in June 2003, the Government of Sri Lanka and LTTE endorsed an agreement committing to an action plan for children affected by war in the north east of Sri Lanka. Under the action plan, LTTE committed to ceasing all recruitment of children and to releasing all children already in its ranks. In a meeting between UNICEF and LTTE in January 2006, it was agreed that both parties would meet regularly to discuss technical issues about the release of children and measures to stop recruitment. Dialogue continues to take place between UNICEF and LTTE through this forum. LTTE also announced the formation of a child protection unit. However, a residual caseload of 1,464 children remain unaddressed as at 30 June 2006. In June 2006, following reports of recruitment by the Karuna group, UNICEF



met with the political wing of the Karuna faction, TMVP, to remind it of its obligations not to recruit children and to seek the release of underage recruits. This dialogue is ongoing, but the Karuna faction has yet to provide concrete commitments.

127. In Somalia, as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the United Nations country team met with ICU, and will include the issues of child recruitment in its further dialogues with both sides to the conflict. UNICEF and its partners have just finalized a five-year strategy for advocacy and intervention for children associated with armed groups, which will guide future interaction with those responsible for involving children in armed conflict. To date, no concrete interventions on this issue have been made with the existing political entities.

128. In southern Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) child protection advisers have been using the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee and its seven subsidiary area joint military committees to engage the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA in dialogue on abuses against children and difficulties in releasing children from military units, in particular those newly incorporated from other armed groups. In Darfur, since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, UNICEF and UNMIS have been in dialogue with SLA (Minawi) and SLA (Wahid) regarding the need to end recruitment of children and to release children who are associated with those armed groups. SLA (Minawi) committed itself to facilitate the work of UNICEF and provide its full support in releasing and reintegrating children associated with its forces. However, recent internal fighting within the SLA (Minawi) faction has hindered follow-up action. It is important to note that the ability of the United Nations to initiate and engage in dialogue with armed groups on grave child rights violations is often hindered by access restrictions and fluid chains of command in some groups.

129. In Uganda, the recent mission of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict resulted in: (a) the Government agreeing to work with UNICEF and OHCHR to set up an action plan for the prevention of recruitment; (b) the removal of child combatants in local defence units and UPDF; (c) the strengthening of measures by the Government with regard to taking disciplinary action against armed forces personnel who knowingly recruit children in the local defence units and UPDF, as well as strengthening existing procedures for access of designated personnel from UNICEF, OHCHR and the Uganda Human Rights Commission to enter military installations for the purposes of verifying presence of children in the armed forces; and (d) the Government undertaking to seriously consider enacting criminal legislation to prevent and punish civilian abettors of child recruitment.

## **VII. Information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers**

130. The Security Council has repeatedly called upon me to ensure that the need for and the number and roles of child protection advisers are systematically assessed during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation. In this regard, in resolution 1612 (2005), paragraph 20 (d), the Council requested me to include information on the assessment of the role and activities of child protection advisers in my report on the implementation of the resolution. Pursuant to that request, the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is undertaking

a study of the child protection experience in peace operations. This study seeks to address the following specific questions: (a) are child protection advisers effective?; (b) in what ways have they made an impact?; and (c) how can the overall impact of child protection advisers be strengthened?

131. Preliminary findings from the study indicate that child protection advisers are effective in two major areas: in gathering information for monitoring and reporting purposes; and in mainstreaming child protection within missions and through mission training programmes. Mainstreaming child protection within the mission reinforces the monitoring and reporting aspect by creating a knowledge base and expertise on child protection. Serving and former child protection advisers who participated in the study, as well as child protection partners, highlighted monitoring and reporting as an area where child protection advisers have been effective and have made a positive impact. The increased awareness of children and armed conflict issues among United Nations civilian police, military observers and the military, all of whom operate on a regular basis in front-line areas, where children are found in harm's way, greatly enhances the work of child protection advisers by providing an extended network of available resources to monitor violations.

132. The findings also indicate that there is room for improvement in a number of areas. First is the overall understanding of the child protection adviser function within missions, especially among senior mission leadership. There is also a tendency for other civilian personnel to see child protection advisers as providers of humanitarian assistance rather than advocates for improved policy and approaches towards children and armed conflict. Second is the placement of the child protection function within the "pillars" of the mission structure, concluding that the child protection function is often not optimally located within that structure; the actual location of the child protection function tends to vary across missions, with child protection advisers sometimes subsumed within other sections, pointing to a lack of a clear Department of Peacekeeping Operations policy consensus about where child protection advisers should be located. Individual child protection advisers have on certain occasions interpreted their mandate broadly, sometimes leading to a lack of common understanding with key partners. This should be addressed in a structured way with all major stakeholders as a priority. Third is the need for stronger child protection policy support within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the headquarters level.

133. The study on child protection experience in peace operations is expected to be completed within the next two months, and will provide a comprehensive assessment of the impact and effectiveness of child protection advisers as well as a number of specific recommendations.

## VIII. Recommendations

134. **I recommend that the Security Council consider expanding its focus and give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern; and to give equal weight to all categories of grave violations beyond the recruitment and use of child soldiers to include the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access for children.**

135. I encourage the Security Council to continue to call upon parties to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and to expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern.

136. I call upon donors to ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to national Governments, the United Nations and partners, for the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces, and to develop relevant and effective programmatic action that reinforces the rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for children, ensuring long-term sustainability and success of such interventions.

137. I welcome the Security Council's continuing consideration of effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in armed conflict in defiance of Council resolutions.

138. I encourage State parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to take measures to support the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children for armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, in particular by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict; enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits by law the recruitment of children under the age of 15 years into armed forces/groups and their direct participation in hostilities.

## **IX. Annexed lists**

139. The present report contains two annexes.<sup>2</sup> Annex I lists parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II lists parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

140. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the annexed lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

*Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, the International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.
- <sup>2</sup> The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Burundi**

Parti de libération du Peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-Forces Nationales pour la Libération (FNL) — Agathon Rwasa

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Côte d'Ivoire**

1. Armed militia groups affiliated with the Presidential camp
  - (a) Front de libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO)
  - (b) Mouvement ivoirien de libération ouest de Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI)
  - (c) Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé)
  - (d) Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO)
2. Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (FAFN)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

*This party has also been responsible for the abductions of children in the reporting period.*

3. Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI)
4. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga who have not integrated into FARDC
5. Non-integrated FARDC elements loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda

*This party has also been responsible for the abductions of children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Myanmar**

1. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)
2. Karenni Army (KA)
3. Tatmadaw Kyi
4. United Wa State Army

**Parties in Somalia**

1. Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT)  
*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against hospitals in the reporting period.*
2. Union of the Islamic Courts (ICU)  
*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in the Sudan**

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan
  - (a) Darfur Government supporting militias, also called Janjaweed  
*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
  - (b) Police forces (camel police)
  - (c) Sudan Armed Forces  
*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions of children and the denial of humanitarian access in the reporting period.*
2. Former rebel parties who have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement  
Sudan Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M) (Minawi)  
*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
3. Parties under the control of the Government of Southern Sudan  
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)  
*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*
4. Parties under the control of both the Government of the Sudan and the Government of Southern Sudan  
Joint Integrated Units of the Sudan Armed Forces and SPLA

5. Groups of tribally linked armed civilians involved in inter-communal fighting or confrontations with parties

The White Army (Lou Nuer)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period*

6. Other groups active in Sudanese territory

- (a) Chadian opposition forces

- (b) Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Chad**

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

*This party has also been responsible for abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

*This party has also been responsible for abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

3. Illegal armed groups not participating in the demobilization process

(a) Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare

(b) Frente Cacique Pipinta

*These parties have also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Nepal**

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)

*This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming, and abducting children and attacks against schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
3. New People's Army (NPA)

#### **Parties in Sri Lanka**

1. Karuna faction

*This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.*



2. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

*This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Uganda**

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Government armed forces and defence units

(a) Local defence units

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming children in the reporting period.*

(b) Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing, maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

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## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/48), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the further progress in the implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). In accordance with the Council's request, the report includes information on compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law and other grave violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict.<sup>1</sup> The report also includes information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism; information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans (called for in para. 7 of resolution 1612 (2005)); and information on the mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), the report covers compliance in ending the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of

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<sup>1</sup> Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.



humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict.

3. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions, and United Nations country teams are the primary sources of information for the report.

4. References to reports, cases, incidents, and so on in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where access to, obtaining or independently verifying information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

5. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for children and armed conflict was guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence.<sup>2</sup> In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

## II. Cross-cutting issues of concern

6. Recruitment of children and internal displacement are closely linked, such as in Colombia, as too often displacement becomes the only avenue left for families in certain areas to avoid their children's recruitment by armed groups. On the other hand, evidence suggests that refugee and internally displaced person camps are often prime recruiting grounds for child soldiers owing to the convenient concentration of vulnerable children. The lack of security around these camps is said to be an important factor that increases the likelihood of child recruitment. During the reporting period, there have been reports that the Karuna faction have abducted and recruited children from internally displaced person camps in Sri Lanka. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, children have been recruited from internally displaced person camps in North Kivu Province by forces loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda during the recent upsurge in violence.

7. The movement of armed groups across borders to recruit children from refugee camps continues to be alarming. Along the Sudan-Chad border, both Sudanese and Chadian armed groups are recruiting children from Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad, while Chadian refugee children are being recruited by Sudanese rebel groups in Darfur. Since January 2007, there has also been a surge in the recruitment and use of Congolese and Rwandan children in North Kivu from refugee camps and communities in Rwanda by forces loyal to Laurent Nkunda, as well as Ugandan

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, common article 2 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949, article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; J. Pictet, editor, *Commentary to the IV Geneva Convention* (1958), p. 20; and *Tadić*, IT-94, International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber, 2 October 1995.

children from the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Uganda border areas. The transportation of vulnerable children by both the Government and rebel groups across borders during armed conflict constitutes one of the worst forms of child trafficking.

8. Girls, and sometimes boys, are targeted with various forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, during armed conflicts. The perpetration of sexual violence against children by State and non-State parties to conflict is prohibited by international humanitarian law and is a violation of human rights. In Darfur, rape is a method of warfare used by armed groups to deliberately humiliate and to force displacement of girls and their families. In the Great Lakes region, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights indicated appalling levels of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, 60 per cent of the cases recorded in Kisangani, northern Democratic Republic of the Congo, involved victims between the ages of 11 and 17. It is imperative that perpetrators of acts of rape and other sexual violence which leave a long-term, devastating impact on the victims are prosecuted in accordance with the gravity of such crimes. The recent decision of the International Criminal Court to open an investigation in the Central African Republic on allegations of rape and other sexual crimes committed in the context of armed conflict between the Government and rebel forces is an important step towards that end.

9. Increasingly, we are also encountering cases of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups in violation of international standards, for example in Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel and the Philippines. Many of the detained children are subjected to ill treatment, torture, forceful interrogation and deprivation of food and education. The children also lack recourse to prompt and appropriate legal assistance, and usually are not separated from adults. In certain situations, some of these children have been used as guides and informers for Government military operations, usually under coercion. During the reporting period, some children have been released owing to United Nations advocacy efforts, such as in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; however, many children remain in detention centres, local prisons, interrogation centres and holding camps.

10. Systematic and deliberate attacks on schoolchildren, teachers and school buildings have, since the last reporting period, escalated in certain conflict situations, warranting the increased attention of, and action by, the international community. In Afghanistan, insurgents continue to burn down schools, especially girls' schools, in an effort to intimidate and prevent girls from accessing education. In Iraq, students are also targets of violent crimes and sectarian killings, especially in Baghdad and Mosul. Killings of teachers, closures of schools and children's fear of being abducted have contributed to a dramatic decrease in school attendance rates.

11. Despite the continuing commitment of the Government of Thailand to ensuring children's access to education, of increasing concern are the disruptions in schools experienced in the south of the country owing to violent attacks on schools, children and teachers by armed elements. In March 2007, three students were killed and seven injured in an attack at a boarding school in Songkhla, and five primary school students were injured when their bus was fired at in Narathiwat. So far, 73 teachers have been killed and more than 100 schools have been burned down, including 11 schools in June 2007 alone, in Raman district, Yala Province. Efforts by the

Government to keep educational facilities available for all children in the region are commendable.

12. Since the last reporting period, important precedents have been set to end impunity for crimes against children, particularly the recruitment and use of children by Government forces or armed groups. These include the confirmation of charges by the International Criminal Court against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, founder and leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots in the Ituri region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the conscription and enlistment of children under the age of 15 and the use of children for active participation in hostilities and the arrest warrants issued by the Court for five senior members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including its leader, Joseph Kony, who is charged with 33 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the forcible enlistment and use of children in hostilities. Furthermore, for the first time, a former head of State, Charles Taylor of Liberia, is undergoing trial in The Hague before the Special Court for Sierra Leone for 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conscripting or enlisting children into armed forces or groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities. Sentencing by the Special Court for Sierra Leone of Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu of the Armed Force Revolutionary Council and the conviction of Allieu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces militia for the recruitment and use of child soldiers send an important message that such crimes against children will not be tolerated and that those who engage in the practice will be brought to justice. Notwithstanding international efforts, national authorities must also promptly commence appropriate national prosecutions for grave crimes against children.

13. The use of indiscriminate weapons, such as cluster munitions during attacks in areas of civilian concentration, has a severe impact on civilians, particularly children, even long after the conflicts have ended. In southern Lebanon, for example, children continue to be injured and killed by the large number of unexploded submunitions remaining from the 2006 conflict. It is imperative that a legally binding international instrument be developed to prohibit the use of cluster munitions which cause harm to civilians.

14. There has been less focus on the reintegration of children associated with armed groups than on disarmament and demobilization in post-conflict situations. As the prospects for recovery in most countries also depend on the successful reintegration of these children, peacebuilding efforts should address children's protection and reintegration needs in the initial planning and implementation of peacebuilding operations. Long-term recovery and development programmes, linked to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, should be community based, in order to provide sustainable and successful reintegration for these children.

### **III. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations against children**

15. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from October 2006 to August 2007. Reports on children and armed conflict in Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda were also submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the reporting period.

16. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II to the present report, and named in the body of my 2006 report (A/61/529-S/2006/826), has been assessed with respect to whether they have ceased recruiting and using child soldiers and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children. Progress made by the parties is also assessed with respect to whether they have engaged in dialogue with the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting or United Nations country teams (as called for in Security Council resolution 1539 (2004)), and whether through that dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes or the signing of peace agreements, they have developed and implemented action plans to end the use of child soldiers and released all children from their ranks.

17. Parties who fully comply with terms set forth in action plans and undertake verified measures to address all the other grave violations for which they have been cited, to the satisfaction of the country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting or United Nations country teams and the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, will be considered for de-listing from the annexes. De-listing does not in any way negate the requirement for continued monitoring of formerly listed parties by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting or the United Nations country team. Should it be determined that de-listed parties recruit and use children at a later point in time or fail to allow continuous and unhindered access to the United Nations for verification, they will be re-listed onto the annexes and the Security Council alerted to non-compliance.

18. A noteworthy achievement has been realized with the parties to conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, where no new cases of recruitment of children have been recorded since the last reporting period. The Forces armées des Forces nouvelles (now Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces nouvelles, FDS-FN) and the four armed militias, namely, the Front pour la libération du Grand Ouest (FLGO), the Mouvement ivoirien de libération de L'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI), the Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé (APWé) and the Union patriotique de résistance du Grand Ouest (UPRGO) in Côte d'Ivoire have ceased recruitment and taken concerted measures to identify and release children associated with their forces for rehabilitation since signing action plans in October 2005 and September 2006, respectively.

## **A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

### **Developments in Afghanistan**

19. The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated during the reporting period, with children continuing to be the victims of the conflict between anti-Government elements, including the Taliban, and national and international security forces, namely, the United States-led Coalition as well as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF). Weak governance and judicial system, as well as the inadequate coverage by the Afghan security forces in insurgency-affected areas, have contributed to the lack of protection afforded to children affected by the conflict. Indiscriminate attacks and disproportionate use of force by the Taliban and other armed elements, including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices, directed at national and international forces have caused a high number of child deaths and injuries. Many of these attacks have taken place in densely populated areas or in the

vicinity of popular gatherings. From January to July 2007, there were at least 950 civilian deaths as a result of insurgency-related violence, out of which the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan has documented at least 49 deaths and 19 injuries to children. On 15 June 2007, a suicide attack against an ISAF convoy in Uruzgan Province that was distributing sweets and water to local children resulted in the deaths of four girls and seven boys, aged between 8 and 15 years.

20. Children have also become casualties in military operations against the insurgency, including air strikes by international military forces. Air strikes have in some cases missed their targets and fallen on civilian areas, killing children. On 9 March 2007, nine civilians in Kapisa Province, including four children, were killed in a Coalition military air strike. On 8 May 2007, 21 civilians, including women and children, were reportedly killed in Helmand Province as a result of air strikes that supported ISAF operations. ISAF acknowledged, at the Protection of Civilians Workshop in Kabul in August 2007, that mistakes had been made during operations and informed the United Nations that it continued to adjust operations to minimize civilian casualties.

21. Unexploded ordnance has also caused deaths of and injuries to children during the reporting period. Between August 2006 and July 2007, 295 mine and unexploded ordnance accidents involving children, which account for over 60 per cent of the total number of accidents, resulted in at least 59 deaths.

22. The United Nations remains disturbed by reports of children being used to perpetrate attacks and, in some cases, as human shields by the Taliban and other insurgents. There have been reports that the Taliban have recruited and used children in their activities, such as suicide attacks. This is a relatively new phenomenon, and the United Nations has documented several high-profile cases of children involved in attacks. In February 2007, a boy estimated to be between 12 and 15 years old killed himself and a guard and injured four civilians as he attempted to gain entry to a police station in Khost city, Khost Province. Additionally, a 14-year-old boy was caught wearing a suicide vest on his way to assassinate the Khost provincial governor. No commitments have yet been made by any of these groups to end this practice.

23. Attacks against schools by the Taliban and other anti-Government elements continued, and security incidents affecting schools and threats against students and teachers documented by the United Nations remain a serious concern. Between August 2006 and July 2007, there were at least 133 documented incidents of school attacks. These caused at least 10 reported deaths among students, mainly in the southern provinces. At least 100 attacks in the south were reported in the first six months of 2007. There have been deliberate attacks on female students and women teachers, and girls' schools are particularly targeted. On 12 June 2007, two gunmen killed two schoolgirls and injured six others as they left the Qalay Meadan Girls' School, in Qala-e Saeed Habib area, Logar Province. According to the Ministry of Education, 384 of the total 721 schools in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan and Zabul are currently closed.

### **Developments in Burundi**

24. The reporting period was characterized by political instability and persistent tensions between the Government and political opposition parties following the President's unilateral Cabinet reshuffle on 13 July 2007. It was equally characterized by the impasse in the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire

Agreement signed by the Government and the armed rebel group Forces nationales de libération (FNL)-Agathon Rwasa on 7 September 2006. Children continue to be associated with FNL. The ongoing recruitment of children by the two factions of FNL-Agathon Rwasa and the smaller break away Jean Bosco (Gateyeri) was of serious concern. However, the FNL-Jean Bosco (Gateyeri) faction is now defunct. From October 2006 to July 2007, 85 cases of recruitment of children were reported throughout the country, with 60 cases occurring in the months following the signing of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement. The upsurge in recruitment by FNL was allegedly aimed at enhancing their bargaining power should further peace negotiations take place, and enabling them to claim increased financial benefits during the demobilization and reintegration phases. Some 48 of the 60 children were students from Gashasa, Rumonge, Marangara and Gashikanwa, in the Bururi and Ngozi Provinces. Most of those children have been released or have defected from FNL ranks owing to the stalled implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and resulting delays in the distribution of demobilization benefits. On a positive note, 26 children, aged 14 to 18 years, who were previously detained in the former demobilization camp in Randa were released in March 2007 and reintegrated with their families and communities prior to the visit of my Special Representative.

25. The detention of children remains a concern. Progress has nevertheless been achieved during the reporting period, with the release of some children arrested for association with FNL. From October 2006 to July 2007, 49 cases of detention of children accused of participation in armed groups have been reported, notably in the provinces of Bujumbura Mairie and Bujumbura Rural. That represents a 35 per cent increase in such cases since the last reporting period. Many of them had been incarcerated for several months without trial or legal assistance. More than 65 children, held in the Mpimba prison in Bujumbura owing to their former association with FNL, were released in March 2007.

26. As a result of the ceasefire, the number of children killed and maimed in armed clashes between members of the armed forces (Forces de défense nationale (FDN)) and FNL from September 2006 to August 2007 decreased by 30 per cent in comparison with the last reporting period. A total of 40 cases of children killed and maimed by FDN and FNL was reported, with 80 per cent of the victims killed by grenade explosions during looting operations. On 11 December 2006, five children were killed in Taba, Gitega district, when three FDN soldiers threw a grenade into their residence.

27. Rape and other sexual violence against children by members of FNL and some members of the Security Services is also of great concern. More than 30 such cases were reported during the period, 80 per cent of which involved girls. On 6 January 2007, a 4-year-old girl was raped by an FDN soldier in Mugongomana, Bujumbura district. On 19 February, a 16-year-old girl was raped by FNL elements in Nyanza-Lac, Mkamba district.

### **Developments in the Central African Republic**

28. There have been numerous reported cases of recruitment of children by the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) rebel group, which controls parts of north-eastern Central African Republic. During UFDR attacks on the positions of the Government Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) and French Army in Birao on 3 and 4 March, some of the rebels were identified as former students of the Birao governmental secondary school. Many of the children, between the ages of 12 and 17 years, who participated in these attacks, were killed.



Further, two out of three schools were partially destroyed by FACA and UFDR following the attack.

29. On 16 June, a tripartite action plan between UFDR, the Government of the Central African Republic and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the reduction and elimination of the recruitment and utilization of child soldiers and their demobilization and reintegration was signed, following which the first group of approximately 200 children were symbolically released. Earlier, in April and May, over 450 children associated with UFDR, 75 per cent of whom were boys aged 13 to 17 years, were demobilized. All these children have since been reintegrated into their families and communities. Approximately 75 per cent of the children had participated in military operations and combat for a sustained period, averaging from nine months to a year, while some had been with armed groups, later associated with UFDR for three years. Ten per cent of the children are as young as 10 years old and were used mainly for logistical support during UFDR operations in 2006 and 2007. It is claimed that the last remaining group of 450 to 500 children had been released to their communities as at September 2007, although this had not yet been verified by the joint Government-UNICEF-UFDR monitoring structure established under the tripartite action plan.

30. A UNICEF mission in June 2007 also confirmed that there were approximately 400 to 500 children, including girls, associated with the rebel groups, the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD) and Front démocratique pour le peuple centrafricain (FDPC), both active in the north-western region. APRD and FDPC are increasingly resorting to forced recruitment of children in their areas of influence. In March and again in June 2007, APRD requested for assistance from the United Nations country team to demobilize child soldiers in its ranks. Although informal dialogue with APRD to prevent recruitment and to demobilize and reintegrate children associated with its ranks is under way, formal negotiations are hampered by insecurity in the north-western region.

31. Reprisals by FACA IN villages suspected of assisting rebels in areas such as Bemal-Boguila, Kabo, Batangafo and Kaga-Bandoro have resulted in massive displacement, death and injury among the civilian population, particularly children. During the reporting period, UNICEF and United Nations partners recorded approximately 1,389 houses, 7 schools and 3 health centres partially or completely destroyed, torched or looted in the areas of Kaga-Bandoro and Ouandago and 203 houses, 2 schools and 1 health centre destroyed in the areas of Kaga-Bandoro and Dekoa.

32. Owing to the heavy presence of rebel groups in the areas of the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago "triangle", there has been a 75 per cent increase in sexual and gender-based violence reported, compared with the number of cases reported in 2006. According to UNICEF, 15 per cent of women and girls in the northern region of the country have been raped. United Nations partners also report that between Batangafo and Bokamgaye, many young girls are forcibly taken as wives for rebels and forced to perform sexual favours in exchange for movement across the numerous checkpoints set up by these rebel groups.

### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

33. Following the signing of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement on 4 March 2007 between President Laurent Gbagbo and Secretary-General of the Forces nouvelles, Guillaume Soro, the "zone of confidence" separating the rebel-held North

and the Government-controlled South was dismantled, creating a new momentum for the peace process.

34. During the reporting period, there was no substantiated evidence of active recruitment and use of children by armed groups. The United Nations has been able to regularly monitor the association of children with fighting forces as part of the implementation of action plans agreed with FDS-FN and four armed militias, namely, FLGO, MILOCI, APWé and UPRGO. FDS-FN renewed its commitment to the action plan to put an end to such association of children with their forces. On 26 January 2007, FDS-FN submitted a letter to UNICEF requesting support to complete the implementation of the action plan, followed by the immediate action by FDS-FN to complete the identification of remaining children associated with their forces. On 14 August 2007, FDS-FN submitted a report to my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire detailing action taken to finalize the implementation of the action plan, where 85 children, including 27 girls, were identified.

35. Similarly, the four militia groups have worked closely with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, UNICEF, the newly integrated command centre, which is responsible under the Ouagadougou Agreement for the disarmament and demobilization phases of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the Programme national de réinsertion et de réhabilitation communautaire (PNRRC), which oversees the reintegration programmes, to implement their commitments under the action plan, which included the designation of focal points by the militias. In April 2007, the focal points began the process of identifying children associated with their forces in Guiglo, Toulépleu, Bloléquin, Tai, Zagné, Duékoué and Bangolo. This resulted in the identification and registration of 204 children, including 84 girls, all of whom are now being assisted through UNICEF programmes.

36. As it has been determined that the FDS-FN and the four militia groups have implemented the action plans and continue to allow unhindered access to the United Nations to monitor compliance, they shall be removed from the lists annexed to my report this year. However, the country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, supported by a verification commission, will continue to monitor the groups' compliance with the action plans, to ensure that continuous efforts are made to prevent the recruitment and use of children and greater emphasis is accorded to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been released.

37. While there has been a decline in reported cases of killings, children continue to lose their lives as a direct result of the conflict environment. Many of the killings are not investigated, and the perpetrators, who may be private members of the community or uncontrolled elements of the various armed groups, are rarely identified. Incidents of rape and other grave sexual violence against children also remain alarmingly high, particularly owing to the prevailing culture of impunity. The Government and FDS-FN have been slow to undertake any rigorous and timely investigations to prosecute the perpetrators.

#### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

38. There has been a decrease in the number of cases of recruitment of children in the reporting period, which can be attributed to several factors, including the progress made in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for children, the army integration process, the decrease in the number of active fighting zones and persistent lobbying by child protection

networks against the recruitment of children. Despite this overall trend, all the parties to conflict listed in my 2006 report (A/61/529-S/2006/826) continue to recruit, use and abduct children. The presence of children in the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) integrated and non-integrated brigades remains high, particularly in the Ituri district and the two Kivu Provinces. In South Kivu, the presence of at least 25 children, including girls, among the ranks of FARDC integrated 3rd and 8th brigades has been documented. On 4 January 2007, following the fighting in North Kivu in November 2006, the Government reached an agreement with rebel commander Laurent Nkunda, allowing for the *mixage* (integration) of Nkunda's troops with FARDC units. The *mixage* resulted in the de facto presence of many children among the ranks of the new FARDC mixed brigades and their use for active combat against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). Despite the agreement, Nkunda and troops loyal to him rebelled at the end of August 2007, and fighting with FARDC troops resumed. An increase in child recruitment by Nkunda and forces aligned with him has been reported since. Several schools in the area have also been closed owing to attempts by Nkunda elements to forcibly recruit students.

39. Reports also indicate that increased recruitment activities were carried out in North Kivu, as well as in Rwanda and Uganda, prior to and throughout the *mixage* process. This surge appears to be linked to the strategy of commanders loyal to Laurent Nkunda to increase the number of troops to be mixed and the strength of forces prior to engaging in combat operations against FDLR and the Mai-Mai in North Kivu. Children who escaped or were separated indicated that recruitment was ongoing in the returnee settlements of Buhambwe, Masisi territory, the Kiziba and Byumba refugee camps in Rwanda, in the towns of Byumba and Mutura in Rwanda and in the town of Bunagana on the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. On 29 January 2007, a 16-year-old boy from Uganda stated that he had been forcibly recruited along with five other Ugandan children in Bunagana by Adjutant chief "Eric" and Major Janvier, who operate under the command of Colonel Saddam of the 836th battalion, loyal to Laurent Nkunda. Following his recruitment, the boy, together with other newly recruited children, was taken to Mushake for the *mixage* of the FARDC Charlie Brigade. As at 30 August 2007, 13 Congolese children recruited in the refugee camps in Rwanda and 17 Rwandan children, 11 recruited in Rwanda and 6 recruited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, had been separated from the FARDC mixed brigades. In addition, a group known as the Association des jeunes réfugiés congolais, reportedly linked to Laurent Nkunda, had been actively recruiting Congolese ethnic Tutsi children and young people in the Kibuye camp since July 2006.

40. In May 2007 the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) undertook a joint assessment visit with the Rwandan authorities to the refugee camps in Rwanda to verify reports of child recruitment and devise protective and responsive mechanisms, such as enhancing sensitization of the refugee community with more involvement by the local authorities, improving the control of exit of children from the camps and ensuring that those accused of recruiting children were charged and brought to justice. The Rwandan Government has undertaken an investigation following the recruitment of eight children from the Kiziba refugee camp on 24 July 2007, allegedly for deployment to South Kivu. The outcome of the investigation is pending.

41. In Ituri, although numbers are lower than in the previous reporting period, child recruitment by the Front des nationalistes et intégrationnistes (FNI) and the Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI) continues. In particular, during the

third phase of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Ituri, which began on 4 August 2007, more than 40 children were reportedly re-enrolled by forces loyal to Peter Karim Udaga. Although 2,900 ex-combatants had been demobilized as at 16 August 2007, it is estimated that FNI, FRPI and the Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC) still have 1,500 elements, including children, that did not surrender. FNI has also been responsible for actively obstructing the separation of children during the disarmament process.

42. Mai-Mai groups still active in North and South Kivu continue to use children. There are reports of child recruitment by Colonel Abdou Panda, former commander of the 121st Mai-Mai brigade based in Lubarika, Ruzizi Plain, South Kivu. In December 2006, 107 children were released from his group at the *brassage* centre of Luberizi. In May 2007, the presence of 30 children, including girls, among the Mai-Mai group Baleine, under the command of Colonel Jackson, was reported in Bingi, North Kivu. Further, owing to the recent phase of conflict in North Kivu, recruitment of children by Mai-Mai groups has also escalated. In August 2007, more than 50 children have been recruited by Mai-Mai groups in Nyamilima, Rutshuru territory, North Kivu. There are also reports of children being held by Mai-Mai groups in Katanga and Maniema Provinces.

43. A decrease in the number of incidents involving the killing and maiming of children was recorded during the reporting period, in comparison with the preceding year. However, children continue to be victims of attacks and clashes between FARDC integrated and non-integrated units, armed groups in Ituri and FDLR in North and South Kivu. In an incident on 26 and 27 May 2007, the killing of 17 people, including 8 children, and the wounding of at least 28 people, including 21 children, was reportedly committed by FDLR/Rasta in the villages of Nyalbuze, Muhungu and Chihamba in South Kivu.

44. Despite all the initiatives undertaken by the Government to counter sexual violence, including the adoption of two national laws on 20 July 2006, the number of incidents of rape and other sexual violence against children remains extremely high. From October 2006 to July 2007, 10,381 survivors of sexual violence, 37 per cent of whom are children, were identified by United Nations partners in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; a 4 per cent increase since the previous reporting period. In a one-year period until June 2007, at least 1,400 child victims of rape and other sexual violence were registered and received assistance from the United Nations and its partners in South Kivu alone, where the main perpetrators include elements of FARDC, the police and armed elements of FDLR.

45. A total of 4,182 children, including 629 girls, were separated from armed forces and groups in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the reporting period. In Ituri, 2,472 children, including 564 girls, were separated from MRC, FRPI and FNI militia forces and 10 boys were separated from Mai-Mai forces in the remote area of Opienga, Oriental Province; in North Kivu, 1,374 children, including 52 girls, were separated primarily from mixed brigades loyal to Laurent Nkunda and FARDC and Mai-Mai militia forces; and in South Kivu, 336 children, including 13 girls, were separated primarily from Mai-Mai militia forces and troops associated with Laurent Nkunda.

#### **Developments in Haiti**

46. It should be noted that, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1780 (2007), the Council recognizes the grave violations committed against children affected by the armed violence in Haiti and requests their continued protection, as set out in

resolution 1612 (2005). Following military operations by the Haitian National Police (HNP) and the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) since December 2006, as well as the arrest of several gang leaders and the dismantling of armed entities, security conditions have improved, especially in areas affected by armed violence, such as Cité Soleil and Martissant in Port-au-Prince. These armed entities vary in organizational structure, activities, motivation and degree of political affiliation. According to MINUSTAH, although these groups are currently essentially criminal in nature, their character and motivations may shift between criminal and political depending on the specific time and circumstances and may pose a threat to peace and security.

47. The situation of children in areas under the influence of armed entities is critical. However, it has been challenging to ascribe definite responsibility for violations to specific parties owing to a large number of actors involved, fragmentation of groups and the difficulty of distinguishing the identity of one group from another. However, the United Nations at the country level has reliable information that the parties named below have been involved in the recruitment and use of children.

48. During the reporting period, there were confirmed reports that children have been used as messengers, spotters, attackers and porters to transfer and hide weapons, as well as for kidnappings. Moreover, children have been directly targeted as a group. In February 2007, Base de Bois-Neuf, controlled by Belony Pierre in Cité Soleil, used two boys, aged between 8 and 10 years, to ignite gas tanks near the “Blue House” occupied by MINUSTAH troops. Also in Cité Soleil, United Nations sources observed that Base de Boston, controlled by Evens Jeune, used children in various capacities as outlined above. On 11 July 2007, a 17-year-old boy, suspected of being a group member, was arrested by HNP in Grand Ravine, Martissant, an area under the control of Base Galil, headed by Wilkens Pierre, and Armée Ti-Machèt. In Gonaïves, a 16-year-old boy associated with the group Raboteau, controlled by Winter Étienne and Ferdinand Wilfort, was arrested by HNP and his weapon confiscated.

49. In the reporting period, 12 children, including a girl, were killed and 8 children, including 4 boys and 4 girls, were injured in Cité Soleil and Martissant. In Gonaïves, four children were killed and five injured in deliberate attacks by armed entities. In December 2006, three girls, aged 13, 14 and 16, were shot in Raboteau. In the same month in Raboteau, a 13-year-old girl was injured by a gunshot and then burned alive; and on 19 July and 5 August 2007, two boys, including one 10-year-old, were decapitated in Ouanaminthe and Mirebalais areas, respectively. Armed entities in Cité Soleil have also used schools as bases during the armed confrontations with MINUSTAH forces at the end of January and the beginning of February 2007.

50. There were approximately 119 cases of child abductions in the reporting period. Although the majority of these cases occurred in Port-au-Prince in 2006, an increasing number of cases were reported from the regions in 2007. In the autumn of 2006, some students were specifically targeted by kidnappers. The situation deteriorated on 13 and 14 December 2006, when 30 students between the ages of 13 and 15 years, were abducted while travelling on school buses near Cité Soleil.

51. Gang rape and other sexual violence against girls and women are still extensively perpetrated by groups in Cité Soleil, Martissant and Carrefour Feuilles. Owing to the lack of official and aggregated data, the number of cases reported is indicative of a larger phenomenon of sexual violence against girls in Haiti.

According to a United Nations partner, approximately 100 cases of child rape were registered from October 2006 to January 2007. Among these, a 3-year-old girl was raped by armed men from Cité Soleil on 9 November, and two cases of rape allegedly perpetrated by members of Evens's group were registered in January 2007. From January to June 2007, it was reported that 54 children, 10 of whom were victims of gang rapes, were raped by members of armed and criminal entities. On 7 May 2007, a 15-year-old girl was raped by six armed men of Bois Neuf, and on 10 May 2007, a 17-year-old girl was raped by six armed men in Grand Ravine, controlled by Base Galil.

### **Developments in Iraq**

52. The prevailing security situation makes obtaining information on violations against children increasingly difficult. Most of the available information is extracted from a wide range of different sources but can rarely be sufficiently verified. It remains clear, however, that Iraqi children suffer most in the ongoing violence. Statistics from United Nations partners and Iraqi authorities suggest that approximately half of all Iraqi refugees are children, as are as many as 38 to 40 per cent of internally displaced persons.

53. There are some indications of children being recruited as combatants by non-State armed groups, such as insurgency organizations. A recent concern is the reported new tactic by insurgent group militias, Al-Qaida and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups, of using children as decoys in suicide car bombings. On 21 March 2007, reports described an incident in which two children were used to facilitate the passing of a car with explosive materials through a Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I) checkpoint in the al-Shaab neighbourhood of Adhamiya district in north-eastern Baghdad. The car was then blown up with the children inside, killing five people, including the two children, and injuring seven others. A MNF-I spokesperson confirmed the incident. MNF-I has publicly reported that insurgents in Anbar Province have been using children to plant roadside bombs and act as spotters for detonation teams. On 21 March 2007, a 14-year-old boy on a bicycle reportedly detonated his suicide vest on an Iraqi police patrol in central Haditha, killing three policemen. Owing to ongoing security operations under the "Baghdad Security Plan" as well as the increasing use of children by insurgents, the number of children, aged between 12 and 17 years, in MNF-I detention has significantly increased, from less than 300 in December 2006 to almost 800 in August 2007, with some 30 children alleged to be active insurgents. These children are provided with education programmes and vocational training.

54. Sectarian violence, fuelled by insurgent and militia action and various criminal gangs throughout the reporting period, has claimed large numbers of civilian lives, including children. There are as of yet no reliable figures on the number of child casualties, although reports of killing and maiming of children are received almost daily. Victims of indiscriminate mortar shelling of residential areas or of bomb attacks, the latter often in the form of devastating suicide car bombs, include many children. As a result of insurgent mortar attacks, five children died in their school in Adil, western Baghdad, on 28 January 2007; three children in Khan Bani Saad on 23 May 2007; and two children in Samarra on 7 August 2007. On 22 May 2007, insurgent gunmen in Iraqi army uniforms killed a family of six, including four children, at a fake checkpoint. On 6 August 2007, a truck bomb in Al-Qebbek, north of Tal Afar, killed 28 persons, including 12 children.

55. Reports of civilians being killed or injured during MNF-I military operations such as house searches or air strikes are becoming more frequent. On 22 February 2007, at least 12 civilians, including 2 to 4 children, were allegedly killed in a gun battle between insurgents and MNF-I forces followed by MNF-I air strikes in Ramadi. Three children in Fallujah were killed on 2 June 2007, when MNF-I allegedly opened fire on a group of individuals believed to be planting a bomb. Many more civilian casualties of military operations were reported, but the age of the victims was rarely confirmed.

56. The education system in Iraq has been adversely affected since the sectarian violence began following the attack on the al-Askari shrine in Samarra on 22 February 2006. Since that attack last year, more frequent attacks on schools, children and teachers have been recorded. UNICEF estimates that at least 30 per cent of Iraqi children are not currently attending school. A particularly disconcerting incident was the deliberate targeting by armed insurgents of the al-Khulud Secondary Girls School in western Baghdad on 28 January 2007, resulting in the deaths of 5 students and 21 injured. In another targeted attack against a school, on 18 June 2007, insurgent gunmen entered a secondary school in Saydiyah, where boys were taking their exams. Approximately 30 students, aged between 17 and 19 years, were abducted. Furthermore, in developments that mirror incidents in Afghanistan, extremists, mainly in Diyala Province, have repeatedly burned or destroyed school buildings: on 15 May 2007 in Abu Ghraib, Baghdad; and on 6 June, 20 June and 21 June 2007, in or near Baqubah, possibly meant as an attack against secular education or schooling for girls.

57. Schools have also become “collateral damage” during fighting between insurgents and MNF-I forces. On 8 May 2007, an attack by an MNF-I helicopter against suspected insurgents in the village of Al-Nedawat, Dujala Province, reportedly killed and injured six children. Local police reported that the helicopter was shot at from the ground and when it fired back, hit the school.

58. The Government has, through the Commission of Child Care, begun to address the challenges confronting children in Iraq. The Commission has designated a committee, which has recommended that the Government sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Government has repeatedly called upon the international community and all relevant United Nations system agencies to offer their support and assistance in reinforcing their efforts in securing and protecting the welfare of children in Iraq.

### **Developments in Lebanon**

59. There are no reports of recruitment of children by the regular armed forces. Both Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, on behalf of the Government of Lebanon, and Parliamentary Deputy Mohamed Raad, on behalf of Hizbullah, informed my Special Representative during her mission to Beirut on 12 April 2007 that Lebanon would ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and not use children for armed violence or political mobilization.

60. Civilians, including several thousand children and family members, were caught in the fighting in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared, northern Lebanon, which lasted from 20 May to 2 September 2007. It is estimated that the fighting between the Lebanese Army and the armed extremist group of Fatah al-Islam resulted in 40 Palestinian civilians killed and over 200 injured, including

children. There are reports of use of Palestinian children by Palestinian armed factions and groups in the Palestinian refugee camps.

61. The extensive and unprecedented use by Israel of cluster bombs during the 2006 conflict left southern Lebanon severely contaminated with approximately 1 million unexploded submunitions and general unexploded ordnance. This continues to pose one of the most serious threats to children in southern Lebanon. From the cessation of hostilities on 14 August 2006 until 31 August 2007, 4 children have been killed and 66 injured as a result of unexploded munitions. On 24 and 25 December 2006, five children, aged 13 to 15 years, from Hanaway and Kaakaeyet al-Jiser, were injured by unexploded cluster bombs while playing. Israel has yet to provide the much-needed strike data on the quantity, types and location of the cluster bombs that were dropped.

### **Developments in Myanmar**

62. The Government, through its Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Children, has undertaken some efforts to address the issue of the recruitment and use of children, including the recent inclusion of preventing the recruitment of child soldiers in their national plan of action against trafficking. Furthermore, written law states that participation in the Government armed forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) is entirely voluntary and that the minimum age for recruitment is 18 years. However, reliable reports from United Nations partners indicate that forcible attempts to recruit children for Tatmadaw Kyi are still taking place. It is difficult to systematically verify the extent of recruitment or the number of children in military camps owing to access limitations. Lack of proper birth certification and local-level connivance in falsifying existing registration information also perpetuate the difficulty of verifying child recruitment.

63. Since 2005, the United Nations country team has received periodic updates from the Government on the activities of the Committee, including information on children being discharged from army service and, most recently, on disciplinary measures taken by the Government against recruiters who have violated Government recruitment policies with regard to minors. The United Nations country team, however, cannot verify the written information provided by the Government concerning disciplinary action taken against perpetrators, even though it has sought working-level interface on numerous occasions.

64. During the recent mission of my Special Representative, who met with acting Prime Minister and Secretary One of the State Peace and Development Council, the Government agreed to cooperate in the establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism on child rights violations within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) by appointing the Director-General of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement as the Government focal point on issues relating to the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005). The Government also agreed to provide the details of actions taken against army recruiters who recruited children and the list of children discharged for follow-up verification by the United Nations country team. At the time of writing, the United Nations country team had just received from the Government a list of children discharged.

65. The Government also agreed in principle to engage in an action plan with the United Nations country team and UNICEF that meets international standards. This would include the establishment of a subcommittee for the reintegration of former child soldiers; a transparent complaints procedure for incidents of recruitment of children, including instituting disciplinary measures against parties responsible for



aiding and abetting recruitment of children; access to recruitment centres by the United Nations country team and UNICEF on a regular basis to verify whether or not children are present; regular child protection training for Tatmadaw Kyi officials; and a public campaign, including at the village level, to create awareness of the rules, regulations and modalities of a complaints procedure to prevent recruitment. It is noted that in parallel with the above, a supplementary understanding was agreed between the Government and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in February 2007 providing a complaints mechanism in respect of allegations of forced labour, under ILO Convention 29, which encompasses forced recruitment and underage recruitment.

66. The United Nations has not received any reports of new recruitment and use of children by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karenni Army (KA), the armed wings of Karen National Union (KNU) and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) respectively, during the reporting period. However, the Government's limitations on United Nations access to areas of operations and on dialogue with KNLA and KA hamper efforts to verify whether those groups have ceased the recruitment and use of children. As a follow-up to letters received by my Special Representative in the last reporting period from KNU and KNPP, dialogues with both parties were initiated by the United Nations, which resulted in KNU and KNPP signing deeds of commitment to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children on 6 April and 13 April 2007, respectively. Under the deeds, the parties also commit to allow the independent monitoring of violations, demobilize and release children in their ranks and facilitate the provision of appropriate physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration assistance by United Nations system agencies and NGOs for the released children. However, owing to the concerns of the Government, further discussions to finalize arrangements on the implementation of these action plans are ongoing.

67. There are reports indicating that a breakaway faction of KNU, the KNU-KNLA Peace Council, has recruited children from the Mae La refugee camp, as well as from villages in the border areas. Sources suggest that several boys were deceived into crossing the border by promises of pay and participation in celebrations but were subsequently coerced into joining the armed group. While most of the children have returned, four boys are reportedly still missing. It is not known whether the KNU-KNLA Peace Council continues recruitment, and the United Nations has not been able to verify the reports of recruitment. Furthermore, there are reports of a "one child per family" recruitment policy by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). In early 2007, the United Nations verified a report of a 15-year-old girl recruited by KIA when she returned to her home village from school in Myitkyina, Kachin State. To date, the girl remains with KIA.

68. There are also eyewitness accounts of children present within the ranks of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) in northern Shan State, despite their recent statement to my Special Representative that children are no longer recruited since the ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar Government. UWSA, however, agreed to further discussions to engage in an action plan to separate and reintegrate children associated with their forces.

69. There are reports of the Shan State Army-South recruiting children as part of a new mandatory recruitment policy. Children are also recruited and used by the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang) in northern Shan State. There is also information that children are present in the ranks of the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF) and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army

(DKBA). However, in-depth monitoring is hampered by access limitations to areas of operations of these groups.

70. Government restrictions on humanitarian access to communities in conflict-affected areas continue to seriously hamper the delivery of aid to those affected, particularly children. Civilians in these areas, including children, are allegedly subjected to systematic human rights abuses by members of the armed forces. Ongoing Government offensives in these areas against ethnic armed opposition groups, such as KNLA and KA, have resulted in many deaths, the destruction and looting of villages and schools, the mining of trails and the displacement of thousands of people. The Minister for National Planning and Economic Development, U Soe Tha, had committed to my Special Representative during her recent mission that the Government would facilitate humanitarian access and operations in those affected areas, within the monitoring and reporting framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

71. United Nations partners have highlighted the issue of former child soldiers imprisoned by the Myanmar authorities for deserting the Tatmadaw Kyi. The United Nations is also aware of cases involving former child soldiers in the refugee camps in the region for whom some services and case management have been provided on an ad hoc basis. However, proper and systematic mechanisms to identify former child soldiers in the refugee camps in the region do not exist and thus it is not possible to conclusively state the number of cases.

### **Developments in Nepal**

72. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the Seven Party Alliance (SPA) and the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) in November 2006, as well as the separate Agreement on Monitoring and Management of Arms and Armies signed in December 2006, prohibit both parties from recruiting or using persons under age 18. They also set out phased plans for the registration of Maoist combatants and the discharge of persons born after 25 May 1988 from the Maoist Army. By January 2007, more than 31,000 Maoist personnel were cantoned and enumerated in 28 sites across the country. In July 2007, the second stage registration of Maoist combatants began and is still under way. The registration should lead to the automatic discharge of all those aged under 18 years at the time of the May 2006 ceasefire. The United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), with the participation of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has finalized the verification at three cantonment sites in cooperation with CPN-M. Verification at other cantonment sites continues. No official release of children has taken place to date. The Government is making the necessary preparations to release and rehabilitate combatants who are under age 18, as provided for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

73. With the end of active conflict, there has been a significant decrease in reports of grave violations of children's rights. Reports of violations by the Government's security forces have seen a particularly marked decrease, and large recruitment drives by CPN-M have come to an end. The Nepal country-level task force on monitoring and reporting documented over a thousand cases of children recruited by CPN-M and its affiliates between October and December 2006. Many of those children ended up in Maoist Army cantonments, and over 300 were released without follow-up or official documentation after spending a few days at these sites. Since January 2007, four cases of recruitment by the Maoist Army have been documented. Two of the children involved have since left the Maoist Army. There were also no

new cases of arrest under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Control and Punishment) Ordinance (TADO) reported. TADO expired at the end of September 2006 and was not renewed. Most children arrested under TADO during the conflict were released.

74. Militias linked to the CPN-M and the Nepal Army are no longer operational, but many personnel from the CPN-M, the Maoist Army and the militia have joined the Maoist Young Communist League (YCL), which was re-established in December 2006. Some of those joining YCL are under age 18. YCL carries out social programmes, as well as activities that parallel those of the security forces, aimed at enforcing laws or punishing social crimes. The presence of children in YCL and youth wings of other political parties is a cause for concern because of the deep politicization of children and youth during the conflict. The exposure or involvement of these children and youth in the violent demonstrations that are a feature of political action in Nepal is also disconcerting.

75. The period of unrest in the Terai region of southern Nepal has also resulted in the deaths of seven children during the reporting period. Four children were killed by the police force and one by CPN-M during demonstrations. In January 2007, a 15-year-old boy was killed by CPN-M at a roadblock established by the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) in Siraha district, eastern region. In a separate case, a 17-year-old girl associated with a CPN-M cultural group was one of 27 people killed in March 2007 during a confrontation between CPN-M and MPRF in Gaur and surrounding villages, Rautahat district. YCL claimed that the girl was a member of their organization. Many more children were injured during public rallies between December 2006 and February 2007.

76. Although the use of schools for military purposes has decreased with the end of the conflict, 40 incidents of inappropriate use of schools were reported between October 2006 and June 2007, with 25 of the 40 occurring in the mid-western region. In 13 incidents, CPN-M used school grounds to train their cadres; in 22 incidents, schools were forced to accommodate political or cultural programmes by the CPN-M party and sister organizations such as YCL and the All Nepal National Independent Students' Union-Revolutionary; and in at least six incidents, affecting over 200 schools, students were forced to participate in gatherings of CPN-M and its sister organizations. Schoolteachers have been abducted and assaulted, mostly in the Siraha and Saptari districts. Two such incidents were committed by CPN-M and YCL, and approximately six incidents were allegedly committed by two factions of Janatantrik Terai Mukti Morcha (JTMM), namely, JTMM-Goit and JTMM-Jwala Singh.

77. There are also serious concerns regarding the Government's commitment to ending impunity and ensuring accountability for serious human rights violations. An increasing number of reports indicate that the Nepal Police refuse to register or investigate serious crimes committed during and after the conflict. The Government believes that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as referred to in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, will address the issues of ending impunity, if and when established.

#### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

78. The situation of Palestinian children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, remains grave, with continued Israeli military operations, incursions and raids throughout the territory, in addition to an escalation in internal hostilities resulting in intense fighting between rival Palestinian factions. During the

reporting period, a total of 106 Palestinian children were killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; 58 per cent of whom were killed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Seventy-four per cent of child deaths caused by IDF occurred in the Gaza Strip, mostly during military operations and artillery shelling. From 1 to 7 November 2006 alone, eight children were killed during the Israeli incursion, code-named "Operation autumn Clouds", into Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip.

79. A total of 24 per cent of the 106 Palestinian children were killed as a result of factional violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Armed clashes between the Palestinian Executive Security Forces (ESF) and Al-Aqsa Brigades in Khan Younis on 26 January 2007 killed a 5-year-old Palestinian child. On 7 February 2007, an 8-year-old Palestinian boy died of wounds sustained when he was caught in armed clashes between ESF and the Presidential Guards of the Palestinian Authority in Bureij refugee camp.

80. A total of 323 Palestinian children were injured during the same period, 64 per cent of whom were injured by IDF in the West Bank, 10 per cent by IDF in the Gaza Strip, 7 per cent by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, 3 per cent in factional violence and 3 per cent owing to the reckless handling of explosives.

81. Five Israeli children, four living in Sderot and one in Kibbutz Karmiya near Ashkelon, were injured by Qassam rockets fired from the Gaza Strip by Palestinian militants in the reporting period. Furthermore, two schools and one kindergarten in Sderot were damaged by home-made Palestinian rockets in May, July and August 2007.

82. Documenting the recruitment of children by Palestinian armed groups remains a challenge, and the extent of the phenomenon is not well known. Although there is no evidence of systematic attempts to recruit children for training or operations, militiamen from at least one Palestinian armed group have approached boys outside their school in Gaza requesting them to join paramilitary training. On 2 August 2007, the case of a 13-year-old boy recruited by Hamas militants in Gaza was reported. The boy had been asked by Hamas to monitor the streets and gather information on drug dealers and collaborators with Israel. On 30 August 2007, IDF soldiers on an anti-terror patrol in the northern Gaza Strip spotted a 16-year-old boy who was carrying two explosive devices intended to be detonated in a suicide bombing attack against them. In April 2007, during the mission of my Special Representative to the Middle East, Palestinian President Abbas and then Foreign Minister Abu Amr agreed to revive the code of conduct among Palestinian groups not to involve children in political violence, and to engage with UNICEF to devise a plan of action to prevent the use of children in such violence.

83. Reports also suggest that Shabak, Israel's security agency, continues to seek to recruit Palestinian children to be used as collaborators inside prisons or upon their release. Data are extremely difficult to gather owing to the reluctance of child detainees to talk about these issues, especially while still in detention, and the lack of systematic monitoring. However, at least one case involving a 16-year-old boy was reported in 2007. Furthermore, IDF continues to force civilians, often minors, to enter potential zones of conflict before the soldiers in order to clear the area or limit casualties, although the Israeli Supreme Court has ruled that practice to be illegal. Four cases of Palestinian children used by Israeli soldiers have been documented in 2007. In two separate incidents on 25 February 2007, during military operation "Hot Winter" in Nablus, an 11-year-old girl and a 15-year-old boy were forced at gunpoint to walk in front of Israeli soldiers into houses which were

thought to shelter militants. The children were physically coerced into carrying out searches for the soldiers. In another incident, during a military incursion into the Balata refugee camp on 11 April 2007, two boys aged 14 and 15 were assaulted and forced to sit on the bonnet of an Israeli jeep while youths were throwing stones at the jeep. These incidents are currently being investigated by IDF.

84. There were five cases of abduction, involving 10 children, registered by the United Nations during the reporting period. Four cases occurred in the Gaza Strip, one attributed to Palestinian armed groups and three to IDF. Another case was carried out by Israeli settlers in the West Bank. On 17 June in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza, three children aged 11 to 16 were abducted by masked militants of the Preventive Security Forces, who accused them of collaboration with Hamas. The children were held at gunpoint and interrogated. They were released after a few hours.

85. Schools and hospitals continue to be attacked or occupied by both IDF and Palestinian armed groups, in some instances resulting in the killing or injury of children. There were at least 10 incidents where IDF soldiers attacked schools (both Palestinian Authority and UNRWA schools). In five of those attacks, Israeli soldiers used tear gas and sound bombs or stun grenades inside the schools. On 18 November 2006 in an UNRWA-run school in Beit Lahia, two students, aged 7 and 12, were shot and injured inside the school by IDF. In a separate incident in the West Bank, on 5 March 2007, IDF soldiers stormed the UNRWA-run Al-Jalazoun Basic Boys' School and Basic Girls' School and opened fire at students, injuring two in the head. In Gaza, Palestinian militants stormed several schools, and in three of those attacks, hand grenades were used. Damage to at least three schools or school property during fighting were reported.

86. At any given point during the reporting period, between 361 and 416 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres, including children as young as 12 years. Between 10 and 22 of those children were being held in administrative detention without charge or trial. The majority of prisoners were boys, while approximately 11 girls had been detained or were serving terms of imprisonment during this period. Over 90 per cent of children arrested, interrogated and charged before the military courts were convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. There are reports that some children held in detention undergo physical beatings and psychological torture, including threats of sexual violence. The systematic transfer of Palestinian child prisoners outside the Occupied Palestinian Territory into Israel is in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

87. An expert paper commissioned by a United Nations body found that the most serious consequence of the barrier and its associated regime, and its damaging humanitarian ripple effect, is an increasing occurrence of forced internal displacement, violations of associated rights and induced poverty. A total of 390 civilian structures were demolished during the reporting period, 117 in Gaza and 273 in the West Bank, leaving at least 1,842 people displaced, 717 in Gaza and 1,125 in the West Bank. The majority of affected persons are children. The denial of passage or delays at checkpoints has significantly affected the access of civilians, particularly children, to medical care and services, causing serious threat to their physical health. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that from October 2006 to August 2007, there were a total of 442 incidents of ambulances reporting delays or denied access at Israeli checkpoints in the West Bank. In addition to home evictions and house demolitions, other causes of forced

displacement are settlement expansion, restrictions on water and land use and restrictions on movement.

### **Developments in Somalia**

88. Reports indicate that both the Union of the Islamic Courts (UIC) and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) recruited and used children during intense fighting for control of Mogadishu in November and December 2006. UIC publicly declared its intention to recruit from schools, and appointed Sheikh Fu'aad Mohamed Khalaf to be in charge of training the students. An intensive recruitment campaign of boys and girls under age 18 by UIC and its allied militias took place from schools in Mogadishu in that period. TFG militias as well as some clan militias have been widely reported to be using children to carry arms. In January 2007, a senior United Nations official visited Mogadishu and was an eyewitness to children training at Belidogle airport, where TFG has a military base. Since June 2007, however, the TFG administration in Jowhar has begun to release children from its ranks, and activities are being planned to reintegrate these children into their communities, with support from UNICEF. In August 2007, the Minister for Women's Development and Family Affairs agreed to play a role in an advocacy campaign to release children from TFG armed forces and prevent future child recruitment.

89. During the reporting period, violence between the TFG and Ethiopian forces on the one hand and insurgent groups, including the Al-Shaabab, remnants of the former UIC elements and Hawiye clan militia on the other, has resulted in high civilian casualties in Mogadishu. Precise numbers of casualties among children are difficult to verify owing to insecurity and the lack of access, but estimates from United Nations partners indicate that in Mogadishu alone, there have been over 1,200 deaths and several thousand civilians injured since October 2006, of which approximately 35 per cent are children. In April 2007, the security situation in Mogadishu deteriorated, as anti-Government factions began staging hit-and-run attacks and using improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings against the TFG and Ethiopian forces. Those forces retaliated with indiscriminate exchange of fire and shelling, sometimes using untargeted rocket launchers. Many of these attacks occurred in residential areas of the city, resulting in disproportionate numbers of children killed or injured. On 1 February 2007, mortars launched into a settlement for internally displaced persons in Talex village killed seven people, including three children; on 29 July 2007 three teenage boys were injured by a roadside bomb in Towfiq district; and on 26 August 2007, a roadside explosion killed two children on their way to school in Gupta district.

90. Rape and other sexual violence committed by the parties to the conflict have not occurred systematically. However, between January and June 2007, the heightened violence has rendered women and girls, particularly among the internally displaced, more vulnerable to sexual violence and attacks. There have been several cases of girls raped while fleeing Mogadishu, mostly along the road to Afgoye and Baidoa. In four of those cases, verified reports identified the perpetrators as men dressed in the uniforms of the TFG militia. Another incident in May 2007 involved TFG militias stopping a minibus at a checkpoint and raping eight women and five girls. These violations have gone unpunished to date.

91. In July and August 2007, reports indicated a wave of raids on schools by TFG forces in Mogadishu, allegedly in search of extremist elements. On 26 July, TFG forces stormed into a school near KM 4 Junction and abducted 4 teachers and

20 students. Several hospitals, including the Al-Hayat and Al-Arafat hospitals, were also raided or attacked with mortar rockets in April and May 2007, disrupting medical services and forcing patient evacuations. More recently, on 18 August, mortar shells from fighting between the TFG and Ethiopian forces and insurgents hit the SOS Hospital in Mogadishu. Furthermore, it has been reported that Ethiopian forces occupied the Mohamoud Ahmed Ali secondary school for military purposes between April and July.

92. Incidents of mine and unexploded ordnance accidents resulting in deaths and injuries among children increased in 2007. Between January and June in southern Somalia, there were more than 28 landmine accidents, killing 8 children and wounding 10; and 33 incidents involving bombs or unexploded ordnance, killing 25 children and wounding 46. A particularly serious incident occurred on 6 July 2007 in central Mogadishu, where a piece of unexploded ordnance exploded, killing eight people, including five children.

93. The insecurity and the multiple checkpoints along main roads have affected humanitarian organizations in and around Mogadishu and, more generally, in south-central Somalia, leaving staff unable to access communities in urgent need of assistance or protection. Humanitarian workers, human rights defenders and media have also been targeted in various security incidents and killings throughout the country, and offices and assets have been destroyed. On 15 May 2007, gunmen attacked the office of the World Health Organization, wounding a guard in the process; and on 27 June, two staff members of the International Medical Corps were killed by gunmen in El-Berde town. On 4 August, staff from an international NGO on an assessment mission in Dhobley, Lower Juba, were ambushed by unknown men, resulting in one person killed and two others injured.

### **Developments in the Sudan**

94. The overall situation in Southern Sudan has improved slightly since the last reporting period. The Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan made the following commitments during the visit of my Special Representative to the Sudan in January 2007: to allow UNICEF and the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) access to the military barracks of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and allied armed forces and groups to monitor and verify compliance; to adopt and implement national legislation to criminalize the recruitment of child soldiers in a timely manner; to allocate adequate resources for the reintegration of children associated with the armed forces; to establish jointly with the United Nations a task force on sexual violence and abuse against children; and to ensure the safety and protection of humanitarian personnel.

95. As a follow-up to those commitments, some important measures have been undertaken by the Government of Southern Sudan to address the situation of children, including progressive legislative reform, structures to address sexual exploitation and abuse and other child protection concerns and a serious commitment to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children.

96. UNMIS has engaged in dialogue with SPLA and SAF to end violations against children and release children from their military units, particularly those newly incorporated from other armed groups. On 7 June 2007, 60 SAF and SPLA commanders committed to end child recruitment and developed an Area Joint Military Committee action plan to address abductions, rape and other sexual violence against children in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity States. However, SAF

and SPLA have not allowed the United Nations unhindered access to military barracks for verification purposes. Progress has also been limited with regard to the timely release and reintegration of children.

97. During the reporting period, hundreds of children were released from SPLA and several from other armed groups aligned with SAF, through the coordination of the Southern and Northern Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commissions. In May 2007, 25 children were released from SPLA in Bentiu, Southern Sudan, and reunited with their families in the North. A separate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for approximately 600 children from SPLA ranks in Southern Sudan is currently being organized. Despite this progress, thousands of children are still held in military barracks, and some demobilized children return to the army owing to an inefficient reintegration mechanism.

98. Children continue to be recruited and used by armed groups aligned with SAF and SPLA forces that fall under their respective commands. In late November 2006, confirmed reports indicate that SAF-aligned forces of Major General Gabriel Tang Ginye recruited approximately 70 children, including street children, during hostilities in Malakal Province. Furthermore, at least another 300 children are confirmed to be present in the Pibor Defence Forces, also previously an SAF-aligned armed group. The Mundari militia, which operates in Terrekeka, Central Equatoria, is also reported to have 40 children in its ranks.

99. During the reporting period, many children were killed during gunfights between SPLA and SAF. There are also persistent reports of SPLA forces attacking or occupying schools in various locations of Southern Sudan. On 24 October 2006, SPLA forces raided a school in Nassir, Upper Nile, for the purposes of recruiting the children. A total of 32 boys and 24 teachers were abducted, although all but 2 boys were released. Further, SAF and SPLA continue to deny child protection personnel access to areas north and south of Abyei Province, Southern Sudan.

100. There were seven confirmed cases of child abduction in Southern Sudan, several of which were attributed to LRA. On 28 March 2007, a village near Maridi, Western Equatoria, was attacked by armed men, suspected to be from LRA. Six girls, aged between 12 and 17 years, were abducted and their whereabouts remain unknown.

101. There are some promising signs in the current phase of the Darfur peace process and agreement on a hybrid African Union-United Nations mission. However, the day-to-day situation for children on the ground remains grave. There are credible reports indicating that SAF, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM-Peace Wing), the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA/MM), SLA/Gasim (SLA/AG), SLA/Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW), SLA/Shafi (SLA/S), the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), Chadian rebel forces, Government of the Sudan allied militias, known as the Janjaweed, and the Central Reserve Police (CRP) continue to recruit and use children. However, in many instances owing to insecurity, access limitations and a multiplicity of armed actors, it has been difficult to identify the perpetrators or verify the allegations. During the reporting period, some children interviewed by the United Nations reported that they had been fighting in East Jebel Mara, Southern Darfur, for at least three years. Those children are allegedly associated with SLA/AS, SLA/AG or SLA/AW. In April 2007, armed children, aged 12 years, were identified with SLA/MM at Khazan Tunjur, South-West El-Fasher, Northern Darfur. In April 2007, United Nations and African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) monitors identified many armed children believed to



be associated with SAF-allied militia in the Kutum area. In May 2007, 13 boys were identified with JEM-Peace Wing. AMIS also confirmed the presence of children as young as 15 years recruited and used by PDF in Mukjar, Western Darfur.

102. In Darfur, there were 46 verified child deaths perpetrated by the Janjaweed and SAF. On 22 November 2006, bombardments from an SAF Antonov plane and two helicopter gunships killed two children in Kishi village, near Bir Maza; and in May 2007, two children aged 4 and 5 were killed as a result of the Government of the Sudan aerial bombardments of villages in Northern Darfur.

103. Rape continues to be widespread in Darfur, and is used as a method of warfare, with an increasing trend to specifically target younger girls. During the reporting period, there have been 23 confirmed reports of rape, with two of the victims being boys. The perpetrators include elements of SAF, CRP, Janjaweed and SLA/MM. Although the prosecution of perpetrators of rape is rare in Darfur, during the reporting period two CRP officers and one SAF soldier were prosecuted for the rape of children as young as 13 years old.

104. In Darfur, frequent hijackings of humanitarian agencies' vehicles impede the delivery of aid and services to the most vulnerable, particularly children. Abductions and the use of physical and psychological violence against aid workers during attacks on humanitarian compounds are also increasing. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that between January and August 2007, five aid workers have been killed, 11 injured and 53 physically assaulted.

105. On 11 June 2007, SLA/MM signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. It agreed to release and hand over all children associated with their forces or any other forces aligned with them; develop and implement an age-determination process; and provide special protection for girls and women. The action plan will benefit 1,800 children associated with SLA/MM. UNICEF and UNMIS have also been in dialogue with representatives of SLA/AW, SLA/AS and SLA (Free Will), who indicated their willingness to collaborate towards the release of children from their ranks. However, as at 30 June 2007, no concrete commitments to release children had been made.

106. Some progress has also been made in Eastern Sudan. As part of the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement signed on 14 October 2006 between the Eastern Front armed group and the Government of National Unity, 3,700 ex-combatants are being demobilized, 250 of whom are children.

## **B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Chad**

107. With the talks between the Government and the armed opposition in Tripoli, and the rainy season, fighting in eastern Chad has significantly decreased. The security situation, however, remains extremely volatile and tense owing to the unsuccessful integration of the United Front for Change (FUC) fighters in the national army following the peace agreement signed in December 2006 by the FUC leader, Mahamat Nour, and President Deby, and the build-up of Government forces. The prevailing insecurity in eastern Chad is also exacerbated by sporadic cross-border raids by Janjaweed militias from the Sudan and inter-communal violence. The decrease in clashes has not reduced the phenomenon of forced recruitment of children by both the State and non-State parties to the conflict.

Reports indicate that children have been recruited into the Chadian National Army. Although the actual figures are unknown, approximately 400 child soldiers, 100 of whom are between the ages of 8 and 12, were found stationed at a Government training centre in central Mongo. On 9 May 2007, the Government of Chad and UNICEF signed an agreement for the demobilization of child soldiers throughout the country. As at 30 July, 425 children, all boys, had been released from Mongo and Moussoro military instruction centres and the N'Djamena main military camp, and transferred to five transit care centres in Abeche and N'Djamena. However, thousands of children in various locations in eastern Chad have yet to be released from armed forces and groups.

108. United Nations monitors have reported that the recruitment and use of children by Chadian armed groups is widespread, although difficulties in identifying leaders, the constant shifting of alliances and groupings and the vast number of groups make it difficult to establish the chain of responsibility for recruitment. UNHCR is currently seeking to increase its child protection staff in eastern Chad. It is estimated that hundreds of children are within the ranks of the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (Union des Forces pour la Démocratie et le Développement (UFDD)). In November 2006, during clashes between the Chadian National Army and UFDD in Abeche, 60 per cent of UFDD members captured were children. Furthermore, although the recruitment and use of girls by armed forces and groups is not widespread, 50 girls were allegedly associated with FUC in the area of Guereda, Dar Tama Department.

109. Thousands of children have also been recruited and used by Sudanese armed groups backed by the Chadian Government, including JEM and the SLA/G-19 breakaway faction from refugee camps located close to the Sudan-eastern Chad border. In January 2007, 39 children from the Breidjing refugee camp were recruited by Sudanese rebels, and their whereabouts remains unknown. Furthermore, there have been reports of Chadian children being forcibly recruited by the Janjaweed, coming from areas across the border in Darfur.

110. Systematic use of child soldiers by Chadian self-defence groups has been reported in Ade, Mogororo and Dogdore of the Dar Sila Department. In January 2007, nine children between the ages of 13 and 17 were recruited in the surrounding perimeters of the Djabal refugee camp in Goz Beida.

111. Many children are killed and maimed by unexploded ordnance and landmines, which are a result of military engagements in 2006 and 2007. In 2007, 107 child victims of landmines and unexploded ordnances were documented, of whom 22 were killed and 85 injured. In May 2007, four children were playing with a piece of unexploded ordnance in Zaigueye when it exploded, killing two of the children and maiming the others.

112. There have been a large number of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence targeted at women and girls by members of armed groups, particularly within the refugee populations. During the first three months of 2007, 139 cases of sexual and gender-based violence were reported in the 12 refugee camps in the eastern region. However, as it remains a taboo subject, comprehensive information on the number of victims and survivors of sexual violence and the proportion of such incidents perpetrated by members of armed forces and groups is difficult to obtain.

### **Developments in Colombia**

113. The Government of Colombia, through the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, has carried out programmatic efforts to prevent the recruitment of children and reintegrate children into their communities. To date, the Government's efforts have benefited 3,326 children previously associated with illegal armed groups.

114. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) continues to recruit and use children. Cases have been reported in the Departments of Cauca, Antioquia, Sucre, Bolivar, Cundinamarca, Guaviare, Meta and Nariño. In Corinto, Cauca Department, members of FARC frequently visit schools to persuade children to join their ranks. Furthermore, despite current talks between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and demands by the National Council for Peace that ELN cease recruitment and release all children from its ranks immediately, this group also continues to recruit children. In December 2006, two girls aged 14 and 15 were forcibly recruited by ELN in Nariño, municipality of Guachavez-Santa Cruz.

115. Children have been used by Government armed forces for intelligence purposes despite official Government policy to the contrary. On 6 March 2007, the Colombian Ministry of Defence issued directive 30743, prohibiting all members of the armed forces from utilizing children for intelligence activities, especially children recovered from illegal armed groups. However, the Defensoría del Pueblo reported that in Cauca, a child demobilized from FARC was used by the XXIX Brigade as an informant for the armed forces in an operation and was later killed at the age of 19 years while in combat with FARC, in contravention of the Paris Principles and Guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. In April 2007, two children aged 8 and 11 in Urrau, Chocó Department, were forced by the national army to carry materials for them. In Bebedo, Chocó Department, reports received by the United Nations in June 2007 confirm that the armed forces operating in that area provided children with food in exchange for cleaning and maintaining their weapons. The Defensoría del Pueblo continues to report children being kept for unauthorized periods in police stations, army battalions or judicial police premises.

116. There are increasing concerns about reported violations and abuses committed against children by new organized illegal armed groups. These groups, such as the Aguilas Negras, Manos Negras, Organización Nueva Generación or the Rastrojos are largely involved in criminal activities related especially to drug trafficking. The Government considers these groups as criminal gangs. In June 2007, Aguilas Negras was reported to have coerced children to join their ranks in Cartagena, Bolivar Department. Reports on the recruitment and use by the other three groups mentioned above have also been received in the reporting period from Valle de Cauca, Bolivar in Cartagena city and Antioquia in Medellin city. Furthermore, the two illegal armed groups outside the demobilization process listed in my 2006 report, Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare and Frente Cacique Pipinta, have been only partially demobilized, and it is believed that children are still present in those groups. The gravity of the reported violations by those groups is very real and calls for serious efforts to enhance the protection of children.

117. Positive efforts have been made by the Government in the demobilization of combatants from the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC). According to official figures, 63 children were demobilized from AUC in 2006, compared with 17,581 adults. Those children, however, were not formally handed over as per the requirements of the collective demobilization process, and there are concerns that a

number of children have been missed out in that process. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute reports that an additional 32 children were demobilized on an individual basis during the same period.

118. The national Instituto de Medicina Legal y Ciencias Forenses certified that in the reporting period 37 children, including 13 girls and 24 boys, were killed and 34 children, including 4 girls, were injured allegedly by Government security forces, of which, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nine cases have been filed by the Judicial Police. Extrajudicial executions by some Government security forces have also been reported. In March 2007, two people, including one 16-year-old boy, were killed by forces from the XVI Brigade of the National Army. According to eyewitness accounts, those killed were subsequently presented as guerrilla members. Children have also been abducted, killed and injured by illegal armed groups. From October 2006 to May 2007, approximately 43 children were reported to have been held as hostages. In October 2006, a 17-year-old girl was abducted in Toribio, Cauca, and later killed, allegedly by FARC, and on 9 April 2007, in Buenaventura, Valle del Cauca, a girl was abducted and killed by members of FARC. On 9 January 2007, a child was abducted and killed by members of Aguilas Negras.

119. There are reports that rape and other sexual violence and exploitation continue to be perpetrated by illegal armed groups and some members of the State forces. OHCHR reported that FARC-EP had committed forced abortions and other degrading treatment against young girls in their ranks. A report was also received by OHCHR that two girls, aged 7 and 11 years from Florida, Department of Valle del Cauca, were sexually abused by a soldier from the San Mateo Battalion on 19 November 2006.

120. There have been some reports of schools being occupied by illegal armed groups. Landmines and abandoned explosive ordnance are often left behind once the illegal armed groups retreat from their occupation of these facilities. A school in Guacamayal, Caldas Department, is still surrounded by landmines. On the other hand, in Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo Department, a school was occupied by members of the National Army. In La Joya, also in Putumayo Department, tanks were placed at the entrance of a school as part of a military checkpoint from July to September 2007.

### **Developments in the Philippines**

121. Armed clashes in the Philippines intensified during the reporting period as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) stepped up its military campaigns against non-State armed groups, particularly in Mindanao. Government forces have reiterated their declaration of an all-out war and engaged the rebel New People's Army (NPA) in skirmishes. Although the Moro National Liberation Front signed a final peace agreement with the Government in 1996, some of its factions based in the Province of Sulu, southern Philippines, have fought AFP in several large-scale confrontations. AFP and its paramilitary allies have also battled elements of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the Provinces of Basilan, Shariff Kabunsuan and Maguindanao despite an existing agreement on cessation of hostilities. Military campaigns against the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Basilan and Sulu also continue. Despite these conflicts, the ability to document child rights violations remains weak.

122. During the reporting period, the Government recorded the recruitment of 11 children, allegedly by NPA: 1 from Leyte, 7 from Samar and 3 from Agusan del Sur.

Three of the children are girls and remain in the custody of the Department of Social Welfare and Development awaiting reintegration. The remaining children have been released to their families. The children were allegedly captured by Government forces in the course of their military operations. However, United Nations partners claim that the children were innocent civilians who happened to be in the areas where the military conducted their patrols or armed encounters took place. The Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) reiterates its policy not to recruit children under age 18 as armed combatants, although it does not deny using children for non-combatant functions in violation of international legal standards. CPP claims disciplinary action is taken against violators of this policy, although monitoring of such compliance remains limited.

123. There are indications that children may be present in the ranks of MILF and ASG, however, owing to access limitations, no new reports of the recruitment and use of children were obtained in the reporting period.

124. United Nations partners reported that four children were killed, three in Mindanao and one in the Bicol region, and seven children were maimed in the Provinces of Cagayan, Davao del Norte and Sulu. Three of the children were girls between the ages of 9 and 14 years. Those incidents occurred during military operations or armed encounters against insurgents, and the victims and survivors have been branded as “rebels” or collateral damage. The most notable case was that of a 9-year-old girl who was killed when Government soldiers opened fire near her home in the Province of Compostela Valley on 31 March 2007, allegedly in pursuit of NPA guerrillas. The military had initially declared her an NPA child soldier but later recanted its accusation, and the Philippine Commission on Human Rights officially declared that she was “caught in the crossfire”. In another incident on 23 January 2007, in Baggao, Cagayan Valley, two girls aged 14 and 15 years were seriously injured by the 17th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army when they opened fire without warning in the area.

125. The Philippine country-level task force on monitoring and reporting was convened on 26 March 2007, comprising of United Nations system agencies and local human rights organizations. On 19 July 2007, the Government of the Philippines, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, has affirmed its concurrence with the implementation of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). In addition, the Government is carefully studying the Paris Principles, which could pave the way towards improving programme interventions for children and armed conflict by the Government.

### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

126. From 1 October 2006 to 31 August 2007, UNICEF received confirmed reports of 339 children being recruited or re-recruited by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), of which 41 per cent were from Batticaloa, compared with 679 children recruited in the preceding 11 months. In the same period, LTTE released 226 children, compared with 171 children released in the preceding 11 months, predominantly from Kilinochchi. Of the children recruited, 78 per cent were boys and 22 per cent girls. The average age of the children recruited during the reporting period was 16 years. Among the 6,221 children registered on the UNICEF database as having been recruited since 2001, 1,469 cases remain outstanding, including 335 children currently under 18 years of age as at 31 August 2007. The reported cases may only be indicative of the actual number of children recruited given access limitations in LTTE-controlled areas. LTTE has designated its so-called Child

Protection Authority as the interlocutor on child recruitment issues and Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), and weekly dialogue between UNICEF and the so-called Child Protection Authority continues. As at 22 August 2007, eight children continued to reside in the Educational Skills Development Centre, in violation of the recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council. At the time of reporting, UNICEF was in the process of arranging the return of those eight children to their families.

127. UNICEF received confirmed reports that 246 children had been recruited or re-recruited by the Karuna faction during the reporting period, compared with 154 children recruited in the previous 11-month period. Most of the children were recruited from Batticaloa. The Karuna faction released 80 children in the same period, compared with 14 children released in the previous 11-month period. The average age of the children being recruited by the Karuna faction was 16 years. All of the children recruited were boys, with the exception of one girl. From the 385 children registered on the UNICEF database as having been recruited, 214 cases remained outstanding as at 31 August 2007, including 160 children currently under 18 years old.

128. The majority of reported child abduction cases occurred in Jaffna, Batticaloa and Vavuniya. Abductions are carried out mainly in the context of recruitment, and are attributed to LTTE and Karuna faction. In some instances, children who were abducted were later found to have been killed. On 14 November 2006, four boys were abducted in Batticaloa. That case is part of several group abductions of children in the area which remain unresolved. On 18 December 2006, 22 students were abducted by LTTE for recruitment purposes while attending a tutoring class in Ampara. All of the children were released within two days as a result of UNICEF advocacy with LTTE. On 22 December 2006 and 18 March 2007, two boys were reportedly detained by the Government of Sri Lanka security forces in Jaffna and have subsequently been reported missing.

129. Since 1 October 2006, according to verified reports, 46 children were killed and 79 maimed owing to the conflict. This includes the deaths of 11 recruited children, 9 of whom were recruited by LTTE and 2 by the Karuna faction. More than half of the killings and maimings occurred in Batticaloa district. On 2 January 2007, a Sri Lankan Air Force aerial bombardment killed seven children and injured eight in Padahuthurai, an internally displaced persons village near Mannar. All but one of the children was under the age of 10 years. On 2 April 2007, three children were killed and four maimed in a bus explosion at a military checkpoint in Ampara attributed to LTTE.

130. Aerial strikes and shelling by the Sri Lankan Army (SLA) and attacks by LTTE have resulted in the destruction of schools and the death and injury of students and teachers. On 8 November 2006, an SLA artillery bombardment hit an internally displaced persons camp located in a school in Vaharai, Batticaloa. At least 26 civilians died, including at least 2 children, and at least 69 civilians were injured, including 21 children under the age of 15 years. On 7 December 2006, LTTE shelling hit a school in Trincomalee which resulted in the death of a teacher and injury of 15 people, including 5 children.

131. Hospitals have also been damaged during SLA operations in the reporting period. On 18 October 2006, the Gramodaya Health Centre in Vaharai was damaged by SLA shelling, and the Centre was used by SLA from January to the end of July 2007. The Special Task Forces of the Government of Sri Lanka have also been utilizing a maternity ward and on-call duty room at a hospital in Batticaloa since

July 2007. On 14 July 2007, SLA shelling damaged the maternity section and outpatient department of a hospital in north Vavuniya.

132. LTTE submitted a draft action plan on 28 March 2007 and a revised version on 19 July 2007, following dialogue with the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting. However, those drafts committed LTTE to a minimum age of recruitment of 17 years until 1 January 2008, at which point the minimum age of recruitment would be raised to 18 years. The delay in raising the minimum age of recruitment to 18 years is contradictory to their previous commitments and international standards. At the time of reporting, LTTE had indicated that the minimum age of recruitment would be raised to 18 years. However, this has not translated into a commitment to release those between 17 and 18 years old at the present time. On the other hand, despite continued advocacy, there has been less progress with the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal, the political wing of the Karuna faction. Following the commitment made to the Working Group of the Security Council, a committee comprising senior officials of the Government of Sri Lanka was established to carry out an independent and credible investigation into the allegations that certain elements of the Government security forces are supporting and sometimes participating in the abduction and forced recruitment of children by the Karuna faction. While the appointment of the committee is welcomed, there is an urgent need for the Government of Sri Lanka to investigate the allegations and take active measures to prevent grave violations against children, including the abduction and recruitment of children by the Karuna faction, especially in Government-controlled areas. Action is also still required by the Government of Sri Lanka to address the situation of children who sought special protection and surrendered to Government forces and who are currently in Pallekele and Jaffna Prisons, including the need for appropriate rehabilitative measures.

### **Developments in Uganda**

133. Although the Government of Uganda has no deliberate or systematic policy to recruit children, the lack of effective monitoring at the local level leads to children continuing to join some elements of the armed forces. During the reporting period there were 16 cases of recruitment and use of children aged 14 to 17 years by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). Three cases were reported in Pader district in which children who had escaped from LRA were used for gathering intelligence before being released in February 2007. In that regard, UPDF did not make use of the agreed civilian reintegration structures in place. Three other cases were reported in the Teso subregion in May 2007, but with the full cooperation of UPDF, the children were later released to OHCHR. The other 10 cases concern the use of children within auxiliary forces of the UPDF, in particular the local defence units. Young boys continue to serve in the local defence units in Anaka and Alero sub-counties, Amuru district, Acholiland. To date, there are still no signs of the release of 1,128 children reported to have been mobilized into the local defence units in late 2004 in Kitgum, Pader and parts of Teso region. The Government has claimed that the local defence units have been disbanded and some of its members integrated into UPDF and Uganda Police Force. During this process, the opportunity to utilize the agreed civilian reintegration structure in place was also missed. The country-level task force on monitoring and reporting noted that comprehensive planning for the demobilization and disarmament of children associated with the local defence units was an essential element for sustainable peace in northern Uganda. In early August 2007, the task force team met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs to finalize an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers

within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). A workshop was held in Kampala on 24 August 2007 with key stakeholders from the Government and the task force team, culminating in a draft action plan to be adopted by the Government shortly.

134. Since December 2006, 48 cases of rape and other sexual violence against girls perpetrated by UPDF or local defence unit elements were reported, of which 37 cases were recorded from March to August 2007 in Kitgum, Gulu, Lira and Amuru districts. Thirty-four of the latter offences were committed by UPDF forces, and three were perpetrated by members of the local defence units. Most of those cases occurred in internally displaced camp settings and return areas. In February 2007, four girls were abducted by a UPDF soldier in Gulu district, resulting in the rape of two of the girls, aged 12 and 14. In the same month, another 14-year-old girl was raped and strangled to death by a local defence unit soldier in Amuru district. Although these cases have been reported to the police, no arrests have been made either owing to difficulties in identifying the perpetrator or because the suspects have disappeared.

135. Two primary schools in Aswa county, Gulu district of Acholiland, were occupied by military forces and used for military training purposes. Through OHCHR intervention, the army vacated the schools on 23 August 2007. In Lira district, the Baralegi primary school in Okwang sub-county is still occupied by military forces. Owing to severe damage to the school structure, the Government plans to build new schools.

136. Owing to the absence of LRA in Ugandan territory during the reporting period, no cases attributable to it have been recorded by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting. LRA has not released any children from the Ri-Kwangba assembly point in Southern Sudan. However, since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in August 2006, approximately 70 children, 15 per cent of whom are girls, have returned from Southern Sudan to reception centres in Gulu, Kitgum, Pader and Lira. The majority of the children had either escaped or were captured by UPDF or SPLA forces, while six children were transferred from the Toto Chan reception centre in Juba, Southern Sudan. Those children have been successfully reintegrated into their communities through UNICEF-supported child protection programmes. A mechanism is currently in place to receive the remaining children still held by LRA. The country-level task force continues to advocate for the release of all children and women remaining in LRA captivity.

### **C. Sexual exploitation and abuse of children by United Nations peacekeeping and other United Nations personnel**

137. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to seek ways in which to strengthen the institutional framework to prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other United Nations personnel, with some initiatives directed specifically at preventing the abuse of children.

138. The ability of the United Nations to cover field locations grew considerably, and as at 31 July 2007, the Department of Field Support has established Conduct and Discipline Units to cover 18 peace operations.<sup>3</sup> Those units are responsible for receiving, monitoring and tracking complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse

<sup>3</sup> A list of peace operations is available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/CDT/about.html>.



against peacekeepers, developing and implementing prevention initiatives and enforcing standards of conduct.

139. In 2006, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) reported the receipt of 371 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Some 357 of these were from United Nations peace operations, which represents a 5 per cent increase in reported allegations from the previous year. During the first half of 2007, OIOS reported the receipt of 72 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse from United Nations peace operations. This downward trend in reported allegations is attributable to the impact of prevention and enforcement initiatives which the United Nations put in place over the course of 2005 and 2006. Of the allegations reported for peacekeeping operations during 2006, 82 investigations have been completed as of June 2007. Of those, five involved acts of sexual exploitation and abuse against minors. The completed investigations resulted in the dismissal or non-renewal of contracts of 1 civilian staff member and the repatriation of 1 police and 13 military personnel.

140. In June 2007, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by a contingent of United Nations peacekeepers were reported in the United Nations peace operations in Côte d'Ivoire. Those allegations involved acts of abuse of young women and girls. OIOS was immediately informed and the investigation process was initiated. Owing to the seriousness of the allegations, the contingent concerned was cantoned. The Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, together with the concerned Member State, remain actively seized of the matter.

141. Recognizing the importance of a strategy for victim assistance as a part of the comprehensive response to sexual exploitation and abuse, the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/291, established an ad hoc open-ended Working Group to consider a draft policy statement and comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel (see A/60/877, annex). That Working Group commenced its deliberations during the sixty-second session of the General Assembly. It is anticipated that, when endorsed by the Assembly, the strategy will provide an institutional framework that will give much-needed support to children who are victims of abuse or are born as a result of cases of abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel. In the interim, victims of abuse may receive emergency medical and psychosocial support facilitated by United Nations operations on the ground in conjunction with local service providers. In some peace operations, such as in Liberia, the United Nations peace operation has established a Rape and Sexual Assault Rapid Response Team to ensure that swift action is taken to aid women and children who are victims of abuse. That team, which embraces local partners, has helped some minors to receive safe housing and medical attention. This initiative was intended to minimize the risk of losing or damaging critical evidence and to reduce the exposure of survivors of abuse to further trauma. The challenge now is to create sustainable initiatives for victims' support. Implementing this strategy is of critical importance.

142. A high-level conference on sexual exploitation and abuse, held on 4 December 2006, jointly hosted by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNDP and UNICEF, resulted in the issuance of a Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations and Non-United Nations Personnel, which contained 10 principles to facilitate rapid implementation of standards relating to the prevention and elimination of sexual exploitation and abuse. As at 31 July 2007, 40 United Nations and 31 non-United Nations entities had endorsed the Statement and committed to combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

143. Significant progress was made during the reporting period with the establishment of an effective legislative framework which members of national contingents are required to comply with. It is encouraging to note that in July 2007, the General Assembly unanimously endorsed recommendations to incorporate revisions on standards of conduct into the draft model memorandum of understanding between troop-contributing countries and the United Nations (see A/61/19 (Part III)). In addition to strengthening the accountability of uniformed contingent personnel, the revisions to the memorandum of understanding also emphasize the need to immediately collect forensic evidence in sexual exploitation and abuse cases in a manner which will be sufficient to prosecute perpetrators in their home country.

#### **IV. Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and mainstreaming of child protection in United Nations peacekeeping operations**

144. As called for in paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), a monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave child rights violations has been established in situations of armed conflict, listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's 2006 report, that are on the agenda of the Security Council, namely Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan; and in other situations of armed conflict, listed in annex II of the Secretary-General's 2006 report, that have voluntarily implemented the monitoring and reporting mechanism, namely, Chad, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The Government of Myanmar has also agreed to cooperate in establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005).

145. Since its inception, monitoring and reporting has moved from a concept to a concrete United Nations system response. The establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism has allowed for systematic, reliable, timely and objective information to be gathered on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, including the identification of offending parties, which feeds into my country-specific reports examined by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. The designation of these offending parties on the annexed lists of my annual reports has proven to have a deterrent effect and has allowed the relevant "destinations for action", such as the Working Group, to maintain political pressure and take action on parties to conflict who are found to be persistent violators of child rights. Reports generated through the monitoring and reporting mechanism process have also contributed significantly to increased international awareness on the issue of Children and Armed Conflict, particularly through their inclusion in Security Council resolutions and debates that have been generated in other United Nations forums.

146. There have been positive developments as a result of the recommendations and actions taken by the Working Group, including drawing the attention of the Security Council as well as its sanctions committees, where applicable, to the need to follow up on the recommendations addressed to them. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, after an initial delay, the Government brought to trial former Mai-Mai Commander Kyungu Mutanga, alias "Gedeon", for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the recruitment of 300 children in Katanga Province from 2003 to 2006. This action follows strong recommendations by the Working Group to take appropriate legal measures against members of armed groups accused of grave

crimes against children. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Working Group requested that Forces de Défense et de Sécurité des Forces nouvelles continue its dissemination of the command order to end the detention of children. Since then, that command order has been successfully implemented, and regular monitoring of prisons and detention facilities in areas under the control of FDS-FN is carried out by the United Nations to ensure that no children are incarcerated.

147. Direct contact and dialogue by the Working Group with all the Government representatives of countries whose situation had been considered by the Working Group has also played a role in encouraging their active participation in its meetings, and in obtaining their positive commitments to protect children affected by armed conflict. The Government of Sri Lanka reaffirmed its zero-tolerance policy for the recruitment and use of children and reiterated its commitment to the Working Group by establishing a committee comprising high-level Government officials to conduct an independent and credible investigation into allegations that some security forces are abetting the Karuna faction in the recruitment and use of children. The Government of Uganda also reiterated its commitment to finalize its action plan pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) in order that the Uganda People's Defence Forces and local defence units be removed from the annexes of my annual reports.

148. Similarly, cooperative and constructive engagement by the Working Group with parties in situations of conflict not on the agenda of the Council, such as the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Uganda, has resulted in their acceptance of the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005).

149. However, in certain situations, increased pressure is required against persistent and recalcitrant violators of child rights, such as dissident General Laurent Nkunda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Janjaweed in the Sudan, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, by further considering the need to impose targeted measures against those parties.

150. In my 2006 report to the Security Council, I recommended that the monitoring and reporting mechanism be expanded to give equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern, thereby encouraging the establishment of the mechanism in all situations on the annexed lists. In April 2007, the Working Group placed the situation of children affected by armed conflict in Myanmar on its agenda. Despite the agreement achieved with the Government of Myanmar on monitoring and reporting mechanism implementation, the issue of access in a timely manner to conflict-affected areas, as well as other Government restrictions, are factors that need to be overcome to enable the effective and independent functioning of the mechanism. In situations not on the agenda of the Council, such as Chad, Colombia and the Philippines, overriding factors such as insecurity, restriction or denial of access to certain areas of the country and insufficient resources pose a significant challenge to the establishment of a rigorous monitoring and reporting mechanism. For example, precarious and unpredictable security situations in eastern Chad or in certain areas of operation of illegal armed groups in the Philippines and Colombia make it difficult to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on child rights violations.

151. My Special Representative has undertaken several country missions to carry out high-level advocacy on issues of children and armed conflict and to assist the authorities, United Nations and civil society partners in improving the situation of children in armed conflict. Several of these country missions have been mandated

by the Working Group. Cooperation from Governments in extending their invitation to my Special Representative has been instrumental in achieving those objectives. In the reporting period, missions to Sri Lanka (November 2006); the Sudan (January 2007); the Democratic Republic of the Congo (March 2007); Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel (April 2007); and Myanmar (June 2007) were carried out by my Special Representative or, in the case of Sri Lanka, by the Special Adviser to the Special Representative. Specific outcomes of those missions have been described under the relevant country situations in section III of the present report.

152. My 2006 report highlighted the findings from the study of child protection experience in peace operations<sup>4</sup> commissioned by the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, as called for in paragraph 20(d) of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The study recognized the crucial need of child protection advisers, and the significant impact they achieve through their monitoring and reporting capacity in increasing the attention to the rights of war-affected children on the United Nations peace and security agenda. The study, however, also brought attention to the need for a clear inter-agency decision-making process to ensure that all child protection actors are playing a role in such a way that takes advantage of their comparative strengths.

153. Five main lessons emerged from the study, namely: (a) the concept of child protection advisers and their current terms of reference should be jointly reviewed and clarified by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF; (b) there is a need for a specialized capacity at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations headquarters to provide guidance, training and daily operational support to the child protection advisers in the field; (c) best practices need to be captured from child protection advisers and fed into policy and guidance development by the Department, in consultation with the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF and other partners; (d) the location of child protection units or advisers within the mission structure needs to be reviewed and possibly standardized; and (e) the profile and selection process for child protection advisers should be reviewed by the Department, in consultation with the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF. The Peacekeeping Best Practices Section is currently in the process of recruiting a senior-level child protection focal point, who will be responsible for following up on the above-mentioned lessons and recommendations.

154. The child protection advisers should also be placed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory to augment the human rights monitoring expertise in the respective missions. There should also be the placement of child protection advisers within the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur and United Nations-European Union multidimensional presence in Chad and the Central African Republic. This would strengthen the task of monitoring and reporting, as well as help to provide timely and accurate information for prompt advocacy and response to the issue of children affected by armed conflict in those conflict situations.

155. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently adopted new reporting guidelines under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, "The Impact of Child Protection Advisers in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations" (May 2007).

on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which encourage States parties to cooperate with my Special Representative and the monitoring and reporting mechanism as per the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in the implementation of the Optional Protocol.

## **V. Information on progress made in the development and implementation of action plans**

156. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), parties are called upon to develop and implement concrete time-bound action plans, in close collaboration with United Nations peacekeeping missions and/or United Nations country teams. During the reporting period, progress on action plans has been made with armed forces and groups in four country situations on the agenda of the Security Council, namely, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar and the Sudan; and two parties in country situations not on the Council's agenda, namely Sri Lanka and Uganda. In Chad, although an action plan has not been developed, the Government signed an agreement with UNICEF to demobilize child soldiers from the armed forces.

157. In the reporting period, several factors have contributed to the compliance by parties, including their engagement in action plans to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict:

(a) There has been sustained engagement and pressure on parties by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, including the possibility of targeted measures;

(b) Trust and confidence-building measures carried out by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting and United Nations country teams with parties have resulted in significant achievements with respect to the demobilization and release of children associated with armed forces and groups;

(c) The visits of my Special Representative have provided the opportunity for high-level advocacy and opened doors for follow-up dialogues with military and political authorities by the task force and United Nations country teams;

(d) The continued mainstreaming of issues on children and armed conflict in the peacekeeping missions through child protection advisers, and enhanced cooperation with UNICEF and OHCHR are resulting in greater efforts for the protection of children.

158. While progress has been made with certain parties to conflict, progress with others has been slower. In Sri Lanka, the draft action plan submitted by LTTE commits the group to not recruit children under 17 years of age, which is inconsistent with international standards. In Myanmar, although KNU and KNPP had engaged with the United Nations on deeds of commitment following their listing on the annexes of my annual report to the Security Council in 2006, the Government of Myanmar had been reticent to allow for further dialogue owing to various concerns relating to their status as non-State actors. Similar sensitivities apply to the conflict in Colombia. In Uganda, an action plan which meets international standards has yet to be finalized.

## **VI. Recommendations**

159. It is recommended that the Security Council consider giving equal care and attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern listed in the annexes to my report.

160. It is further recommended that the Security Council give equal weight to all categories of grave violations, including not only the recruitment and use of children, but also the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children.

161. While recognizing the efforts and cooperation by some countries, the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be supported in all situations of concern.

162. The Security Council is encouraged to continue to call upon parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to my report to prepare concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and other violations and abuses committed against children for which they are cited, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children, in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and to expand the call for action plans to all situations of concern.

163. I welcome the Security Council's continuing consideration of effective targeted measures against parties to armed conflict who continue to systematically commit grave violations against children in armed conflict in defiance of recommendations by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and of Council resolutions. The Security Council should consider a range of measures, including a ban on the export or supply of arms, a ban on military assistance, the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders, their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, and restriction of the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

164. The Security Council is encouraged to empower its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to recommend to the Council the imposition of targeted measures, and to monitor the implementation of such measures, on parties to armed conflict who commit grave violations against children in all situations of concern listed in the annexes to my report.

165. It is recommended that all future peacekeeping missions and relevant political missions include within their mandates child protection advisers, as appropriate, to strengthen monitoring and reporting and provide timely and accurate information for prompt advocacy and response for the protection of children affected by armed conflict in those situations.

166. Member States concerned should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible for the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children through national justice systems. The Security Council is encouraged to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction.

167. Member States concerned should coordinate with my Special Representative on her engagement with non-State parties to ensure the broad and effective protection of children exposed to situations of concern.

168. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are encouraged to take measures to support the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, in particular by signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces/groups and their use in hostilities; to submit reports under the Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and to exercise extraterritorial jurisdiction in order to strengthen the international protection of children against recruitment.

169. Member States are urged to work towards the implementation of a comprehensive strategy on assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel, thereby enabling children who are victims of or born as a result of such abuse to receive much-needed support.

170. Adequate resources and funding need to be made available by donors to national Governments, the United Nations and partners to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of all children who have been associated with armed forces or armed groups, including relevant and effective programmatic action that reinforces such efforts, while ensuring their long-term sustainability and viability.

171. Member States are urged to address immediately the grave humanitarian, human rights and development consequences of cluster munitions. To that end, Member States are encouraged to conclude a binding instrument that prohibits the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians; requires the destruction of current stockpiles of those munitions; and provides for clearance, risk education and other risk-mitigation activities, victim support, assistance and cooperation, and compliance and transparency measures.

## VII. Annexed lists<sup>5</sup>

172. The present report contains two annexes.<sup>6</sup> Annex I lists parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II lists parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

173. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the annexed lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible

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<sup>5</sup> Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the present report is guided by criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

<sup>6</sup> The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.



## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

Taliban Forces

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Burundi**

Parti de libération du peuple hutu (Palipehutu)-Forces nationales pour la libération (FNL) — Agathon Rwasa

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Forces démocratiques pour la rassemblement (UFDR)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools in the reporting period.*

3. Forces démocratiques populaire de Centrafrique (FDPC)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

3. Front des nationalistes et intégrationnistes (FNI)

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

4. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI)

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

5. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, Maniema and Katanga who have not integrated into FARDC

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

6. Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC)

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

7. Non-integrated FARDC brigades loyal to rebel leader Laurent Nkunda

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)

2. Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council

3. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)

4. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)

5. Karenni Army (KA)

6. Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)

7. Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

8. Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)

9. Tatmadaw Kyi

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

10. United Wa State Army (UWSA)

**Parties in Nepal**

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M)

*This party has also been responsible for abducting children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Somalia**

1. Remnants of the former Union of the Islamic Courts (UIC)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

2. Transitional Federal Government (TFG)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Southern Sudan**

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

(a) South Sudan Defence Forces, including the forces of Major-General Gabriel Tang Ginyi

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(b) Sudan. Armed Forces (SAF)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Parties under the control of the Government of Southern Sudan

(a) Pibor Defence Forces

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(b) Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Darfur**

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

(a) Chadian opposition groups

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(b) Darfur Government supporting militias called the Janjaweed

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

(c) Police Forces, including the Central Reserve Police

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(d) Popular Defence Forces

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(e) Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

2. Former rebel parties who have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement

(a) Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Gasim

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minnawi

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

3. Rebel parties who have rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement

(a) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

(b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Shafi

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Chad**

1. Chadian National Army

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Chadian self-defence groups operating in Ade, Dogdore and Mogororo
3. Government of the Sudan-backed militias, known as the Janjaweed
4. Sudanese armed groups backed by the Government of Chad
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement
  - (b) Sudan Liberation Army — G19 faction
5. Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children.*

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions, committing rape and other grave sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions, committing rape and other grave sexual violence and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

3. Illegal armed groups not participating in the demobilization process
  - (a) Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare
  - (b) Frente Cacique Pipinta

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
3. New People's Army (NPA)

**Parties in Sri Lanka**

1. Karuna faction

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and abductions of children in the reporting period.*

2. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

*This party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and abductions of children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Uganda**

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

2. Government armed forces and defence units

(a) Local defence units

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

(b) Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)

*This party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

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# General Assembly Security Council

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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**  
**Sixty-third year**

## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council presidential statement (S/PRST/2008/6), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of its resolutions 1612 (2005), 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004) on children and armed conflict. The report includes information on compliance with applicable international law to end the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations being committed against children affected by armed conflict;<sup>1</sup> information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children, as well as progress made in mainstreaming children and armed conflict issues in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions; and a brief summary of the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and of its progress.

2. The report includes a proposal to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on rape and other grave sexual violence against children. The Office of my Special Representative has also identified the following emerging concerns in relation to the children and armed conflict agenda as key priority areas for action and continued

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<sup>1</sup> Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.



advocacy. These concerns include internally displaced children and their particular risks for recruitment; terrorism and counter-terrorism measures and its impact on children; the accountability of child soldiers for acts committed during armed conflict, and special protections accorded to them; control on the transfer and use of arms and ammunitions, particularly to countries where children are known to be, or may potentially be, recruited or used in hostilities; and measures to achieve sustainable reintegration of children affected by conflict.

3. The report covers compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, including the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict.

4. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams are the primary sources of information for the report.

5. References to reports, cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where access to obtaining or independently verifying information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

6. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence.<sup>2</sup> In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

## **II. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations being committed against children**

7. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from September 2007 to December 2008, as well as some developments that have extended beyond the reporting period. Reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. PICTET (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).



Congo, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka and Uganda were also submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict during the reporting period.

8. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II to the present report, and named in the body of my 2007 report (A/62/609-S/2007/757), have been assessed with respect to whether they have ceased recruiting and using children, and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children. Progress made by the parties is also assessed with respect to whether they have engaged in dialogue with country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting, as called for in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), and whether through that dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes or the signing of peace agreements, they have developed and implemented action plans to end the use of children and released all children from their ranks, and made specific commitments to address other grave violations against children for which they have been cited.

9. Parties who fully comply with terms set forth in action plans and undertake verified measures to address other grave violations for which they have been cited, to the satisfaction of the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting and the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, will be considered for de-listing from the annexes. Ongoing monitoring by the country-level task force on monitoring and reporting is required to ensure the protection of children and compliance with the undertakings given by parties that have been de-listed. Should it be determined that de-listed parties recruit and use children at a later point in time, or fail to allow continuous and unhindered access to the United Nations for verification, they will be re-listed onto the annexes, and the Security Council will be alerted to the non-compliance.

## **A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

### **Developments in Afghanistan<sup>3</sup>**

10. Allegations of recruitment of children by armed groups, including those associated with the Taliban, have been received from all regions, particularly from the south, south-east and east. Recruitment is also reported to be prevalent in areas with high concentrations of returnees or internally displaced persons, particularly in the south and south-eastern provinces. Recently, allegations were received of children living in the southern border areas who were being approached and offered money to carry out activities on behalf of armed groups. A study conducted by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) also documented cases of children being used by the Taliban to carry out suicide attacks.

11. There are also concerns that due to inadequate age-verification procedures in its recruitment processes, children have been found in ranks of the Afghan National Police.

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in Afghanistan, see S/2008/695.

12. Children have been captured, arrested and detained by Afghan law enforcement agencies and international military forces because of their alleged association with armed groups. There is evidence of children being ill-treated, detained for long periods of time by the National Directorate of Security and prevented access to legal assistance, in contravention of the provisions of the Afghan Juvenile Code and international standards on juvenile justice. In November 2007, a 17-year-old boy arrested by the National Directorate of Security in relation to the murder of the head of the Department of Women's Affairs by the Taliban in Kandahar was detained with no charge until August 2008 and was allegedly severely beaten and deprived of food and sleep. He was later transferred to National Directorate of Security detention in Kabul, tried and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment in Pul-i-Charki adult prison.

13. Reports of child casualties due to the conflict have been received from all across Afghanistan. Children are caught between opposing sides in the ongoing conflict in the southern and eastern regions. Between January and December 2008, 73 children were killed and 91 injured in the eastern region; and 100 children were killed and 116 injured in the southern region. Children have also been victims of asymmetric attacks, which have included suicide bombings, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, body-borne improvised explosive devices, and attacks by anti-government elements including the Taliban, in the north-east, west and central regions, which primarily target national and international security forces, governmental infrastructure and personnel. For example, on 20 October 2008 in Kunduz Province, a suicide bomber blew himself up in the vicinity of an international forces checkpoint, killing five children and seriously injuring two more. Furthermore, a total of 106 children (94 boys and 12 girls) were killed and 409 children (354 boys and 55 girls) injured from landmines and unexploded ordnance in the reporting period, mainly in the Baghlan, Kabul and Kandahar provinces.

14. Since my last annual report, there has been an escalation of incidents affecting the education sector, including attacks on schools, students and teachers. From September 2007 to September 2008, 321 cases were recorded, compared to 133 cases reported over the same period last year. As of September, the Ministry of Education reported that 99 schools had been attacked, burned or destroyed by anti-government elements, including the Taliban, and 600 schools were closed since the start of the year, with 80 per cent of the closures being in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul and Urozgan. Students, teachers and other education personnel have been threatened or killed. During the reporting period, approximately 20 children were killed and 27 seriously injured, mainly in the central and south-eastern regions. These incidents were perpetrated by anti-government elements, including the Taliban. A particularly disturbing incident occurred on 12 November 2008, when Taliban militants attacked a group of girls en route to school by throwing acid on their faces. They were reportedly paid 100,000 Pakistani rupees for each girl they were able to burn. Schools have also been unintentionally damaged in artillery exchanges with anti-government elements and international military forces.

15. The conflict has negatively affected access to basic health services in almost half of the country, with the southern region being the most affected. Medical personnel have been targeted by anti-government elements, including the Taliban. On 14 September 2008, two World Health Organization (WHO) doctors and their

driver were killed by the Taliban during a targeted suicide attack in Spin Boldak. The impact of the violence is further exacerbated by the dissemination of night letters throughout the country by anti-government elements, including the Taliban, instructing civil servants to stop working for government and international organizations. This is instilling fear and panic, and particularly affecting female health service workers.

16. Humanitarian access is increasingly restricted in conflict-affected areas, aggravated by recurrent threats, beatings, abductions and killings of humanitarian workers, attacks and looting of aid convoys. Anti-government elements, including the Taliban, were responsible for more than 144 attacks on humanitarian personnel in 2008, in which 38 humanitarian workers were killed. These groups have expanded their presence turning many areas of the country into “no-go” zones, particularly in the south, south-east and east. As of December 2008, 79 out of 398 districts were inaccessible to United Nations agencies for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to millions of Afghans, including children.

17. Reports of children being sexually abused and exploited by members of armed forces and groups were documented. Although some incidents were investigated and perpetrators sentenced to imprisonment, in most incidents they are not officially reported for fear of retaliation, and only a few reach the prosecution stage. Nevertheless, a few cases of influential leaders of armed groups using young boys for sexual purposes were prosecuted.

#### **Developments in Burundi**

18. The Parti pour la libération du peuple Hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) led by Agathon Rwasa continues to recruit and use children. From January to December 2008, 152 children between the ages of 9 and 17 were confirmed to have been recruited by FNL. An increase in the incidence of recruitment coincided with the 26 May 2008 Government/FNL joint declaration on the cessation of hostilities and the gathering of FNL in pre-assembly and assembly areas where the recruitment of hundreds of students along with or by their teachers was reported. The children were promised demobilization benefits by FNL, which was probably seeking to inflate its numbers. During the initial verification of FNL combatants assembled in Rugazi in June 2008, approximately 150 children were present. In August 2008, following the sensitization on children in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, FNL submitted a list acknowledging the presence of 30 children in Rugazi, although their separation was blocked on two occasions by the FNL leadership. This issue has still not been resolved.

19. Children were also found associated with the alleged FNL dissidents at the Randa and Buramata assembly areas. The alleged dissidents agreed to the release of all children in exchange for their inclusion in the formal demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process. In April, the separation and demobilization of 220 children was completed, and all the children were reunited with their families by July 2008. An additional 69 children associated with the alleged dissidents were identified in September 2008, and their separation by the national authorities is pending the establishment of the new government disarmament, demobilization and reintegration structure.

20. The Group of Special Envoys for Burundi met in Bujumbura on 16 and 17 January 2009. Following the meeting, they issued the Bujumbura Declaration,

which set out deadlines on critical aspects of the peace process, including the unconditional separation of all children associated with FNL by 30 January 2009. FNL failed to meet that deadline. It subsequently assured the Government and the international community of its willingness to release the children associated with the movement, but again made the release conditional on the start of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for all its combatants and the integration of its members into security institutions. Despite repeated pledges and agreements, FNL has failed to cooperate on this issue.

21. In October 2008, allegations were received of child recruitment by forces of General Laurent Nkunda's Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP). According to the Burundi National Police, investigations on possible recruitments were being carried out in Cibitoke and Bujumbura Marie provinces. The country task force is closely monitoring the situation.

22. Sexual violence against children continues to be a serious concern, with a vast majority of the reported victims being girls. From January to December 2008, the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi registered 476 cases of rape and sexual violence against children between the ages of 1 and 17 years, of which 449 were girls and 27 boys. The perpetrators included members of the Burundi National Police, the Burundi National Defence Forces, FNL and alleged FNL dissidents, although a majority of the cases were perpetrated by civilians in an environment of insecurity and impunity. The recent adoption of the revised Penal Code by the National Assembly and by the Senate with amendments that strengthen the sentencing of perpetrators of sexual violence against children is welcomed.

#### **Developments in the Central African Republic<sup>4</sup>**

23. Reports indicate that Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD), Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), Forces démocratiques populaires de Centrafrique (FDPC), and Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) recruit and use children. Self-defence militias are also found to be recruiting children into their ranks, particularly in the Ouham-Pénde region. There are concerns that these militias have in some cases been supported by the Government of the Central African Republic and that they have been used as auxiliaries by the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA). An increasing presence of armed children recruited by these militia groups has been sighted along main roads from Bossangoa to Bouar to Bocaranga. Although not a systematic practice, there are also reports of some elements of FACA and the Presidential Guard committing other grave violations against children, including killing, maiming, and attacks on schools.

24. In February and March 2008, attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on villages in the Obo area, in south-eastern Central African Republic, led to the abduction of approximately 55 children (40 boys and 15 girls). The majority of the children abducted were under 15 years of age. According to the testimonies of some children who were abducted and later released by LRA, the children were being used as soldiers and for auxiliary tasks, and some of the girls were used as sexual

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<sup>4</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in the Central African Republic, see S/2009/66.

slaves. Two girls under the age of 18 testified that they were repeatedly gang-raped by LRA elements.

25. Incidence of rape and sexual violence against children by armed elements is of grave concern. In March 2008, 5 of the 15 girls released by UFDR were found to have been regularly sexually violated by members of the group. Three girls reported that they were either raped or gang raped. All the girls were between the ages of 11 and 17 at the time of release. Cases of rape and sexual violence and of abduction, killing and maiming of children have also been attributed to the zaraguinas, who are from the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, Mali and Uganda, and on occasion are made up of elements from the Central African Republic rebel groups or from the Chadian and the Central African Republic armed forces.

26. Patterns of displacement are unique in the Central African Republic, and can be distinguished in two categories. In the first case, persons leave their villages in an organized manner and stay in the bush for a few days. Such “preventive” displacement or coping strategy is usually provoked by rumours of movements of armed forces and groups or zaraguinas. In the second case, displacement is a reaction to unexpected attacks on villages by armed forces and groups or zaraguinas, and populations typically have no time to organize their escape and leave without any basic necessities. They may hide in the bush, move from one village to the other, or end up in the internally displaced persons camp of Kabo (central north). In this unpredictable context, children are particularly vulnerable, given the possibility of being left behind or suffering grave violations such as abduction and recruitment, killing, maiming, or sexual violence.

#### **Developments in Chad<sup>5</sup>**

27. Information gathered by the United Nations confirms that there is a consistent pattern of recruitment of children by both Government forces and rebel groups, including in refugee camps and internally displaced persons sites, particularly in eastern Chad. Between March and August 2008, there were reports of missing children recruited in all camps visited. All indications show that those children have joined the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel group. In most camps, some refugee leaders act as focal points to facilitate the recruitment of children, in particular for JEM. These leaders reportedly take advantage of social gatherings in the camps, such as religious celebrations or wedding parties, to incite children into joining the rebellion. The Government of Chad is reported to be aware of this fact, and, according to consistent information received, some local officials have been assisting in the recruitment.

28. The presence of military elements in the camps has been reported. According to information received, JEM has opened offices in some camps, including in Oure Cassoni (Bahai), the second largest refugee camp in the country, and the closest to the Sudanese border. It has also opened offices in the city of Iriba, broadcasting and distributing public appeals, calling for people, including children, to support and join them.

29. The recruitment and use of children is also perpetrated by other Sudanese armed groups generally referred to as Toroboros. The Toroboros are reported to have

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in Chad, see S/2008/532.

recruited children in the Breidjine and Treguine refugee camps between July and August 2008.

30. Thousands of children remain associated with armed groups belonging to different rebel factions such as the Convention révolutionnaire démocratique du Tchad (CRDT), Concorde nationale tchadienne (CNT), Front uni pour le changement (FUC) and Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD).

31. Government officials deny that Armée Nationale Tchadienne (ANT) recruits children. However, it should be noted that 13 per cent of the 555 children released from the armed forces and groups in 2007 and 2008 originated from ANT, particularly from the Centres d'Instruction Militaire of Lumia and Moussoro, and from the Gendarmerie Nationale, including the Legion de Abeche and École de la Gendarmerie de N'Djamena. Further, most Chadian self-defence groups operating in Ade, Dogdore and Mogororo, listed in my last annual report, have been integrated into the Chadian national army. These elements received formal training at the Moussoro Military Instruction Centre. There are no more children present in their ranks.

32. In addition, at the end of 2007 and throughout 2008, children were reportedly recruited by the Direction Générale de Sécurisation des Services et Institutions de l'Etat (DGSSIE), which is directly in charge of special military operations. Those children were recruited south and east of N'Djamena for the sum of 333,000 FCFA each (US\$ 600), or in exchange for a motorcycle. Many of them were sent to DGSSIE training centres in Amtinene and Moussoro. Information corroborated from various sources confirmed that approximately 100 children from a DGSSIE contingent left the Moussoro training centre in July 2008, and were deployed in different units of the DGSSIE in the Gassi and Amtinene camps and Camp des Martyrs in N'Djamena. They are frequently spotted in the streets of N'Djamena and in the operational units in Tine, Adre, Am Zoer, Goz Beida and Abeche in the east.

33. Women and girls in refugee camps and internally displaced persons sites, as well as in the surrounding towns and villages, have been subject to sexual assaults. Rape and physical assaults directed at girls are mainly attributed to unidentified uniformed armed men but also to ANT soldiers from units operating in the hills of Goz Beida and Modeina area. Cases of sexual and gender-based violence show an increasing trend of abuse towards refugee and internally displaced females, in particular girls under the age of 10.

34. The reporting period was characterized by a number of attacks targeting humanitarian personnel and assets. In most cases, the attackers seized material assets, while in others the attackers were more violent, killing humanitarian staff. Perpetrators are believed to be mainly armed elements and members of rebel groups who use extorted property for their military campaigns. There were also reports that, in some instances, members of ANT were implicated in incidents against humanitarian personnel. The consequences of these attacks for civilians and children in particular have been severe. Humanitarian programmes were disrupted in Iridimi, Touloum, Ade, Adre and Dogdore. It is important to note that in many incidents of carjacking of humanitarian vehicles, the attackers drove into the Sudan, emphasizing the cross-border nature of this problem.

### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

35. There was no substantiated evidence of use of child soldiers by armed forces or groups in the reporting period. In February 2008, the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) received a small number of allegations against militia groups in the west, which were investigated through the established United Nations verification modality and disproved. The leadership of the groups allowed full and unhindered access by the United Nations for verification. Following that, the militia groups issued a communiqué on 17 February 2008 condemning the use of child soldiers and reiterating their full commitment to their action plan and to Security Council resolutions. Similar cooperation is also extended by Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces nouvelles (FDS-FN).

36. Rape and other sexual violence, as well as other grave violations against children, are prevalent throughout Côte d'Ivoire and are perpetrated with impunity by individuals and groups, often unidentified, who take advantage of the current deficit in the rule of law and administration of justice. The situation is more serious in areas under the control of FDS-FN in the north of Côte d'Ivoire. Some progress has been noted in Government-controlled areas, although many reported cases remain uninvestigated or unprosecuted.

37. In follow-up to the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Ministry of Family, Women and Social Welfare requested UNOCI to submit a draft proposal to the Government on the creation of a national commission for children affected by armed conflict, in accordance with international law and taking into account the principles relating to the status of national institutions. A separate proposal on the establishment of a national action plan to combat sexual violence was also submitted at the request of the Government in September 2008. These proposals are under review by the Government.

38. The leadership of FDS-FN also developed and signed a programme of action against sexual violence on 19 January 2009, in response to the request of the Working Group. The programme of action includes elements of prevention, addressing impunity and providing witness protection and assistance to victims of sexual violence, and will constitute a stopgap measure pending the establishment of a national action plan to combat sexual violence by the Government. In a letter addressed to my Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire dated 17 April 2008, the militia groups in the west also expressed their willingness to join efforts to address sexual violence.

### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>6</sup>**

39. During the reporting period, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) documented a total of 554 children (including 26 girls), who were newly recruited. Of those documented cases, 86 per cent occurred in North Kivu, 12 per cent in South Kivu, 1 per cent in Oriental province and 1 per cent in Rwanda. New cases of recruitment of children have been attributed to Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) (29 per cent), all Mai-Mai factions (32 per cent), CNDP (24 per cent) and Forces démocratiques de

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, see S/2008/693.

libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (13 per cent). A total of 1,098 children, including 48 girls, were documented to have separated from or escaped from armed groups.

40. Although systematic recruitment of children by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have ceased in accordance with their military policy and applicable international laws, children continue to be integrated into the force through the brassage process, owing to lack of proper screening. The release of children present within FARDC has been frequently obstructed, and child protection partners have been denied access to brassage centres by some FARDC commanders in order to identify and separate children. The presence of some children continues to be reported in remaining non-integrated FARDC brigades, particularly in the Kivus.

41. The recruitment of children and their use in active combat by CNDP increased because of the resumption of fighting with FARDC in late 2007 and since September 2008. In November 2008, CNDP recruited children from schools in Masisi and Rutshuru territories. CNDP also detained children captured from various armed groups during the fighting.

42. FDLR and its sub-groups FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FOCA), FDLR-Rally for Unity and Democracy and FDLR-Soki continue to recruit children, including many children from Rwanda. Between June 2007 and September 2008, a total of 84 Rwandan children separated from armed groups were repatriated by MONUC. Out of that total, 48 were recruited by FDLR, 25 by CNDP, 7 by FARDC and 4 by Mai-Mai groups.

43. In Ituri, following the surrender of the main militia leaders, no new recruitments were reported from Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC) and Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI). Only a few cases of recruitment were documented and attributed to Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI).

44. Widespread sexual violence remains a grave concern, with a majority of the perpetrators being elements of armed groups in the regions of active conflict, but also including FARDC soldiers and national police officers. In 2008, children constituted 2,727 cases of sexual violence in Oriental province; among them 2,204 cases in Ituri, 528 cases in South Kivu, and 1,196 cases in North Kivu.

45. Since September 2008, reports of abduction of large numbers of children by LRA were received. As of November 2008, MONUC documented 154 cases following the LRA attacks in and around Dungeni, Haut Uélé district, Oriental province. At the end of December 2008, further cases of abduction, killing and sexual violence against children were reported after attacks on Faradje and Doruma. Between September and December, 104 children escaped LRA and received reintegration support by child protection partners. In December 2008, FARDC, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) launched a joint military attack on LRA rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provoking the dispersion of LRA towards the Sudanese border and south of Congolese territory.

46. During the periods of renewed fighting in North Kivu, there was an increase in reports of attacks on schools and health facilities by CNDP and Mai-Mai. As FARDC reinforced their positions, cases of lootings and occupation of schools and health facilities attributed to FARDC elements in Ituri and the Kivus were reported. From July 2008, at least 10 violent attacks on humanitarian convoys, institutions



and individuals attributed to the Mai-Mai and 5 cases attributed to FARDC soldiers were received.

47. Recent significant events such as the splitting of CNDP, the detention of Laurent Nkunda by the Rwandan Government and the joint military operations by FARDC and Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) against FDLR may also carry significant implications for children, in terms of the increased risk of children being used in military operations, or killed or injured in hostilities, as well as the demobilization of children within CNDP and other armed groups.

### **Developments in Georgia**

48. The dramatic escalation of hostilities in South Ossetia, Georgia, on 7 and 8 August 2008, and the subsequent conflict significantly affected the situation in and around the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the fighting has led to the displacement of approximately 158,700 persons, with 120,700 displaced within Georgia and 38,000 South Ossetians having sought refuge in the Republic of North Ossetia of the Russian Federation. UNICEF has estimated that, as of 1 January 2009, there remain 12,000 children internally displaced and 400 children displaced in the Republic of North Ossetia of the Russian Federation.

49. According to the Georgian Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, a total of 228 persons, including two children, were killed during and immediately after the hostilities. Reports indicate that some of the casualties were due to action by regular troops that fought during the August conflict, as well as by South Ossetian militias. According to the de facto authorities in South Ossetia, there were approximately 1,692 civilian casualties, including children. However, the United Nations indicated 391 civilians were killed and 2,234 injured. Mines and other unexploded remnants of war continue to pose a threat to a returning population in the areas adjacent to the South Ossetia administrative boundary line. Seven people, including three children, have been injured by unexploded remnants of war in various villages in Shida Kartli region. As of the end of September 2008, approximately 26,500 unexploded remnants of war were cleared from the adjacent areas and 98,240 from the South Ossetian zone of conflict.

50. Approximately 99 schools suffered damage from the conflict to varying degrees, including from rocket attacks. Loss of school equipment and furniture was also reported both as a result of military action and subsequent looting. In Tskhinvali, 6 schools and kindergartens were destroyed, and 22 others were damaged, according to the de facto authorities in South Ossetia.

51. As of the beginning of September 2008, 13 clinics in Gori and in the adjacent areas were not functioning owing to infrastructure damage and/or the displacement of health-care workers, having serious consequences for the provision of health services to children. Doctors and nurses were also killed or seriously injured from sniper shooting or bombardments of medical infrastructure during the conflict. Clinics in Karaleti and Dvani were severely damaged; Tkviavi hospital and three clinics in Mereti, Nikozi and Berbuki were damaged; and several primary health-care facilities in Dzevera, Mereti and Nikozi were completely looted. Almost all health-care facilities in South Ossetian villages, including in Sarabuk, Pris, Tbet, Khetagurovo and Satikar, were totally destroyed. The main hospital in Tskhinvali was hit by rockets reportedly launched by Georgian forces.

52. There has been no humanitarian access to South Ossetia from the south since the August conflict, although the United Nations has been allowed full access to Abkhazia, Georgia. This has limited the ability of the United Nations to obtain information on the situation of children and their needs and to investigate child protection concerns. Humanitarian access to South Ossetia is currently provided through the Republic of North Ossetia of the Russian Federation. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) gained access to its office in Tskhinvali on 20 August 2008, and provides humanitarian assistance to the four districts comprising South Ossetia, including Tskhinvali.

### **Developments in Haiti**

53. Since my last annual report, armed elements in Haiti have been dismantled through military and police operations by the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and the Haitian National Police. However, children were used in violent political demonstrations throughout the country, roadblocks and lootings, as well as in the attempt to enter the Presidential Palace compound in April 2008. MINUSTAH military battalions reported that approximately 30 per cent of the protestors were children. MINUSTAH confirmed that 45 children were arrested under charges of criminal conspiracy and detained in the Delmas-33 detention centre, in Port-au-Prince, for their participation in the violent demonstrations. Children also continue to be used by armed elements to carry out abductions and weapons smuggling.

54. In the last quarter of 2007, MINUSTAH reported an alarming phenomenon among some armed elements in the area of Jamaica Base, Cité Soleil. These groups were equipping children with toy guns that looked realistic, and the children had approached MINUSTAH military checkpoints brandishing these weapons. Preliminary investigations indicated that the armed elements acting as political spoilers were using the children in an attempt to instigate public disorder.

55. The abduction of children remains a serious concern, particularly in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien. A total of 126 children, including 60 girls, were abducted by armed elements in the reporting period. The majority of girls abducted were also raped or sexually abused. Students on their way to or from schools have been particularly targeted by abductors.

56. Despite an overall improvement in security, 52 children were killed in the reporting period, mainly caught in cross-fire between Haitian National Police and armed elements.

57. Sexual violence, including gang rapes, against children perpetrated by armed elements in the context of insecurity and impunity continues to be reported. The report on sexual violence against girls and women in Haiti by the National Forum against Violence against Women (Concertation Nationale contre les violences faites aux femmes) estimated that from cases documented between January and June 2008, 50 per cent of the rape victims were girl children. The report highlights that the number of reported cases has increased, as a result of the improved security situation allowing girls to seek support without fear of retaliation and sensitization activities encouraging girl victims to obtain follow-up assistance.

58. MINUSTAH confirmed that 297 children, including 30 girls, are being detained in detention centres throughout the country as at the end of December

2008; 60 per cent of them are being detained for their alleged association with armed groups and 87 per cent are held in prolonged pre-trial detention, some of them since 2004.

### **Developments in Iraq**

59. While the human rights situation in Iraq remained serious in 2008, the country has witnessed gradual stabilization and security improvements, with a lower number of violent, high-visibility, high-casualty attacks by non-State armed groups and criminal gangs. The capabilities of groups such as Al-Qaida in Iraq have diminished considerably over the past several months. However, Al-Qaida in Iraq is now suspected of training children to become fighters or insurgents, after video footage of such training sessions was discovered during a raid by United States soldiers on a hideout in Khan Bani Saad, north-east of Baghdad, in February 2008. In another reported case, on 26 May, in Sumer (Mosul), Iraqi troops arrested six boys between the ages of 15 and 18, who were suspected of being trained by a Saudi Al-Qaida member to carry out suicide bombings.

60. There are particular concerns about non-State armed groups allegedly using children to support operations such as transporting improvised explosive devices, acting as lookouts for other armed actors and as suicide bombers. On 15 May 2008, insurgents strapped explosives to a young girl and remotely detonated her as she approached an Iraqi Army command post in Yousifiyah; on 2 September, a 15-year-old boy blew himself up among pro-government militia members in al-Tarmiyah (northern Baghdad); and on 10 November, a 13-year-old girl blew herself up at a checkpoint in Ba'qubah.

61. The case of a 15-year-old girl, would-be suicide bomber, made international headlines when she was arrested by Ba'qubah police on 24 August 2008, still wearing an explosive vest. She was married to an alleged Al-Qaida militant at the age of 14, after leaving school at the age of 11. Both her father and brother had allegedly been suicide bombers.

62. While there are no reports of children in the new Iraqi Army, there are disturbing reports of children being recruited into the ranks of the Awakening Councils. The recent decision by the Iraqi Government to integrate the Awakening Councils into the Iraqi Army may alleviate these concerns. United Nations partners have documented 472 children who have been recruited and used by local militias in disputed areas.

63. Killing and maiming due to armed violence remained a continuing occurrence although at decreased levels in Iraq, and children were among the victims. On 31 December 2007, five children were victims of a suicide car bomb in al-Tarmiyah; on 16 July 2008, a car bomb explosion in a market in Tal Afar (Ninewa governorate) killed nine children; and on 22 September, a bomb blast in Hammam al-Ali (south of Mosul) killed five children who were playing near their homes. There were some cases of attackers directly targeting children. These include an incident that occurred on 18 November 2007 in Ba'qubah, when a suicide bomber detonated his vest containing explosives while United States soldiers were handing out toys to children in a playground, killing three children. On 22 January 2008, a suicide bomber blew himself up at the entrance to al-Mutwra school in Ba'qubah, injuring 17 students and 4 teachers.

64. Civilians, including children, were unintentionally injured or killed by multinational force (MNF-I) air strikes, military ground operations or during checkpoint confrontations. The most notable campaign was the MNF-I joint action with Iraqi security forces on militias in Baghdad's Sadr City in April and May 2008. Although militias were successfully driven out, the use of air strikes and other high-calibre weaponry in the densely populated area led to a considerable number of civilian casualties. The spokesman of the Baghdad Security Plan reported that, as of 30 April, 925 people had been killed due to many causes, including insurgent killings. Many of those killed were non-combatants, but no precise gender or age disaggregation of victims was carried out.

65. There have been incidents of children being killed by employees of private military and security companies. On 16 September 2007, at least one child was among the 17 persons killed by Blackwater guards in Baghdad's Nisoor Square, when they fired into a crowd of civilians following an alleged security threat. Five indictments were handed down against Blackwater team members in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia for manslaughter. A sixth Blackwater member has already pleaded guilty to one count each of manslaughter, attempted manslaughter and aiding and abetting.

66. As of December 2008, there were 838 children in conflict with the law under custody of the Government of Iraq. Some children have been detained or imprisoned for conflict-related reasons such as alleged participation in insurgent activities or other forms of association with armed groups. During a United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) visit to the central prison of Fallujah, it was revealed that in one cell (of 25 square metres) reserved for juveniles, 29 inmates as young as 14 years old were being confined. Eight of the children have been in pre-trial detention for more than one year. Children continue to face the threat of sexual and physical abuse by Iraqi police and prison guards, particularly upon arrest and during the early stages of investigations. Detained children have also been allegedly subjected to threats and ill-treatment by investigators with the aim of obtaining a confession. The Government of Iraq has made serious commitments to improve the conditions of children in detention. UNICEF and UNAMI human rights advocacy to apply the Amnesty Law of February 2008 contributed to the release of 750 children detained in Iraqi facilities without trial or formal charges.

67. The administrative detention of children allegedly associated with armed groups by MNF-I had been a major concern in the recent past. The situation is no longer at a crisis level, with a decrease in detainee figures from 874 as of 8 December 2007 to approximately 500 as of mid-May 2008, and to 58 as of 17 December 2008. The children are being treated well, but the vague basis for their internment "required for imperative reasons of security" remains troubling. The United States-Iraq security agreement that came into force on 1 January 2009 no longer authorizes MNF-I to detain individuals for reasons of imperative security.

68. Children's access to education has been compromised by insecurity and population movement due to insecurity in 2007 and 2008. The UNESCO National Education Support Strategy from Iraq released in April 2008 estimates that 2 million children of primary school age do not attend school largely because of the security situation. UNICEF received reports that schools have also been threatened by groups promoting religious extremism, particularly against girl schools in south and

central Iraq. On 27 March 2008, armed elements blew up a school building in Saydiyah.

69. In Diyala governorate, efforts were under way to have MNF-I, the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police units vacate more than 70 school buildings they had occupied and used for military purposes. The use of public buildings for military purposes may continue to decrease given the end of the “surge”, improving conditions on the ground, and articles within the United States-Iraq security agreement that require United States forces to vacate all Iraqi cities and villages by the end of June 2009.

#### **Developments in Lebanon**

70. As a result of the use of cluster munitions by Israel during the 2006 conflict, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre has investigated and recorded seven child casualties (one killed and six injured) in the reporting period. These incidents occurred in Nabatieh and Bint-Jbeil. Children will continue to be exposed to the threat of explosive remnants of war in all affected regions because of the unprecedented usage of cluster munitions in residential areas, villages, schools and agricultural lands, and as long as there is lack of information on the cluster bomb strike data and the clearance of the munitions. During her mission to Lebanon in April 2007, my Special Representative requested the Government of Israel to hand over the strike data to the Government of Lebanon or the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre in south Lebanon; however, there has been no response from the Government of Israel to date.

71. Although Lebanon has signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, it has not yet ratified it. Although the ratification instrument was submitted to Parliament on 11 February 2002, ratification continues to be delayed.

#### **Developments in Myanmar**

72. According to official reports shared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Government of Myanmar continues to screen and release underage children found in its armed forces during the training process. The Government informed that 68 children were detected in various military training schools and were released to their parents and guardians during the reporting period. The 68 cases included 12 children who were released through the International Labour Organization (ILO) mechanism, 1 released and reported to ICRC, and 2 released and reported to ILO and ICRC. ILO, through its mechanism to eliminate the use of forced labour, has verified the release of 23 children, mostly from involuntary military enrolment, based on complaints filed by parents and relatives. An additional 14 cases either await Government response or remain open while the process continues. The complaints lodged have been dealt with expeditiously by the Government Working Group for the elimination of forced labour, although they are assumed to represent only a portion of the actual cases.

73. The Government further informed that it has discharged nine military recruitment officers from service for violating the national military recruitment law. The United Nations has not been able to verify that. However, on underage recruitment cases received by ILO, no action against perpetrators has been taken under either the Penal Code or military regulations which results in imprisonment. ILO has noted that three military personnel received administrative penalties, such

as a demotion or loss of salary, for the illegal recruitment of children. Minor progress has also been made with the recent release and quashing of cases involving two underage recruits who were imprisoned for desertion.

74. The Government also informed the United Nations country task force that it has put procedures in place for the rehabilitation and reintegration of underage recruits. UNICEF has not been permitted access to children who were released through the Government's mechanisms for follow-up purposes. Discussions with the Government have been initiated by the United Nations to address methods for accessing released children, as well as to undertake inspections of recruitment centres, training schools and camps, with a view to identifying children, gaining their release and subsequently supporting their reintegration and rehabilitation.

75. Details on children released and verified by ILO as already being in the care of their families have been shared with UNICEF. UNICEF is working towards offering them rehabilitation support as appropriate under their existing child protection programme, subject to its gaining Government approval. No broader programme initiative is available at the present time.

76. UNICEF met Wa authorities in early 2008, which included a visit to two military camps, where the Wa State Army was managing and running four primary schools. This is worrisome, given the allegations of their recruitment and use of child soldiers. The Wa reported that the students are not given military training and that they are attired in military uniform because these are affordable. The children are orphans, street children or children from poor families. No further assessment was carried out and there has been no further contact with the Wa authorities.

77. Reports from camps along the border areas found one case of a child recruited by the Karen National Union (KNU) and three cases of children associated with the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP). A 14-year-old boy escaped from KNU in January 2008, after being forced to join in September 2006. In June 2008, a 16-year-old boy travelled to a KNPP base to become a soldier. His parents visited the base and requested his release, which was refused by KNPP. The parents sighted approximately 20 children at the base. The monitoring and reporting mechanism has been established in all nine camps along the border in order to improve the verification of cases and raise awareness on the issue of child soldiers among camp residents.

78. Although there have been reports of the presence of children among other groups listed in my 2007 report (i.e., the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang) in northern Shan State, and the Shan State Army-South), the United Nations had not been able to establish contact with any of these groups as of end December 2008.

### **Developments in Nepal<sup>7</sup>**

79. As of 25 May 2006 2,973 Maoist army personnel were assessed to be under the age of 18, and, at the time of reporting, were still being held in Maoist army

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in Nepal, see S/2008/259.

cantonments. Following the commitment made by the Prime Minister of Nepal to my Special Representative on 5 February 2009, the Army Integration Special Committee decided to request the Government to immediately release the children from the cantonments. Prior to the formal verification procedures called for in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of November 2006, many children informally self-released, and in some cases, escaped or went absent after official leave. In other cases, children were released after negotiations by their families or members of the country monitoring and reporting task force. There are 10 documented cases of self-released children being pressured or forced to return to cantonment sites by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (UCPN-M), the Maoist army or the Young Communist League (YCL), the youth wing of UCPN-M. Since July 2007, approximately 7,500 children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and groups, and 3,000 children affected by the conflict, have benefited from community-based reintegration programmes in 58 districts.

80. During campaigning for the Constituent Assembly election held on 10 April 2008, all major political parties either used children or did not prevent children from participating in the electoral campaign. In some cases, YCL used children in acts of intimidation. On election day many children between the ages of 7 and 15 years were observed participating in political party activities, some violent, breaching the election code of conduct which restricts the use of children. The participation of children in demonstrations raised protection concerns when violence by some demonstrators and excessive use of force by security forces caused injury to some children. Children were sometimes given risky roles in these demonstrations, such as carrying flaming torches, burning tires and throwing stones at the police, and there were instances where homeless children were paid to undertake these roles. The creation of militant youth wings with self-declared policing roles, including YCL, the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) Youth Force, the Madhesi Peoples Rights Forum and the Nepali Congress, are also raising protection concerns.

81. As an update on the previously reported case of Maina Sunuwar, a 15-year-old girl who died while in custody of the then Royal Nepal Army in 2004, a case was filed and the district court issued a summons for the four army officers accused of intentional homicide to appear before the court. The four officers were all still at large at the time of reporting.

82. Abductions, killings, explosions of improvised explosive devices and attacks on schools and teachers by armed groups in the Tarai (southern plains) region continued, with children making up a disproportionate number of the victims. Three cases of abduction and killings of teachers and principals were attributed to the Tarai armed group Janatantrik Tarai Mukti Morcha led by Jwala Singh, and one case of abduction of a 6-year-old child was attributed to the Tarai Mukti Tigers. Some Tarai armed groups are alleged to have been recruiting and using children, and the United Nations is seeking to verify these allegations.

### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

83. A total of 112 Palestinian children were killed in the reporting period up to 26 December 2008 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and a further 431 children were killed during the hostilities from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009. Of the total 543 children killed, 96 per cent of deaths were as a result of Israeli Defense

Forces (IDF) operations and 4 per cent were because of factional violence. The majority of deaths occurred in Gaza. The main causes for the killings included shootings during IDF raids, Israeli search and arrest campaigns, IDF launched ground-to-ground and Israeli Air Force missile strikes, tank shells fired in the course of IDF ground operations, aerial bombardments and a few cases of shootings at crossings as children approached IDF checkpoints. Children were also killed during armed clashes resulting from Palestinian factional violence.

84. A total of 581 Palestinian children were injured in the reporting period up to 26 December 2008 in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, with 71 per cent of the injuries occurring in the West Bank. From 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009, an additional 1,871 children were injured in Gaza. The main causes of injuries included shelling and aerial bombardment by IDF, rubber-coated metal bullets fired by IDF at protestors during demonstrations, IDF military operations, including search and arrest campaigns, military incursions, and assaults by Israeli settlers. During her visit to Israel in April 2007, my Special Representative raised with the Israeli authorities the issue of the frequency of settler attacks on Palestinian children in Hebron and al-Tuwani village and the need for effective law enforcement and accountability. The Government committed to fully investigate the cases; however, the outcome of these investigations is pending. Approximately 35 children have also been injured during armed clashes as the result of Palestinian factional violence.

85. Four Israeli children were killed by a Palestinian gunman in an attack on a Jewish seminary in West Jerusalem. In addition, 15 Israeli children were injured, mainly as a result of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel and stone throwing.

86. While there have been reported incidents of children being trained and/or used by Palestinian militant groups in Gaza, community members are reluctant to provide information on cases of children used by armed forces or armed groups for fear of reprisals. Significant progress has been made towards the implementation of an informal monitoring system on child rights violations.

87. There are concerns that Hamas reportedly used children as shields and may have used schools and hospitals or areas in their proximity to launch rockets into Israel during the December 2008 and January 2009 hostilities. These concerns must be further investigated.

88. On 15 January, in Tal al-Hawa, south-west of Gaza City, an 11-year-old boy was made to accompany IDF for a number of hours during a period of intense operations. As the soldiers entered the Palestinian Red Crescent Society building, the boy was made to enter first, in front of the soldiers. While moving through the town the boy was made to walk in front of the group, even when the IDF soldiers met with resistance and were fired upon. On arrival at Al-Quds Hospital, the boy remained in front of the soldiers, but then was subsequently released. This appears to be in direct contravention of a 2005 Israeli High Court ruling on the illegality of the use of human shields.

89. Continued raids and use of schools by IDF and Israeli settlers have resulted in damage to property, but, more significantly, they have resulted in the injury and death of students and teachers. A total of 27 incidents of raids by IDF soldiers and Israeli settlers attacking both governmental and United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools and students



have been reported. During the hostilities in December 2008 and January 2009, 7 schools were destroyed and 157 government schools were damaged in Gaza. A total of 36 UNRWA schools were lightly damaged. Further, 14 hospitals and 38 clinics were damaged or destroyed. A total of eight UNRWA health facilities were lightly damaged.

90. A total of nine schools and kindergartens in Sderot, Be'er Sheva, Ashdod, Ashkelon and Kiryat HaHinoch were hit and damaged by Qassam and Grad rockets launched by Hamas during the December 2008 and January 2009 hostilities.

91. Humanitarian access to Gaza was severely strained through much of the reporting period, but deteriorated further with the onset of the December 2008 and January 2009 hostilities. While Israel kept one crossing open at partial capacity during that period of hostilities, key crossings remained closed and movement within the Gaza Strip was severely restricted. In both the West Bank and Gaza, the lives of children continue to be put at risk because of difficulties in accessing specialized medical services in East Jerusalem as a result of border restrictions and applications for permits to cross checkpoints. While children often receive permits, their parents frequently do not and as a result they are unable to access medical treatment. A total of 13 children are known to have died in Gaza in the reporting period after Israeli authorities denied access to specialized medical services in Israel.

92. The arrest of children by Israeli military authorities and their detention continue to be significant concerns. Children are arrested and sentenced on a range of charges, including throwing stones at the barrier or at Israeli security forces, demonstrations against the occupation, and violence against security forces. At any given point during the reporting period, between 281 and 337 Palestinian children were being held in Israeli prisons and detention centres, including children as young as 12 years, in violation of international humanitarian law. Approximately eight girls were detained and serving terms of imprisonment. Reports indicate that due process was systematically violated throughout the stages that led children into detention, including arrest, interrogation, trial and sentencing. Statements taken from 21 children who had been arrested and detained indicate that children continued to be subjected to abuse, including beatings, blindfolding, solitary confinement, forced confessions in a language they do not read or write, food being withheld, yelling and insults, and exposure to loud noises. Upon release, a number of children reported that they had been approached to provide information on behalf of the Israeli intelligence service.

93. Further, between 8 and 15 children were being held in administrative detention at any given point during the reporting period. Children can be detained in administrative detention for up to six months without charge or trial on the basis of information of which neither the detainees nor their legal representatives are advised. The administrative detention of two girls aged 16 years, with no charges made against them, was reported. That was the first reported incident of girls in administrative detention recorded by the United Nations. The girls have since been released.

94. Approximately 1,369 Palestinians were forcibly displaced or affected as a result of home demolitions of 192 Palestinian-occupied residential structures in Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, by Israeli forces. A confirmed 440 children and an additional estimated 194 children were impacted. The

December 2008 and January 2009 hostilities resulted in a dramatic increase in home demolitions, with at least 112 demolished homes, affecting hundreds of children.

### **Developments in Somalia<sup>8</sup>**

95. A situation analysis on children and armed conflict administered by UNICEF and partners, with the participation of community leaders in central and southern Somalia, indicated that approximately 1,300 children have been recruited into the Transitional Federal Government forces, the remnants of the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU), Al-Shabaab and clan-based armed groups throughout central and southern Somalia, particularly in and around Mogadishu. The community leaders informed that boys in Al-Shabaab were used as frontline combatants, and girls were recruited into cooking and cleaning roles. Most of the recruitment takes place from schools. In the clashes in Guriel and Dhusamareb in December 2008, eyewitness accounts indicated that between 30 and 45 per cent of Al-Shabaab combatants were children. Seven of these children were killed and three were injured in these clashes.

96. Violence escalated between armed forces and groups, mostly between the Transitional Federal Government security forces, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) and African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) forces against opposition groups, including the remnants of the former ICU, Al-Shabaab and other clan-based armed groups, and children are often killed or injured in the crossfire. Children have been killed and maimed as a result of indiscriminate attacks that have included the use of artillery, mortar, rocket fire, gunfire and improvised explosive devices in areas with high civilian concentration, including busy market places and residential areas. Reports indicate that anti-government armed groups, including Al-Shabaab and clan-based armed groups, used strategies that reduced their visibility in civilian areas, placing civilians at risk, and used children to detonate improvised explosive devices against the Transitional Federal Government and ENDF soldiers. In October 2008 alone, 19 children were killed and 10 injured in Mogadishu. In one case, two children demonstrating against Ethiopian presence in Somalia were shot and killed by ENDF soldiers following the detonation of an improvised explosive device during the demonstration. According to community leaders, approximately 100 children have been killed or injured by landmines and unexploded ordnances in central and southern Somalia in the reporting period.

97. Rape and other sexual violence were committed by both members of armed forces and groups, as well as civilians, in the context of breakdown in law and order. Children and women living in internally displaced persons settlements in Bossaso, Galkayo, Hargeisa and along the Afgoye corridor reported a large number of rapes. Between July and September 2008, 303 cases (292 girls and 11 boys) were reported in the north-west zone of Somalia. Perpetrators are rarely brought to justice and in some cases victims are forced to marry the perpetrators or be killed under traditional law. In October 2008, a 13-year-old girl was stoned to death for adultery by local authorities after being raped by three men in Kismayo. Cases of rape by ENDF soldiers have also been reported.

98. Since mid-2007, 144 schools in five districts of Mogadishu were closed at various times, as they were attacked or risked being attacked because the

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in Somalia, see S/2008/352.

surrounding areas became scenes of conflict between ENDF, the Transitional Federal Government, AMISOM and anti-government armed groups, including Al-Shabaab and clan-based armed groups. These included targeted attacks by the Transitional Federal Government on students and teachers of Koranic schools in Mogadishu, owing to the perception that children in these schools are being mobilized to join the insurgency and are therefore considered legitimate military targets. A total of 34 schools were temporarily occupied by armed groups or used as military bases by armed forces at various times throughout the reporting period. On 22 October 2008, the President of the Somalia National Union of Teachers reported that the 34 schools and universities that remained open in Mogadishu had to be closed because of the general insecurity, the presence of Government forces in close proximity and an increasing number of deaths of students and teachers.

99. An escalation in the number of humanitarian aid workers who have been targeted has resulted in reduced access to the 3.2 million Somalis, including approximately 1.6 million children, requiring emergency assistance. During the reporting period, 34 humanitarian workers were killed, 26 were abducted and many others were harassed, received death threats or were detained for questioning.

#### **Developments in the Sudan<sup>9</sup>**

100. In southern Sudan, the United Nations confirmed the recruitment and use of 101 children by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). More children are present in SPLA, although the exact numbers cannot be determined prior to the completion of the registration exercise currently under way. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) child protection officers have been able to regularly access SPLA military barracks to register children. As of 31 December 2008, 68 children were registered for demobilization, although their release and reunification have met with serious delays. Government authorities have also reported on the spontaneous demobilization of some children associated with SPLA. These children are unaccounted for to date. In some states, SPLA has been reported to be including previously registered children in troop movements prior to the children being officially released. Children were also witnessed among the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) in the Abyei area.

101. The United Nations reported the recruitment and use of 487 children by various armed forces and groups operating in all three Darfur states, with a majority taking place in the state of Western Darfur. The fragmentation and proliferation of opposition armed groups have created fertile ground for recruitment, with over 14 Sudanese and foreign armed forces and groups identified in Darfur for recruiting and using children. These include the groups identified in my 2007 report, which are Justice and Equality Movement (JEM (Peace Wing)), Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will, SLA/Abu Gasim/Mother Wing, SLA/Minni Minnawi, SLA/Abdul Wahid; Government forces including SAF, Central Reserve Police and militias supported by the Government; as well as Chadian opposition groups. New groups identified include Justice and Equality Movement, Movement of Popular Forces for Rights and Democracy, SLA/Peace Wing, SLA/Unity and various tribal groups in the north. There is no evidence of recruitment by the Popular Defence Forces and SLA/Shafi.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in the Sudan, see S/2009/84.

102. The increasing activities of the Lord's Resistance Army, including the recruitment of children, in Western Equatoria state were also reported.

103. On 10 May 2008, approximately 110 children, between the ages of 11 and 17, were among the JEM forces who attacked Omdurman, Khartoum, who were captured by SAF. A presidential decree pardoned 99 children, all of whom have been reunified with their families in the three Darfur states, Khartoum, South Kordofan, El Gedarif and While Nile states, as well as some in Chad. Four children were released at a later date, while the whereabouts of 5 others remain unknown. One 16-year-old received the death penalty.

104. Sexual violence continues to be a major concern in Darfur, where the United Nations verified cases of 53 children, the youngest being 6 years old, who were raped by armed elements. One third of the cases occurred within the vicinity of internally displaced persons camps. Perpetrators were identified by witnesses or victims as Government forces, including the Border Intelligence Force, the Central Reserve Police, SAF, police forces and militias supported by the Government.

105. United Nations monitors reported the killings of 42 children and injuries to 20 children across Darfur, mainly during attacks on villages, market places and internally displaced persons camps, or during clashes between different armed groups. The perpetrators include SAF, the Central Reserve Police and police forces, as well as armed groups such as JEM, SLA/Unity, SLA/Minnawi, militias supported by the Government, Chadian opposition groups and tribal groups. Children were also killed or injured in continuous aerial bombardments by SAF, primarily in Northern Darfur state. Between March and May 2008, 12 children were killed and 7 injured during six such aerial bombings.

106. All attacks on schools or hospitals in Darfur occurred during ground attacks or clashes between different armed groups. In September 2007, five schools and a clinic were burned in connection with an attack on Haskanita. An investigation by the United Nations has noted that the whole town had been burned in what seemed to be a systematic and intentional operation committed by splinter groups from both SLA/Unity and JEM. However, most lootings of schools and hospitals occurred in Western Darfur, including by SAF and militias supported by the Government.

107. The reporting period was marked by a substantial increase in attacks against humanitarian workers and premises in Darfur. As of October 2008, a total of 19 humanitarian workers were killed and 38 injured in Darfur; 227 humanitarian workers were abducted; and 293 vehicles were stolen, which seriously affected food deliveries to Darfur. Despite the extension of the moratorium on restrictions, the humanitarian community continues to face Government restrictions, such as delays and denials of work permits for international NGO staff, as well as access impediments for humanitarian missions in the field. For instance, in early 2008, the Government denied access for 40 days to humanitarian agencies assisting some 160,000 conflict-affected people, including an estimated 80,000 children in the northern part of Western Darfur.

## **B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Colombia**

108. The Government of Colombia adopted a comprehensive policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups, including the creation of a high-level intersectorial commission in December 2007, aimed at reducing the risks of recruitment of and violence against children. The Government also continues to carry out programmatic efforts to reintegrate children separated from illegal armed groups into their communities.

109. Information has been received on the recruitment and use of children by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Caqueta, Cauca, Choco, Guaviare, Nariño, Putumayo, Santander, Sucre, Valle del Cauca and Vaupés, as well as by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) in the departments of Arauca, Cauca, Nariño and Norte de Santander. Both FARC-EP and ELN are reported to be recruiting from schools. In addition, in September, FARC-EP abducted three girls, aged 12, 14 and 16, in Arauca department; and in May 2008, FARC-EP recruited five indigenous children, between the ages of 12 and 16 years, from the Waunaan community, in Choco department. Children are used by these groups to take part directly in hostilities, to provide logistical support and for intelligence services. In Ituango, Antioquia department, a child was used by FARC-EP to transport weapons and explosives. In several cases, children have been tortured or killed by these groups for resisting recruitment or when they intended to escape.

110. Recruitment frequently leads to the displacement of affected populations in order to avoid the recruitment of their children. The Constitutional Court, in its order No. 251 of October 2008, confirmed that child recruitment is one of the main causes of displacement in the country. In March 2008, 18 children from a rural community in Putumayo department were forced to leave their homes to avoid recruitment by FARC-EP.

111. Recruitment is also a common practice of armed groups that emerged after demobilization. In March 2008, the recruitment of children by Autodefensas Campesinas Nueva Generación (AC-NG) was confirmed in the Nariño department. The United Nations has collected several testimonies from children and adolescents separated from the former Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, in which they report having been contacted to join these armed groups.

112. According to information from the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), a total of 402 children separated from FARC-EP, 86 from ELN and 1 from the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR) during the reporting period. ICBF also reported that a total of 44 children separated from armed groups such as AC-NG and Ejército Revolucionario Popular Antiterrorista de Colombia (ERPAC), and other armed elements such as the Aguilas Negras, Rastrojos and the Cooperativa de Seguridad de Meta y Vichada. The Government considers these groups as criminal gangs largely involved in criminal activities related especially to drug trafficking. Children are still assumed to be present in these groups. In August 2008, following the demobilization of the Ejército Revolucionario Guevarista (ERG) in Choco, 7 children, including 3 girls, were released.

113. According to the Colombian High Commissioner for Peace, 391 children were released by AUC within the demobilization framework under the Justice and Peace Law from 2002 to 2006. Approximately 432 children separated individually, outside the negotiations with AUC, although credible information indicates many more children associated with AUC did not undergo the formal demobilization process. The Attorney General's office met with the former commanders of the Elmer Cardenas Block, the Central Bolivar Block and the Autodefensas del Magdalena Medio to exclusively address the issue of recruitment of children in order to establish accountability for former recruitment cases within the framework of the Justice and Peace Law. More than 1,000 cases of illicit recruitment by such groups have been denounced under the Justice and Peace Law as of December 2008. Further, the Attorney General is currently investigating 141 cases of child recruitment under the Penal Code, and there were three convictions for this crime during 2008.

114. The United Nations received credible information regarding the use of children by some members of the security forces for intelligence purposes despite Government policy to the contrary. Three directives have been issued by the Ministry of Defence prohibiting this practice, in accordance with the national law on childhood and adolescence. It was reported in February 2008 that a 12-year-old boy was used by the police as an informant in Valle del Cauca department. As a consequence, the boy received death threats by FARC-EP and was later killed in December 2008. Also in February, it was reported that members of the army and national police solicited information from children in rural communities in Carmen de Atrato and Quibdo, in Choco department, on the locations of guerrilla groups and the identities of their members.

115. Children are victims of indiscriminate attacks by illegal armed groups or are often caught in crossfire in clashes between illegal armed groups and national armed forces. A total of 15 children have also been killed and 29 injured by anti-personnel mines and unexploded ordnance laid by FARC-EP and ELN between September 2007 and October 2008.

116. Credible information on cases of extrajudicial executions of children was gathered by the United Nations. In January 2008, a 17-year-old boy disappeared from Soacha municipality near Bogotá, and was presented as "killed in combat" a day later by the Armed Forces in Norte de Santander, a department on the border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. A similar case involved a child from Gamarra municipality, Cesar department, in August 2008. The Ministry of Defence has issued three specific directives and established a transitory commission in October, to investigate cases of extrajudicial executions, which has resulted in the dismissal of 37 military officers as of January 2009.

117. According to Constitutional Court order No. 092 of April 2008, the impact of sexual violence against girls has increased. Perpetrators include illegal armed groups and members of the Armed Forces. The Attorney General's office has initiated investigations, and there have been a number of convictions as of December 2008.

118. During the reporting period illegal armed groups continued to attack or occupy schools for military purposes and target teachers. Schools are also often damaged as a result of military clashes between illegal armed groups and the Armed Forces. In May 2008, two schools in Dagua municipality, Valle del Cauca department, were

seriously damaged as a consequence of separate armed clashes between FARC-EP and the national police and national army, respectively. In June 2008, four teachers in Nariño department were abducted and killed by FARC-EP, as they were allegedly believed to be army informants. The United Nations has verified information on the occupation of schools by the Armed Forces. In June 2008, a school in Montana municipality, Caqueta department, was occupied by members of the army. The school was subsequently attacked and seriously damaged as a result of an armed confrontation with FARC-EP on 13 June. The authorities have ordered an investigation into this case.

#### **Developments in the Philippines<sup>10</sup>**

119. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) acknowledged the presence of children in their ranks in a meeting with my Special Representative in December 2008, and agreed to enter into negotiations with the United Nations for an action plan.

120. The New People's Army (NPA) remains adamant that it does not recruit or use children, and reiterated its policy of non-recruitment in communications to the United Nations. However, in March 2008, three children were reported to have admitted their association with NPA upon their surrender to Government authorities in Catanduanes province.

121. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) has long been known to have children in its ranks. This was confirmed by a local news correspondent who was held captive by the group in Sulu province in June 2008. After her release, she revealed that boys in their teens were among her armed captors.

122. There were reports of the attempted recruitment of indigenous children in Quezon province for the paramilitary Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU).

123. A total of 48 children, including 27 girls, were killed or injured in the reporting period, 81 per cent as a result of armed clashes between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and MILF that erupted pursuant to the aborted signing of the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain in August 2008. The United Nations confirmed that AFP and CAFGU were also responsible for the deaths of 11 children and injury to 20 children, all of whom were casualties of either military aerial or artillery bombardment against renegade MILF forces in Maguindanao province or military operations against ASG and NPA.

124. More than 100 residents of Kolambugan town, including 28 children, were temporarily held hostage and used as human shields by elements of the 102nd Base Command of MILF during attacks on civilian communities in Lanao del Norte province on 18 August 2008. MILF also razed five classrooms during the incident.

125. There were four cases of military occupation and use of schools as temporary camps. Soldiers from the 50th and 503rd Infantry Battalions of the Philippine Army set up camps in a primary school in Tubo town in Abra and conducted aerial operations from the location in March 2008. Other cases were documented in

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on and examples of incidents of grave violations against children in the Philippines, see S/2008/272.

Lianga municipality, Surigao del Sur province and in Barangay Ngan, Compostela Valley province, Southern Mindanao.

126. United Nations partners reported one case of sexual assault perpetrated against a 14-year-old girl by a member of the 30th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army stationed in Butuan City. The victim filed a complaint against the suspect, and the trial is currently in progress, although cooperation from the 30th Infantry Battalion has been difficult. During her mission in December 2008, my Special Representative raised the case with the Undersecretary for Defence Affairs of the Department of National Defence, Antonio C. Santos.

127. Former child soldiers are being rehabilitated and reintegrated into society through the implementation of Government social integration programmes, which include financial and legal support, and access to education, health services and psychosocial services for these children. However, mechanisms for release and reintegration of children need to be further brought in line with good practices.

#### **Developments in southern border provinces of Thailand**

128. There has been significant improvement in the security situation in the southern border provinces of Thailand owing to the continuing efforts of the Royal Thai Government to protect the safety and enhance the development of children in cooperation with the local communities. However, the impact of violence on children is still a concern. There have been several reports of child casualties as a result of bombings by militants in public spaces and of being caught in the crossfire between militants and security forces.

129. The number of attacks on schools has decreased significantly. According to the Ministry of Education, during the reporting period from September 2007 to December 2008, 34 State-run education facilities were damaged or destroyed (compared to 164 for the whole of 2007), 7 schoolchildren were killed and 30 were injured.

130. The current Government has announced that it will take serious measures to ensure that security operations conducted in the southern border provinces are in accordance with international standards and respect for human rights, and that any alleged abuse by state authorities, such as the irregular detention of children, is fully investigated. The Government is also undertaking a systematic review of its laws, including the Emergency Decree.

#### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

131. UNICEF received 39 reports of child recruitment and 7 reports of re-recruitment by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) from 1 September 2007 to 31 October 2008. However, the number of children who were recruited by LTTE is estimated to be much higher. The majority of the recruitment by LTTE (64 per cent boys and 36 per cent girls) occurred in the Vanni. The capacity in the Vanni to monitor and receive reports of recruitment of children was reduced steadily in the reporting period owing to limited access allowed to the United Nations, increased insecurity and the requirement that international and national humanitarian agencies leave the Vanni on 16 September 2008 and relocate to Vavuniya as a result of the intensification of the conflict. Threats by LTTE against families wishing to report have also been a significant factor. Although data



collection has been severely hampered prior to their relocation, UNICEF was able to verify a total of 19 children released by LTTE and 9 children who had escaped and returned to their families. According to UNICEF reports registered before the onset of the fighting, as of the end of January 2009, there were 81 children who had not been released and 1,342 individuals who had been recruited as children but are now over the age of 18. In February 2009, the United Nations reported that there are clear indications that LTTE has intensified forcible recruitment of civilians and that children as young as 14 years old are being targeted.

132. The Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), a former breakaway faction of LTTE, became a registered political party on 24 January 2008. It signed an action plan with the Government of Sri Lanka and UNICEF on 1 December 2008, agreeing to commence the release of children for rehabilitation and reintegration. Efforts are under way and the United Nations awaits the full and timely implementation of the action plan. This was seen as an important undertaking by TMVP. From November 2008 to January 2009, 7 cases of child recruitment were reported, and 22 children were released, while during the period from 1 September 2007 to 31 October 2008 UNICEF received 113 reports of child recruitment and 40 reports of re-recruitment by TMVP. During the same period, a total of 108 children were released and 81 children escaped and returned to their families. As of the end of January 2009, 41 children remain recruited and there are 804 individuals who were recruited as children but are now over the age of 18.

133. The Government has made significant initiatives to support its obligations towards children leaving armed groups. The Office of the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation undertook five specific initiatives in the reporting period: the establishment of the Ambepusse Centre for the rehabilitation of children leaving armed groups; the development and signing of a memorandum of understanding with UNICEF clarifying roles and responsibilities in relation to the prevention, release, care, protection and reintegration of children associated with armed groups; the drafting of an Emergency Regulation for the provision of rehabilitation services for children leaving armed groups; the development of a public awareness campaign against child recruitment; and the facilitation of the action plan with TMVP and UNICEF.

134. The Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka recorded 102 incidents of child abduction in the reporting period, with 54 children abducted in Batticaloa alone. Of the 41 children remaining in the ranks of TMVP, 16 were abducted.

135. Reports indicate that, as at the end of December 2008, 26 children had been killed and 10 injured. The causes included aerial bombardment by the Sri Lankan Air Force and children being caught in crossfire and shelling between the Sri Lankan Army and LTTE. Children were also victims of claymore mine attacks; for example, on 29 January 2008, a claymore mine detonated on a bus carrying mostly schoolchildren in Thatchanamadhu, Mannar district, an area that was tactically controlled by LTTE. Thirteen children were killed and 8 were injured in the incident.

136. The physical security of children trapped in increasingly small areas where intense fighting is taking place and in other conflict affected areas has become a critical protection concern. LTTE was carrying out operations, including artillery fire from civilian areas, placing them at risk. The Government also continued aerial bombardment and long-range artillery fire. The full scale of child rights violations is

not known due to access impediments. However, on the very few occasions that access was possible in the Vanni, the United Nations verified that at least 4 children were killed and 17 injured in December 2008 and 55 children were killed and 212 injured in January 2009. On 29 January 2009, ICRC successfully escorted 226 sick and wounded patients requiring urgent medical treatment to Vavuniya hospital in the Government-controlled area. The wounded included 50 children between the ages of 4 months and 17 years.

137. Between 15 December 2008 and 15 January 2009, 11 shellings of or near medical facilities in the Vanni were reported. On 2 February, ICRC issued a statement condemning the shelling of Puthukkudiyirppu Hospital for the second time. It has since been shelled on three further occasions.

138. As a result of the intensification of military operations in LTTE-controlled areas of the Vanni at the end of 2008, and restrictive procedures imposed by the Government for the transportation of essential goods to the Vanni allegedly owing to security concerns, including medical supplies, therapeutic food to treat malnourished children and shelter materials, children displaced by the conflict have been adversely affected. Some WFP and Government food convoys were delivered in January and February 2009. The United Nations has been engaged in ongoing advocacy with the Government and LTTE for increased access to the Vanni, but that became more difficult as the conflict intensified. Additional impediments to humanitarian access included LTTE preventing civilians, including children and United Nations national staff and their dependants, from leaving the Vanni to Government-held territory. Further, internally displaced persons sites in Government-controlled areas of Mannar and Vavuniya are subjected to tight Government security regulations, which severely restrict the movement of internally displaced persons and access to humanitarian agencies.

### **Developments in Uganda**

139. There were no cases of recruitment and use of children by Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) or the local defence units in the reporting period. The Government of Uganda asserted that local defence units had been disbanded and its members integrated either into UPDF or the Uganda Police Force. In February 2009, the country task force on monitoring and reporting carried out on-site visits to UPDF facilities in northern Uganda to observe UPDF general recruitment exercises and to verify the implementation of UPDF recruitment policies, as part of the terms of the action plan signed by the Government on 16 January 2009. In addition, the visits sought to verify the disbanding of local defence units and to confirm the discharge of any persons under the age of 18 in the process of integrating local defence units into UPDF.

140. Following the visits, the country task force ascertained that the age criteria for recruitment into UPDF within existing laws and regulations were strictly observed; confirmed that current policies and directives relating to the prevention of recruitment and use of underaged persons were in place, including for age verification, awareness-raising, prevention and disciplinary measures; noted that UPDF recruitment criteria and procedures were strictly adhered to by its officers; and that there has been no evidence of the recruitment of children by UPDF since August 2007. The country task force also confirmed that local defence units were in the process of being phased out, and members who did not meet the recruitment

criteria, including age limits, are demobilized and reintegrated into their communities.

141. On the basis of these findings, and as it has been determined that UPDF and its auxiliaries have shown full commitment towards the implementation of the action plan and continue to allow regular access to the United Nations to any UPDF facilities upon request to monitor compliance, they shall be removed from the lists contained in the annex to my report this year. However, the country task force will continue to monitor UPDF compliance with the action plan, to ensure that continuous efforts are made to prevent the recruitment and use of children.

142. The Government has established a clear national policy framework for the demobilization and reintegration of non-government forces operating in and outside Uganda, based on the Amnesty Amendment Act (2006). Its peace, recovery and development programme for northern Uganda encompasses a demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants programme that seeks to coordinate and facilitate socio-economic reintegration of non-governmental forces that voluntarily surrender to the Government, including those associated with LRA.

143. Owing to considerable improvement in the security and humanitarian situation in northern Uganda, the number of grave violations attributable to UPDF and its auxiliaries has dropped significantly. A total of 16 cases of sexual violence were registered from September 2007 to October 2008. Eight cases were reported to law enforcement officers for investigation, and in five of those cases, the perpetrators were arrested. In addition, the presence of UPDF soldiers on the ground has decreased, and formal institutions and structures such as the police, particularly children and family protection units, as well as welfare officers and members of local councils, are assuming a greater role in ensuring social and legal protection for children.

144. No cases have been attributed to LRA, as the group has not been operating in Ugandan territory, although women and children are reported to still be present within its ranks. Between November 2007 and April 2008, 20 boys who had fled LRA captivity were received at various reception centres across northern Uganda and confirmed the presence of many more children in LRA. The Government estimates that at the time LRA left Uganda, it consisted of approximately 1,000 individuals, of whom 500 were women and children. The presence of LRA has been reported in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, southern Sudan and the Central African Republic, and, in response to grave violations committed against children by LRA, a strategy for a subregional coordination mechanism to monitor and report on cross-border recruitment and use of children will be developed.

### **III. Information on progress achieved in implementing Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict, including progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and in the development and implementation of action plans**

#### **Progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism**

145. As called for in paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), monitoring and reporting mechanisms on grave child rights violations have been established in all eight situations of armed conflict, listed in annex I to the 2007 report of the Secretary-General (A/62/609-S/2007/757), that are on the agenda of the Security Council; and in all five situations of armed conflict or other situations of concern, listed in annex II to the same report. Parties in Afghanistan and the Central African Republic were listed in the report of the Secretary-General for the first time last year for recruitment and use of children, thereby triggering the requirement to establish a monitoring and reporting mechanism within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). In July 2008, the monitoring and reporting mechanism was set up in Afghanistan, while the mechanism is in the process of being formally established in the Central African Republic. The Government of Colombia formally accepted the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on 29 December 2008.

#### **Progress made in the development and implementation of action plans with parties to conflict**

146. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), parties are called upon to develop and implement concrete time-bound action plans, in close collaboration with the United Nations. During the reporting period, formal action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children were signed with the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) of Sri Lanka on 1 December 2008 and the Government of Uganda on 16 January 2009. Important commitments to begin negotiations on an action plan were received from the Justice and Equality Movement in the Sudan and the Moro Islamic Liberation Forces in the Philippines. In addition, commitments were received by the Government of Nepal to release children from Maoist cantonments as a matter of priority and by FNL in Burundi to immediately and unconditionally separate and release all children.

147. Engaging in dialogue on child protection with all parties to conflict is crucial in order to bring parties into compliance with international standards for the protection of children. With regard to non-State actors, it is important that States allow such dialogue between non-State actors and the United Nations without prejudice to their political and legal status, for the purposes of developing action plans to halt recruitment and use of children and to address all other grave violations committed against children. However, in certain situations of concern, such as in Myanmar and Colombia, the Government has been reticent to allow for further dialogue with certain armed groups, and this has impeded progress on securing the release and rehabilitation of children associated with these groups.

148. Over the last years, commitments by parties leading to action plans have been obtained by several parties to conflict, both State and non-State actors. The status of

these action plans and other commitments made for the release of children as of the end of January 2009 is reflected in the table below.

#### Status of action plans

### Parties to conflict listed in annex I to the reports of the Secretary-General (A/61/529-S/2006/826 and Corr.1 and A/62/209-S/2007/757)

#### Parties in Afghanistan

##### Taliban forces

**No action plan.** In September 2008, the country task force on monitoring and reporting initiated consultations with the Government of Afghanistan to devise a strategy to disseminate information to parties to the conflict on the monitoring and reporting mechanism, and on engaging with parties for the preparation of action plans to end child recruitment.

#### Parties in Burundi

Parti pour la Libération du peuple Hutu-Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL)  
(Agathon Rwasa)

**No formal action plan.** The release of children associated with Palipehutu-FNL is being negotiated within the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement signed on 7 September 2006 between the Government of Burundi and Palipehutu-FNL. Pursuant to the Bujumbura Declaration of 17 January 2009, FNL committed to immediately and unconditionally separate children associated with its combatants no later than 30 January. However, FNL has refused to begin the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of its combatants, including the separation of children associated with its forces on 5 February, until there is an agreement on the integration of its combatants into the national security forces.

#### Parties in the Central African Republic

Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD)

**Dialogue has been initiated by the United Nations to translate commitments into an action plan.** During the visit of my Special Representative to the Central African Republic in May 2008, the leader of APRD, Laurent Djim Wei, committed to prepare a list and release all children in his armed group as soon as proper arrangements are made for their protection and reintegration into communities.

Union des forces démocratiques pour la  
rassemblement (UFDR)

On 20 October 2008, APRD handed over to UNICEF and partners a list of 105 children to be released.

**Dialogue has been initiated by the United Nations to translate commitments into an action plan.** In June 2007 a tripartite agreement was signed between the Government of the Central African Republic, UFDR and UNICEF, in which the UFDR agreed to separate and release all children associated with its armed group; and facilitate their reintegration.

Forces démocratiques populaires de Centrafrique  
(FDPC)

**No action plan.**

### **Parties in Côte d'Ivoire**

Armed militia groups affiliated with the  
Presidential camp:

(a) Front pour la libération du Grand Ouest  
(FLGO);

(b) Mouvement ivoirien de libération de  
L'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI);

(c) Alliance patriotique de l'ethnie Wé  
(APWé);

(d) Union patriotique de résistance du  
Grand Ouest (UPRGO).

### **Action plan signed on 14 September 2006.**

Parties have been de-listed from annexes of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2007/757). All the parties have ceased recruitment and taken concerted measures to identify and release children associated with their forces for rehabilitation, and have allowed the United Nations to regularly monitor the association of children with fighting forces as part of the implementation of action plans.

Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces  
nouvelles (FDS-FN)

### **Action plan signed on 10 October 2005.**

Party has been de-listed from annexes of the 2007 report of the Secretary-General. Party has ceased recruitment and taken concerted measures to identify and release children associated with their forces for rehabilitation, and have allowed the United Nations to regularly monitor the association of children with fighting forces as part of the implementation of its action plan.

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Forces armées de la République démocratique du  
Congo (FARDC)

**No formal action plan.** The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children has been carried out within the Operational Framework for Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups, adopted by the Unité d'exécution du programme national de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion, in March 2004.

	<p>Through that national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, from mid-2003 to December 2006, approximately 30,000 children were released from armed forces and groups, including those released prior to the adoption of the operational framework. The final phase of the formal national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration did not take place in 2008; however, 1,098 children were documented to have separated from or escaped from armed groups in the reporting period.</p>
Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)	<b>No formal action plan.</b>
Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI)	<b>No formal action plan.</b> The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children was carried out within the operational framework for children associated with armed forces and groups, except for small splinter groups from FNI and FRPI who failed to disarm.
Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI)	
Mouvement révolutionnaire congolais (MRC)	
Mai-Mai groups in Maniema and Katanga that have not integrated into FARDC	<b>No formal action plan.</b> Remaining combatants are awaiting inclusion into the next phase of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu	<b>No formal action plan.</b> In January 2008, the Mai-Mai groups adopted the “actes d’engagement” for North and South Kivu, in the context of the Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Kivus, and committed to release children in their ranks.
Congres National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP)	<b>No formal action plan.</b> In January 2008, CNDP adopted the statements of commitment (actes d’engagement) for North and South Kivu, in the context of the Conference on Peace, Security and Development in the Kivus.
<b>Parties in Myanmar</b>	
Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)	<b>No action plan.</b>
Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council	<b>No action plan.</b>
Kachin Independence Army (KIA)	<b>No action plan.</b>
Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Karenni Army (KA)	<b>No action plan.</b> However, the Karen National Union (KNU)/KNLA signed a deed of commitment on 6 April 2007; and the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP)/KA signed a deed of commitment on 13 April 2007.

Karenni National People's Liberation Front  
(KNPLF)

Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army

Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)

Tatmadaw Kyi

United Wa State Army (UWSA)

In line with this commitment, the United Nations country team in Myanmar will undertake discussions with the parties in order to finalize action plans to cease the recruitment and use of children from their armed wings in the border areas. The country teams in Myanmar and Thailand, however, have been unable to establish contact and undertake formal dialogue with these groups to date due to resistance from the Government of Myanmar.

**No action plan.** The country team has been unable to establish contact with these non-State entities to date.

**No action plan. The Government action plan does not meet minimum standards.** In 2004, the Government of Myanmar high-level committee for the prevention of military recruitment of underage children outlined a plan of action to address the recruitment, release and reintegration of children; public awareness; cooperation with international organizations; and action against transgressors of recruitment policies.

During the visit of the Special Representative in June 2007, the Government of Myanmar agreed to update the Tatmadaw Kyi action plan and to bring it into line with international standards, with the country task force on monitoring and reporting. The United Nations has formally sought a meeting with the Committee to advance discussions on the action plan development and implementation, but the meeting has not yet taken place.

**No action plan.** During the visit of the Special Representative in June 2007, UWSA agreed to engage with the United Nations on the modalities for an action plan.



### Parties in Nepal

Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M)

**No formal action plan.** The release of children associated with UCPN-M who are held in Maoist army cantonments is being addressed within the context of Nepal's Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 and the Agreement on Monitoring the Management of Arms and Armies, which commits UCPN-M and the Government of Nepal to the immediate release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups. A draft national plan of action for the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, including children associated with armed forces and groups, is pending finalization and Government approval for implementation.

During the visit of my Special Representative on 5 December 2008, the Prime Minister of Nepal committed to the release of 2,973 children from the Maoist army cantonments by the end of February 2009.

### Parties in Somalia

Transitional Federal Government

**No action plan.** An advocacy campaign against child recruitment targeting armed groups, government officials, and community and religious leaders is ongoing to mobilize broad support for the development of action plans.

Remnants of the former Islamic Courts Union (IUC)

**No action plan.** Dialogue with IUC or any other armed groups in Somalia is seriously impeded by access restrictions and the targeting of humanitarian workers.

### Parties in southern Sudan

#### Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan

South Sudan Defence Forces, including the forces of Major-General Gabriel Tang Ginyi

The South Sudan Defence Forces have been fully incorporated into the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)

**No formal action plan.** However, the United Nations continues its advocacy with SAF on issues related to grave violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children, through the Ceasefire Joint Military Committee and its seven subsidiary Area Joint Military Committees.

### **Parties under the control of the Government of southern Sudan**

Pibor Defence Forces

The Pibor Defence Forces have been fully incorporated into the Sudan People's Liberation Army.

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)

**No formal action plan.** The release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups are carried out by the South Sudan disarmament, demobilization and reintegration Commission within the context of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all children from various fighting forces and armed groups. A national reintegration strategy for children associated with armed forces and groups has been developed.

During the reporting period, 150 children were demobilized.

### **Parties in Darfur**

#### **Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan**

Chadian opposition groups

**No action plan.**

Government-supported militias called Janjaweed

There is no United Nations engagement with Janjaweed to date.

Police forces, including the Central Reserve Police

**No action plan.**

Popular Defence Force

**No action plan.**

#### **Former rebel parties that have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement**

Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing)

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Gasim/  
Mother Wing

**No action plan.** However, during a meeting to launch child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Darfur in June 2008, representatives of the six signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement, including Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing), SLA/Free Will, SLA/Minni Minnawi, SLA/Peace Wing, SLA/Abu Gasim/Mother Wing and Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy agreed to start discussions on a plan of action and reaffirmed their commitments for the release, return and reintegration of children associated with their groups, in accordance with the Darfur Peace Agreement.

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minnawi

**Action plan signed on 11 June 2007 between Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (Minnawi) and UNICEF.**

After an initial delay in implementation of the action plan owing to a lack of clarity on the mandate and channels of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Darfur, SLM/A (Minnawi) reaffirmed its commitment for the release, return and reintegration of children into its ranks in June 2008; so far, 16 children have been registered for demobilization.

**Former rebel parties that rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement**

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid

**No action plan.**

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Shafi

**No action plan.**

**Parties to conflict listed in annex II to the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/609-S/2007/757)**

**Parties in Chad**

Chadian National Army

**No action plan.** However, an agreement was signed on 9 May 2007 between the Government of Chad and UNICEF in the context of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in Chad to release all children associated with the armed forces and groups and facilitate their sustainable reintegration into communities and families.

In addition, during the visit of my Special Representative in May 2008, the Government of Chad committed to allow verification by United Nations teams of detention centres, training camps and military facilities; release as a matter of priority children associated with armed groups held in detention; and establish an inter-ministerial task force to coordinate and ensure effective reintegration of children.

A joint commission was formed by the Government and UNICEF in August 2008. The commission has carried out verification visits to the Moussoro and Lumia instruction centres, where one child was identified and released.

	A total of 555 children have been demobilized to date, including 13 per cent from the Chadian National Army and 87 per cent from the Convention révolutionnaire démocratique du Tchad (CRDT), Concorde nationale tchadienne (CNT) and Front uni pour le changement (FUC).
Chadian self-defence groups operating in Ade, Dogdore and Mogororo	Most elements of these groups have been integrated into the Chadian National Army.
Government of the Sudan-backed militias, known as Janjaweed	<b>No action plan.</b>
Sudanese armed groups backed by the Government of Chad:	<b>No action plan.</b>
(a) Justice and Equality Movement;	
(b) Sudan Liberation Army — G19 faction.	
Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD)	<b>No action plan.</b>
<b>Parties in Colombia</b>	
Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)	<b>No action plan.</b>
Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)	<b>No action plan.</b>
Illegal armed groups not participating in the demobilization process:	<b>No action plan.</b>
(a) Autodefensas Campesinas del Casanare;	
(b) Frente Cacique Pipintá.	
<b>Parties in the Philippines</b>	
Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)	The absence of a political organization and the extreme risks involved prevents the possibility of the United Nations engaging with ASG.
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)	<b>Dialogue has been initiated by the United Nations to translate commitments into an action plan.</b> During the visit of my Special Representative in December 2008, the leadership of MILF committed to enter into an action plan with the United Nations to halt the recruitment and use of children and to ensure their separation and return into civilian life.
New People's Army (NPA)	<b>No action plan.</b> The Government of the Philippines has expressed reservations on the engagement of the United Nations with NPA.

However, the United Nations country team is considering possible dialogue on child protection with the Office of the Presidential Adviser to the Peace Process within the context of the ongoing peace processes.

### **Parties in Sri Lanka**

Karuna faction/TMVP

**Action plan signed on 1 December 2008 between TMVP, the Government of Sri Lanka and UNICEF.** The action plan lays out a three-month process by which TMVP should stop the recruitment of children and release all children in its ranks.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

**Action plan does not meet minimum standards.** LTTE developed an action plan on 15 October 2007. However, it does not meet minimum prerequisites, including but not limited to allowing full access to the United Nations country team for verification, formalizing principles and time-bound measures for the safe release of children, and accountability mechanisms and mechanisms for preventing re-recruitment. Also, the action plan was not signed by the parties.

Any small progress made was not maintained and, as of April 2008, only 17 children have been verified as released. There has been no consistent dialogue with LTTE to review its commitments since the relocation of the United Nations in September 2008 from the Vanni.

### **Parties in Uganda**

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

**No action plan.** LRA has not been present in Ugandan territory as of November 2005. On 24 August 2007, the United Nations Special Envoy for LRA-affected areas transmitted a message from the Security Council to the leader of the LRA delegation, who assured that the delegation would convey the message to the leader of LRA, Joseph Kony. The message urged LRA to take immediate steps to release children associated with its forces; to immediately engage in transparent procedures with UNICEF for verification of the demobilization of all children; to provide humanitarian personnel unimpeded access to populations in need; and to ensure that specific provisions for children are included by the parties at all steps of the negotiations.

Government armed forces and defence units:

- (a) Local defence units;
- (b) Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).

**Action plan signed on 16 January 2009 between the Government of Uganda and the Uganda Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting.** As it has been determined that UPDF and its auxiliaries have shown full commitment towards the implementation of the action plan and continue to allow regular access to the United Nations to any UPDF facilities upon request to monitor compliance, the parties have been de-listed from the current year's report.

### **Parties to conflict not listed in annexes to the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/609-S/2007/757)**

#### **Parties in Central African Republic**

Self-defence militias

**No action plan.** On 13 December 2008, UNICEF met with the Minister of Defence to request for access to these militias. Following his agreement, UNICEF and partners met with the militia leader of the Ouham-Pendé prefecture, who has agreed to work collaboratively to release children within its ranks.

#### **Parties in Darfur**

##### **Former rebel parties that have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement**

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Peace Wing

Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy

**No action plan.** However, during a meeting to launch child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Darfur in June 2008, representatives of the six signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement, including Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing), SLA/Free Will, SLA/Minni Minnawi, SLA/Peace Wing, SLA/Abu Gasim/Mother Wing and Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy agreed to start discussions on a plan of action and reaffirmed their commitments for the release, return and reintegration of children associated with their groups, in accordance with the Darfur Peace Agreement.

### **Former rebel parties that rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement**

Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)

**Dialogue has been initiated by the United Nations with JEM to translate commitments into an action plan.** In July 2008, JEM stated its commitment during a workshop held by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue in Geneva to refrain from recruiting children for military operations.

Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity

**No action plan.** In July 2008, SLA/Unity, during the workshop in Geneva, also committed to refrain from recruiting children.

149. Concerted leadership by United Nations missions and country teams on the ground and partners in following up on these commitments through sustained advocacy and monitoring is vital to their success, in addition to the credible threat of action by international actors, including the Security Council. However, more must be done to ensure that parties to conflict respect and comply with their child protection obligations and commitments. This should include targeted and concrete measures by the Security Council where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties listed in the annexes to my reports, particularly the persistent violators, in accordance with its resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

150. The Working Group has drawn the attention of several Security Council sanctions committees and their relevant expert groups to the repeated violations against children by leaders of armed groups, such as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the aim of obtaining targeted measures against individuals or groups who persistently commit, or are complicit in the commission of, grave violations against children. Limited progress, however, has been made to date.

### **Progress made in the mainstreaming of children and armed conflict issues in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions**

151. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has significantly expanded the incorporation of children's issues in peacekeeping operations, including child rights and protection in training for peacekeepers and the deployment of child protection expertise in peacekeeping missions. Child protection advisers are currently deployed in seven peacekeeping operations. In situations where a peacekeeping operation exists, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations co-chairs the country task forces on monitoring and reporting. The department is currently developing a policy directive on mainstreaming the protection of children affected by armed conflict within United Nations peacekeeping that will also provide guidance on the role and function of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations, outline the policy framework within which they operate, and define partnerships and coordination with other key child protection actors on the ground. The reports of the Secretary-General on country situations with peacekeeping missions have increasingly included child protection issues as a specific aspect of the reports.

152. The Department of Political Affairs has developed specific guidance on child protection for mediators. It has also recently revised its Operational Guidance Note on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, in order to integrate the

consideration of children and armed conflict issues that facilitate or impede peace processes, and has identified the release of children as a factor that promotes confidence between parties to conflict in its guidance on confidence-building measures. The newly established United Nations mediation focal point system of the Department of Political Affairs seeks to ensure that children and armed conflict issues are taken into account early on in the strategic thinking and planning phase of a peace process. Significant effort has also been made by special political missions of the Department to mainstream the protection of children and armed conflict throughout their missions and mandates.

153. The presence of child protection advisers should be integrated into or enhanced in all relevant peacekeeping and political missions as key implementers of Security Council resolutions, and in order to mainstream a child-conscious approach in the discharge of their functions. Child protection advisers engage in monitoring the situation of children in armed conflict, including monitoring grave violations under resolution 1612 (2005), engaging in dialogue with parties to conflict for the development of action plans, advocating on politically sensitive issues, thereby supporting operational partners who may be unable to do so without the risk of jeopardizing their programmes on the ground, ensuring systematic training on child rights and protection, lending support to the planning and implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, and implementing other aspects of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

#### **IV. Strengthening monitoring and reporting of rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict**

154. Widespread and systematic rape and sexual violence against children, both girls and boys, is increasingly a characteristic of conflict, often perpetrated in a rule-of-law vacuum that is a consequence of conflict, and exacerbated by an ensuing culture of impunity. In some instances sexual violence has been used as a premeditated tactic of war designed to humiliate or exterminate a population or to force displacement. For children, the physical and mental consequences are devastating, with far reaching negative effects on sustainable peace and security. During the reporting period, high incidence rates of rape and sexual violence against children were received from Burundi, Chad, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia and the Sudan.

155. There is universal consensus that rape and sexual violence against children in armed conflicts are grave crimes. It is therefore critical that efforts be strengthened towards ending impunity and ensuring access to justice, accountability and remedies for cases of such crimes against children. International humanitarian and human rights law provides that children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect, protection and care, including against all forms of sexual violence and exploitation. Rape and other forms of sexual violence also constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

156. During the Security Council open debates on children and armed conflict in February and July 2008, Member States reaffirmed the need to strengthen the general framework of protection against such crimes. The Council, as a follow-up to



its resolution 1325 (2000), has begun to translate that call through its resolution 1820 (2008), in which it requested in paragraph 15 that I provide “information on situations of armed conflict in which sexual violence has been widely or systematically employed against civilians; analysis of the prevalence and trends of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict”. The Council also requested in paragraph 3 that, where appropriate, I “encourage dialogue to address this issue in the context of broader discussions of conflict resolution between appropriate United Nations officials and the parties to the conflict”.

157. To this end, the office of my Special Representative has initiated consultations with relevant United Nations agencies and departments to devise a strategy to strengthen data collection and reporting on sexual violence within the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), which will provide a better platform for the identification of incidents, victims and perpetrators through a common set of indicators, and to enable a better analysis of trends on sexual violence against children. Resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) are mutually reinforcing, and the complimentary processes for documentation or reporting vis-à-vis these resolutions should be explored to allow for streamlined and better coordinated sharing of information on rape and sexual violence among United Nations agencies. Enhancing the participation of relevant United Nations agencies and departments working on the issue of sexual violence in the country task forces on monitoring and reporting is a step towards that objective.

158. In the light of the fact that children are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, and the culture of impunity prevails for such crimes, I recommend that the Council adopt an incremental approach by first including rape and other grave sexual violence as an additional criteria for inclusion in the annexes along with recruitment and use of children. Like the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence is always deliberate, targeted and a direct consequence of criminal intent. This would be a positive step towards expanding the protection framework for children and drive United Nations and international efforts to seal commitments to put an end to sexual violence against children.

159. The same way parties that are listed for child recruitment have to prepare and implement time-bound concrete action plans, steps also need to be taken to ensure that parties that are listed for rape and sexual violence against children enter into dialogue with the United Nations to formally outline commitments and undertake measures to put an end to such practices. Structured dialogue on recruitment and use of children has already paved the way for dialogue on broader child protection issues and enabled child protection actors in the field to pursue other priorities such as rape and other grave sexual violence against children, such as in Côte d’Ivoire.

160. This proposal as laid out above should be supported as a constructive step towards addressing issues of prevention, impunity, and response, in order to put an end to sexual violence against children.

## **V. Recommendations**

161. It is recommended that the Security Council consider giving equal attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern listed in the annexes to my report, as well as other relevant situations of concern addressed in my report.

162. While acknowledging the equal weight for all grave violations against children, considering that children are particularly vulnerable to rape and sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, as noted in the present and previous reports, and the culture of impunity prevails for such crimes, it is recommended that the Security Council consider, at a minimum, expanding the criteria for the annexes of my report to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict without prejudice to the possibility of further expanding the criteria in the future to include other violations, including, if possible, intentional killing and maiming of children.

163. As addressing sexual violence is an important system-wide priority of the United Nations, mechanisms and arrangements for monitoring such violations should be strengthened. Country-level task forces under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should include actors who monitor gender-based violations, and modalities for data sharing and coordinated action, including on access to justice and remedies, should be developed between gender-based violence and child protection actors. National capacity to address sexual violence should also be strengthened.

164. The Security Council is encouraged to continue to insist that parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to my report prepare and implement concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in violation of international obligations applicable to them, and to take measures against any parties that fail to comply.

165. The Security Council is also encouraged to call upon parties in situations of armed conflict listed in the annexes to my report to undertake specific commitments and measures to address other violations and abuses committed against children for which they are cited.

166. Concerned Member States should allow contact between the United Nations and non-State parties to ensure the broad and effective protection of children in situations of concern, including for the purposes of preparing action plans to halt recruitment and use of children and undertaking specific commitments and measures to address all other grave violations committed against children. The Security Council should encourage this. Such contact will not prejudice the political and legal status of these non-State parties.

167. The Security Council is urged to ensure that systematic communication is established between its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions Committees and their expert groups in country situations of common concern. This may include the Working Group bringing to the attention of relevant sanctions Committees and their expert groups specific information contained in my reports prepared in the framework of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) for any necessary action. In situations where there are no existing sanctions committees, the Security Council is urged to consider means by which targeted measures may be applied against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children.

168. It is recommended that the Security Council ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions, including by means of the deployment of child protection advisers. The need for, the number and roles of and

the budget for child protection advisers should be systematically assessed during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation and political mission, and children's concerns should be reflected in all mission planning instruments and processes, including technical assessment and review missions.

169. Given the regional dimension of some conflicts highlighted in this report, relevant Member States, United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams should establish appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns such as recruitment, release and reintegration of children.

170. Member States should take strong and urgent action to bring to justice individuals responsible for the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law and other grave violations against children through national justice systems. The Security Council is encouraged to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, violations against children in armed conflict that fall within its jurisdiction, and other international justice mechanisms should also prioritize accountability for crimes against children.

171. Member States are urged to ensure that children who are accused of crimes under international law allegedly committed while they were associated with armed forces or groups are considered primarily as victims, and that they are treated in accordance with international law, and within a framework of restorative justice and social rehabilitation.

172. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are encouraged to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities. In particular, these include signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces/groups and their use in hostilities; exercising extraterritorial jurisdiction in order to strengthen the international protection of children against recruitment; taking measures to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; and submitting timely reports under the Optional Protocol to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

173. Effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children is crucial for the well-being of all children associated with armed forces and groups, and, as such, relevant Governments and donors should ensure that these programmes receive timely and adequate resources and funding, and are community-based for long-term sustainability. This is increasingly a critical factor for durable peace and security.

174. The monitoring and reporting of violations against children need to be supported with effective measures to prevent and respond to such violations. The Security Council should continue to call upon relevant national and international actors to support and expand programmes to ensure that children who are victims of violations have access to appropriate services and response.

## VI. Lists<sup>11</sup> in annexes to the report

175. The present report contains two annexes.<sup>12</sup> Annex I contains a list of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing also in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II contains a list of parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Parties marked with an asterisk (\*) have been on the annex lists for a minimum of four years.

176. It should be noted that countries as such are not listed in the annexes. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

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<sup>11</sup> Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the present report is guided by criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence; reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

<sup>12</sup> The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children<sup>a</sup>**

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

Taliban forces: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Burundi**

Palipehutu-Forces nationales pour la libération (FNL) — Agathon Rwasa:\* *this party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD).
2. Forces démocratiques pour la rassemblement (UFDR): *this party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
3. Forces démocratiques populaire de Centrafrique (FDPC).
4. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA): *this party has also been responsible for abductions and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
5. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ).
6. Self-defence militias supported by the Government of Central African Republic.

#### **Parties in Chad**

1. Chadian National Army: *this party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*
2. Concorde nationale tchadienne (CNT).
3. Convention révolutionnaire démocratique du Tchad (CRDT).
4. Direction Générale de Sécurisation des Services et Institutions de l'Etat (DGSSIE).
5. Front uni pour le changement (FUC).

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<sup>a</sup> Parties marked with an asterisk (\*) have been on the annex lists for a minimum of four years.

6. Sudanese armed groups backed by the Government of Chad:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement;
  - (b) Sudanese Toroboros.
7. Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD).

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda and currently by Bosco Ntaganda: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children, and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*
2. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC):\* *this party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).\*
4. Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI).\*
5. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA): *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children, abduction and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
6. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including PARECO:\* *this party has also been responsible for attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Iraq**

Al-Qaida in Iraq: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA).
2. Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council.
3. Kachin Independence Army (KIA).
4. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA):\* *this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.*
5. Karenni Army (KA):\* *this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.*
6. Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF).
7. Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army.

8. Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).
9. Tatmadaw Kyi: *\* this party has also been responsible for the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*
10. United Wa State Army (UWSA).

#### **Parties in Nepal**

Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M).\*

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools in the reporting period.*
2. Remnants of the former Islamic Courts Union (ICU): *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools in the reporting period.*
3. Transitional Federal Government (TFG): *\* this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in southern Sudan**

1. Parties under the control of the Government of the Sudan:  
Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF): *this party has also been responsible for committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
2. Parties under the control of the Government of southern Sudan:  
Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).\*
3. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

#### **Parties in Darfur**

1. Parties backed by the Government of the Sudan:
  - (a) Chadian opposition groups: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period;*
  - (b) Government-supported militias: *\* this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children, and attacks on schools in the reporting period;*
  - (c) Police forces, including the Central Reserve Police: *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period;*
  - (d) Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF): *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children, and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*

2. Former rebel parties that have accepted the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing);
  - (b) Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy;
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Gasim/Mother Wing;
  - (d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will;
  - (e) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minnawi: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period;*
  - (f) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Peace Wing.
3. Rebel parties that have rejected the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM): *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period;*
  - (b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid;
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity: *this party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*



## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children<sup>a</sup>**

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN):\* *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children and attacks on schools in the reporting period.*
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP):\* *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming, abductions, committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children and attacks on schools in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).\*
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF):\* *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and abductions of children in the reporting period.*
3. New People's Army (NPA).\*

#### **Parties in Sri Lanka**

1. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE):\* *this party has also been responsible for killing and maiming and the denial of humanitarian access to children in the reporting period.*
2. Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) (former Karuna faction): *this party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Uganda**

- Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).\*

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<sup>a</sup> Parties marked with an asterisk (\*) have been on the annex lists for a minimum of four years.



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Sixty-fifth year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2009, is submitted pursuant to paragraph 19 of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution, resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), as well as its presidential statements on children and armed conflict.

2. The first part of the report (section II) includes information on measures undertaken by parties listed in the annexes to end all violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict that serve as indicators of progress made in follow-up to the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The second part (section III) contains an update on the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established by the Council in its resolution 1612 (2005). The third part (section IV) of the report focuses on information on grave violations committed against children, in particular recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence against children, abductions of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict in contravention to applicable international law.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, this

<sup>1</sup> Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict includes, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II and Protocol V to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.



section identifies trends or patterns of violations and provides an assessment of the progress or deterioration.

3. In accordance with the request of the Security Council, and taking into account the views expressed by the members of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the fourth part of the report (section V) provides information on the criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes of my report. And the final part (section VI) contains a series of recommendations.

4. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1882 (2009), the Security Council requests that the present report include in the annexes, in addition to recruitment and use, those parties to armed conflict that engage in patterns of killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children in contravention of applicable international law. A conservative approach has been taken this year in determining the parties to be listed for these additional violations, given the limited time for country task forces to orient themselves with the listing criteria and requirements pursuant to resolution 1882 (2009).

5. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations.

6. References to reports, cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

7. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. Information on measures undertaken by parties listed in the annexes to end all violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict**

8. The present section presents the specific measures and initiatives undertaken by parties during the reporting period to cease recruiting and using children, refrain

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. Pictet (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).

from committing rape and other sexual violence and/or from killing and maiming children, as well as to address other grave violations against children during armed conflict for which they have been cited, in line with their obligations under international law and relevant national legislation.<sup>3</sup> These measures are based on a review of all pertinent sets of conclusions of the Security Council Working Group and recommendations in my country reports on the situation of children affected by armed conflict. They comprise the critical priority recommendations addressed to parties, based on which progress made by parties is assessed. They include:

(a) Engagement in dialogue with country task forces on monitoring and reporting, as called for by the Security Council in its resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), towards the preparation and implementation of action plans to end the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children;

(b) Release of all children from their ranks unconditionally through a formal process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in line with international standards;

(c) Addressing impunity for perpetrators through investigations, convictions or sanctions of those responsible for grave crimes against children;

(d) Reform or implementation of national legislation that criminalizes child recruitment, sexual violence or any of the other grave violations in line with international law;

(e) Any other specific measures to prevent the killing and maiming of children and/or to prevent and combat the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

## **A. Dialogue and action plans**

9. Action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and association of children, as well as to secure their release from armed forces and groups, were signed between the United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF); the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA); the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) on 30 July, 20 November and 16 December 2009, respectively. In conjunction with the MILF action plan, a supplemental general order for dissemination to all frontline commanders is being finalized to re-state the policy on non-recruitment of children within the MILF-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF), providing for, inter alia, the necessary sanctions for non-compliance and the establishment of child protection units within MILF-BIAF. A programme for the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of children who may be found in the ranks of MILF-BIAF is planned to be put into place in 2010. The SPLA action plan, signed in the presence of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, will set a timetable for the release of children, defines continuous prevention measures against recruitment and re-association of children and grants the United Nations access to the military

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<sup>3</sup> For more comprehensive information, see specific country reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict submitted to the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

barracks of SPLA to monitor and verify compliance. In Nepal, the signing of the action plan, witnessed by my Special Representative, resulted in the discharge and release of 1,843 personnel verified as minors in the United Nations-led verification process in 2007. The discharged minors will have access to a range of rehabilitation options provided by the Government, with assistance from the United Nations. A total of 1,130 children, the remainder of the caseload, did not present themselves, as many had fled on earlier occasions or were fearful to return to the cantonments. Those children will obtain discharge notifications and will be traced in their home communities for assistance and protection.

10. In the Central African Republic, although an action plan for the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD) had been negotiated and ready to be signed by the Government, the national “Comité de pilotage” and the United Nations since October 2008, it has been put on hold by the Minister of Defence, who requested that other parties to conflict listed in the annexes of my report, in addition to APRD, be included within the action plan.

11. Dialogue on action plans with parties to conflict is also ongoing in other country situations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a draft action plan has been submitted to the Government. The Minister of Defence and the Chief of Staff of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have expressed their willingness to cooperate with the United Nations, although the Government has yet to engage formally in the discussions. A draft action plan is also under discussion with the Working Committee on the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism of the Government of Myanmar. On 26 November 2009, the Government agreed to undertake the following steps identified in the draft action plan: to appoint a focal point from the Office of the Chief of Military Affairs Security, in addition to representatives from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Resettlement; to cooperate with the United Nations so as to strengthen birth registration systems that facilitate age verification during recruitments; to provide awareness training on child rights and protection at all military recruitment centres and training schools; to issue directives stipulating disciplinary measures for recruiters and violators to all military divisions on the prohibition of recruitment of minors; to facilitate in-country access on specific requests by the United Nations, in conjunction with states and divisional coordination committees; and to facilitate visits by the United Nations to Government recruitment centres and military sites. Those positive commitments to the draft action plan should be accelerated and finalized in an urgent manner.

12. Important commitments to begin negotiations with the United Nations towards the development of action plans and the release of children were received from several parties in the Sudan. The leadership of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) agreed to consider the adoption of an action plan that also extends to pro-Government militia groups in Darfur. Commitments were also received from the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Ghasim (Mother Wing), SLA/Free Will and the Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing), all of which are signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement. SLA/Minni Minnawi agreed to allow continuous unhindered access to its military camps and areas of concentration for verification by the United Nations in compliance with an action plan it had signed in 2007.

13. In Afghanistan, the Government appointed a high-level focal point on 18 October 2009 to interact with the country task force on monitoring and reporting.

That was followed in December by the commitment to establish an interministerial steering committee on children and armed conflict, with the objective to develop an action plan to address issues affecting children in the context of the conflict. The official launch of the Government steering committee is scheduled to take place in early 2010. In Chad, the Government has, since July 2009, shown a consistent policy position and commitment against child recruitment, and is engaged in discussions with the United Nations, through its Defence Adviser, on the process towards development of an action plan. In Somalia, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has undertaken to assist the Transitional Federal Government to prepare an action plan that would include measures to screen its troops, as well as the establishment of prevention mechanisms against the further recruitment of children.

14. In Sri Lanka, where an action plan was signed by the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) in December 2008, distinct steps are being undertaken to ensure its implementation. A task force comprising the Government agent, the police department, the Sri Lankan army, the Department of Probation, the National Child Protection Authority and UNICEF was established in Batticaloa in January 2009. It meets on a monthly basis to monitor progress and address issues related to the action plan. In addition, the task force established a child welfare unit to provide assistance to families seeking information, orientation and support for the release of their children. This has contributed significantly to increasing the confidence of the population in the authorities and to reporting cases of child recruitment. Only five children remain associated with the group as of December 2009.

15. The United Nations country team in Myanmar, however, remains unable to establish contact and undertake formal dialogue with non-State armed groups listed in the annexes to my report, as the Government has not granted access to those groups. In the Philippines, the Government has not given its endorsement for the United Nations to directly engage the New People's Army (NPA) for the purposes of an action plan. In Colombia, the Government has also expressed concerns about dialogue with Colombian parties listed in my report and dialogue with my Special Representative continues in that regard.

16. During the reporting period, child protection dialogue has also resulted in some positive movement in the form of commitments by parties in Côte d'Ivoire to combating sexual violence against children, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1882 (2009). Consultations with the Government on a draft national action plan on sexual violence are currently under way. Furthermore, on 19 January, the Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces nouvelles (FDS-FN) signed a programme of action to address sexual violence against children in areas under its control. This is expected to serve as a stopgap measure pending the establishment of the national action plan. On 20 February, the Chief of Staff of FDS-FN established a working group (groupe de travail et de suivi) composed of 14 members, to oversee the implementation of the programme of action in all zones under its control and has requested the United Nations to provide a comprehensive briefing on resolution 1882 (2009) to his cabinet. In a similar development, on 30 January, the leadership of the militia groups operating in western Côte d'Ivoire also committed to collaborate with the United Nations on preventing sexual violence, through a communiqué addressed to my Special Representative in Côte d'Ivoire.

## **B. Release of children through a formal process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

17. In Burundi, in response to the Declaration of the Special Envoys for the Great Lakes Region of 17 January 2009 and continued advocacy by the United Nations and the Political Directorate, as well as the regional initiative, eight focal points from Agathon Rwasa's Forces nationales de libération (FNL) were nominated to be responsible for facilitating the separation of children associated with FNL combatants. This encouraged real progress in discussions on the release of children associated with FNL, which culminated in pivotal success, with the formal release of the first group of 112 children on 2 April from the Rubira and Rugazi assembly areas. On 10 April, the remaining 228 children were released from five FNL pre-assembly areas. On 8 June, 40 children associated with alleged FNL dissidents in the Randa and Buramata assembly areas were also released. To date, all the children have been reunified with their families and there are no known children associated with armed groups in Burundi.

18. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during the reporting period 2,672 children, including 97 girls, were separated or escaped from the armed forces and groups during the "fast-track integration" process carried out in North and South Kivu. Of the 2,672 children, 2,032 were separated from the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and its sub-groups, FDLR — Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FOCA), FDLR — Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD) and FDLR — Soki, the Forces des résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI), the front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FPJC), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO), the Mai-Mai Patriotes résistants, the Mai-Mai Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, the Mai-Mai Mongols, the Mai-Mai Kasindiens, the Mai-Mai Ruwenzori and other unnamed, smaller Mai-Mai groups. The remaining 640 children were separated from the newly integrated FARDC units after the completion of the integration process. All those children were provided temporary care in transit and orientation centres or in foster families pending family reunification.

19. In north Sudan, 739 children associated with SPLA, the Eastern Front Movement, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), SLA/Peace Wing and other armed groups aligned to the SAF registered for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process since the signing of the three peace agreements in the Sudan and have all been released. A total of 638 of those children have been benefiting from inclusive reintegration activities in nine states across the north of the country during the reporting period. In south Sudan, 56 children associated with SPLA have been demobilized since August 2009 and 35 children have been registered for the demobilization anticipated for 2010. This has been as a result of the establishment of the first child protection unit within SPLA headquarters, which consists of five SPLA officers and carries out joint monitoring and verification missions to SPLA barracks with the United Nations. Furthermore, the good collaboration between the North and South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commissions for the reintegration of children in the Three Areas (Abuja, Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile) is acknowledged. In Darfur, a decree by the Government of National Unity for the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to coordinate disarmament, demobilization and

reintegration activities in Darfur, in collaboration with the Darfur Security Arrangements Implementation Commission of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority, has assisted in efforts to release and reintegrate children associated with armed groups. The Darfur child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, endorsed in early July 2009, with UNICEF as the United Nations-system lead, is based on an operational plan developed with six armed groups, including SLA/Free Will, SLA/Abu Ghasim (Mother Wing), the Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing), SLA/Minni Minnawi, SLA/Peace Wing and the Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy. A total of 387 children from SLA/Free Will and SLA/Abu Ghasim (Mother Wing) have been disarmed and demobilized during the reporting period.

20. Despite the absence of a formal action plan with APRD in the Central African Republic, a contingency plan to assist the release of children was developed by the United Nations and child protection partners following the commitment by the group to demobilize all children in its ranks. As part of the implementation of this plan, APRD identified several cantonment sites for children and provided preliminary lists of children associated with the group for verification by the United Nations. During the reporting period, 652 demobilized children, including 52 girls, were assisted. In the north-west, 474 children, including 39 girls, were demobilized from APRD. All the children received immediate care in interim care centres or with foster families and have been successfully reunified with their families. An additional 174 children, including 13 girls, formerly associated with the *Unión des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement* (UFDR) in the north-east, were identified and assisted through community child protection mechanisms.

21. In Chad, with a view to verifying the presence of children and facilitating their release from the ranks of the *Armée nationale tchadienne* (ANT), the Ministry of Defence sent out orders to commanders of armed and security forces to grant access to military camps to the United Nations and the International Committee for the Red Cross for monitoring and verification. The Government also initiated and allowed joint verification visits by the United Nations to military barracks and training centres in Abéché, Koundoul, Moussoro and Mongo. Joint visits to the headquarters of the *Armée de terre*, the *Gendarmerie nationale*, the *Garde nationale et nomade du tchad* (GNNT) and the *Direction générale de sécurisation des services et institutions de l'État* (DGSSIE) in N'Djamena were also undertaken in August 2009. As a result of those verification exercises, UNICEF has documented a total of 240 children who have been released from the following armed groups: *Front pour le Salut de la République* (FSR); *Front uni pour le changement* (FUC); *Mouvement national pour le redressement* (MNR); *Rassemblement des forces pour le changement* (RFC); *Conseil démocratique et révolutionnaire* (CDR); *Union des forces révolutionnaires* (UFR); *Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement* (UFDD); *Union des forces démocratiques pour le changement* (UFCD); *Union des forces démocratiques* (UFD); *Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale* (FPRN); and *Union pour le changement démocratique* (UDC).

22. Following the end of the conflict in Sri Lanka, as of November 2009, a total of 560 "surrendee"<sup>4</sup> children, including 199 girls, were identified through the process

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<sup>4</sup> A "surrendee" under the Sri Lankan Emergency Regulation No. 1580/5 of 15 December 2008, is a child leaving an armed group that has been identified and registered by the Government of Sri Lanka and verified by UNICEF.



of screening for former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) combatants. Of the 560 children, 6 were formerly associated with the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP). Children have been separated from the adult surrendeers and transferred to rehabilitation centres dedicated for children, in line with Emergency Regulation No. 1580/5 concerning the reintegration of children leaving armed groups. In the Poonthottam Cooperative Training Centre in Vavuniya, established as a child rehabilitation centre in July 2009, children undergo vocational training courses, while at the Ratmalana Hindu College, established in October 2009, children have resumed formal education. The process of screening is ongoing and small groups of children continue to be identified.

23. In Myanmar, according to official reports made available by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 87 child soldiers were released through Government mechanisms from January to December 2009. Progress has been made with respect to those reports, as they now include addresses and other contact details of the children, which assist the United Nations in verifying the release and in tracing the families of the children. In addition, under the International Labour Organization (ILO) Supplementary Understanding complaints mechanism for the elimination of forced labour, a total of 44 under age recruits were verified as discharged and reunited with their families in 2009. The Government working committee on the monitoring and reporting mechanism has also invited the United Nations to witness the discharge of eight children from the basic military training schools, recruitment centres and camps. During the reporting period, UNICEF and child protection partners provided reintegration services to 54 former child soldiers, in support of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

24. In Colombia, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) continues to implement reintegration programmes, re-establishment of rights and psychosocial attention for children separated from illegal armed groups. From January to December 2009, information from ICBF indicated that a total of 218 children had been separated from the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 74 from the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and 1 from the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL). In addition, according to ICBF, 22 children had been separated from other illegal armed groups which the Government considers to be criminals involved in drug trafficking. While many of those groups are dedicated to common criminal activities, others operate in a manner similar to that of the former paramilitary organizations.

### **C. Addressing impunity for perpetrators through investigations, convictions or sanctions of those responsible for grave crimes against children**

25. In many of the country situations covered in the present report, the near total impunity for grave crimes perpetrated against children remains disturbing and poses a serious challenge for the protection of children. Despite several initiatives and commitments by some Governments to address impunity using national accountability mechanisms in 2009, including by initiating investigations, arrests and trials against members of armed forces or armed groups, with some resulting in convictions, impunity continues to prevail. The number of prosecutions of parties to conflict listed in the annexes of my report for the commission of violations against children remains small. Information received suggests that factors which undermine

the fight against impunity include, the lack of political will, weak legal and judicial infrastructures, as well as the absence of resources and expertise to conduct investigations and prosecutions. In some situations, there is deliberate obstruction of the course of justice and the failure to focus on command responsibility. Concerted effort must be made in establishing and maintaining the rule of law at the national level, as well as ensuring that perpetrators of crimes against children are held accountable in a manner consistent with international human rights norms and standards, as this has a critical deterrent effect.

26. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mai-Mai commander, Gédéon Kyungu Mutanga was convicted by the Haut-Katanga military court for crimes against humanity on 5 March 2009. This was the largest trial involving such crimes in the country and his conviction by the military justice system set an important precedent for those who suffered human rights abuses. On 3 June, the Kisangani military tribunal sentenced four members of a Mai-Mai group to life imprisonment and one to 30 years' imprisonment for crimes against humanity, in particular for the rape of more than 30 women, including 8 girls. In South Kivu, six FARDC elements were convicted for crimes of sexual violence against children during the reporting period. It is important to note, however, that while the efforts of military tribunals should be recognized, their jurisdiction should be restricted to military offences committed by military personnel, to the exclusion of human rights violations, which should fall under the jurisdiction of ordinary criminal courts. Where military courts have exercised jurisdiction, they must do so in accordance with international due process and fair trial standards.

27. Collaboration between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the International Criminal Court has resulted in the arrest and transfer to the Court of Germain Katanga, a commander of the Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri, and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, the former head of the Front des nationalistes et intégrationnistes and a colonel in FARDC. Both individuals are charged with the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of children in hostilities, attacks against civilians, as well as murder, rape and sexual slavery. Their trials resumed in January 2010.

28. There has been some cause for concern, however, despite those positive steps to investigate and prosecute violators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the appointments of known perpetrators of grave crimes against children to Government or senior military positions. Jean-Pierre Biyoyo was made a colonel in FARDC despite being convicted by a military court in March 2006 for the abduction and illegal detention of children for the purposes of recruitment, while a leader of the Mudundu 40 militia; Bosco Ntaganda was made a general in FARDC in January 2009 despite being the subject of an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court for the war crime of enlisting child soldiers and using them in hostilities; and Ndayambaje Nyangara Kipanga, convicted to life imprisonment in absentia by the military court in Goma on 27 July 2009 for the abduction and rape of three girls, escaped from prison and is reportedly within the command structure of FARDC.

29. In Sri Lanka, a TMVP cadre was arrested in Batticaloa in April 2009 for child recruitment and use, but was released after one week on bail without being charged. The cadre was reportedly killed following his release. The Government has not taken any additional action with regard to similar allegations. However, commitments to take steps to address allegations of recruitment and re-recruitment of children in Ampara district by errant TMVP cadre Iniya Barathi, referred to as

“commander”, were made by officials during the mission of the envoy of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Major General (ret.) Patrick Cammaert in December.

30. In Myanmar, in response to complaints lodged by ILO on under age recruitment by Tatmadaw Kyi officers, such administrative penalties as serious reprimands, the loss of wages or the loss of seniority have been imposed on 26 soldiers. In addition, a commissioned officer has been dismissed from the military and sentenced to one-year imprisonment, and two privates have been sentenced to imprisonment of up to three months with hard labour by the military courts.

31. In Colombia, according to a report by the Attorney-General, for the period from January 2008 to August 2009, 156 cases of recruitment, affecting 633 children, were received by its Human Rights Unit and a total of 13 persons were convicted. In addition, as of December 2009, the United Nations has confirmed information of the Justice and Peace Unit indicating that demobilized members of self-defence groups have begun giving testimony on 1,437 cases of child recruitment and have completed testimonies on 1,093 cases. Of those cases, 90 charges have been pressed, but there have been no convictions to date.

32. In Nepal, on 13 September 2009, a decision was finally issued by the Kavre District Court on the previously reported case of Maina Sunuwar, a 15-year-old girl who was tortured and killed by members of the former Royal Nepal Army in 2004. The court ordered the Nepal Army to turn over court-martial documents and immediately proceed with the automatic suspension of Major Niranjana Basnet, one of the four soldiers charged with Ms. Sunuwar’s killing. Major Basnet had been deployed by the Nepal Army to serve with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT). Upon the recommendation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat, in view of the serious nature of the allegations, Major Basnet was repatriated on 12 December. At the time of writing, he remains in the custody of the Nepal Army despite a formal request by the Nepal police for his arrest. Senior officers from the Nepal Army and the Minister of Defence have made statements challenging the court’s jurisdiction over the case and indicating that the officer would not be turned over to the police until a military court of inquiry had completed an investigation into the circumstances of the repatriation.

33. In Afghanistan, a number of investigations were conducted into incidents involving, inter alia, the killing and maiming of children by military forces. Notably, an investigation led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was ordered into the events surrounding the air strike in Kunduz, in which 40 children were killed. There have been no known investigations by the Afghan National Forces and Afghan National Police for violations concerning children. The Taliban or other insurgent armed groups are responsible for the vast majority of violations against children.

#### **D. Reform or implementation of national legislation criminalizing child recruitment, sexual violence or other grave violations against children**

34. In 2009 a number of important new pieces of legislation were adopted or existing laws modified to prevent, prohibit and criminalize child recruitment and other grave violations against children, in line with State obligations under

international law. There have also been some significant successes in efforts to integrate child rights and child protection goals into national development plans and strategies, such as the national action plan for the child in Côte d'Ivoire.

35. As of 31 December 2009, the number of ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict has increased to 131 countries. My Special Representative continues to advocate with Member States for the ratification or accession to this important international instrument in order to give it the broadest possible legitimacy and force. Countries covered in the present report that have not ratified the Optional Protocol include the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Lebanon, Myanmar, Pakistan and Somalia.

36. On 10 January 2009, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo promulgated a new law on child protection, replacing the decree of 6 December 1950 on juvenile delinquency. Under the law, for the first time, the recruitment and use of children under 18 years of age by armed forces, the police and armed groups are prohibited and can result in a prison term of 10 to 20 years. The law also sets the age of legal majority at 18 years and calls for the creation of special tribunals and police units for the protection of children.

37. In the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army Act of 2009, adopted on 10 February 2009, explicitly establishes 18 years as the minimum age required for enrolment into the SPLA forces. In addition, on 9 April 2009, the President of the Government of South Sudan inaugurated the Child Act of south Sudan, the first-ever law recognizing children's rights. The act criminalizes the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as torture and cruel treatment of children. Another example of major progress in this regard was the ratification of the Federal Child Act by the Sudan National Assembly on 29 December 2009. This new act brings Sudan's legislation in line with international standards, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. The act prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces or groups, ensures demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation support for child soldiers and child victims of conflict, and abolishes the death penalty for any person under 18 years of age.

38. In Burundi the revised penal code adopted by the National Assembly on 22 April 2009 now prohibits the enlistment of children into the national defence forces, lays down that 18 years is the minimum age for conscription, raises the age of criminal responsibility to 15 years, provides alternatives to imprisonment and strengthens sentences against perpetrators of violations against children, in particular sexual violence.

39. Another significant development is the coming into force of the Child Soldier Prevention Act, on 23 June 2009, in the United States of America. The act restricts the provision of United States military training, financing and other defence-related assistance to countries identified as recruiting or using child soldiers in Government armed forces or Government-supported paramilitary organizations or militias, in violation of international law.

40. In Nepal, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare has initiated a draft of the child rights protection and promotion bill, which will include, among other provisions, criminalization of the recruitment of children in armed forces and groups. This process has been put on hold owing to the change of Government.

## **E. Other measures to prevent the killing and maiming of children and/or to prevent and combat rape and other forms of sexual violence against children**

41. On 1 April 2009, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo officially endorsed the Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, developed in consultation with relevant ministries, non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). A plan that operationalizes the components of the comprehensive strategy was subsequently developed as the priority action plan for addressing sexual violence, including against children, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and has been integrated into the wider national strategy against gender-based violence. Similarly, in the Sudan the Ministry of Justice of the Government of National Unity developed an action plan for combating violence against women and children in line with Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009). The action plan defines key objectives and activities in five main areas, that is, legislative, health, social protection, awareness-raising and addressing impunity.

42. In October 2009 the Government of the Philippines and MILF panels signed the Agreement on the Civilian Protection Component of the International Monitoring Team, which reconfirms their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law to refrain from intentionally targeting or attacking non-combatants or to avoid acts that would cause collateral damage to civilians. The Agreement also includes provisions for the preservation of facilities vital for the survival of civilians, such as schools, hospitals and relief distribution sites. To give effect to the Agreement, both parties agreed to issue or reissue orders to their respective military units or security forces (including paramilitary organizations, associated militias and police units) to conduct their operations consistent with their obligations and commitments. In Afghanistan, a review was conducted by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United States Forces in Afghanistan, leading to the issuance of a new tactical directive in July 2009. In 2010 a comprehensive analysis and review of ISAF standard operating procedures will be undertaken to ensure that international child protection standards are being met.

## **III. Information on progress made in the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism**

43. Following the listing of Al-Qaida in Iraq in my last report, the United Nations country team in Iraq endorsed the establishment of a country task force on monitoring and reporting in March 2009. The task force has not yet been activated owing to the lack of expertise on the ground; however, the training of partners aimed at improving the reporting and verification of child rights violations has been undertaken throughout the year. In Colombia, the country task force was formally established in January 2009, subsequent to the acceptance by the Government of the process in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

44. In 2009 four regional task forces on monitoring and reporting were established in the eastern, central, south-eastern and western regions in Afghanistan. Task force

members also increased the number of staff dedicated to monitoring and reporting mechanism activities. A child protection unit was established in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March 2009, consisting of a child protection adviser and a monitoring and reporting officer, although greater field presence is urgently required. Focal points on child protection were appointed in four of the Mission's eight regional offices to work with the regional task forces. In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the leadership of the MONUC child protection section and UNICEF, several working groups established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005) have been set up, which act as sub-branches of the country task force in the field to ensure the regular reporting on grave violations of child rights. The Nepal country task force expanded its scope to monitor and report on armed groups, especially in the Tarai region and the eastern hills.

45. Given the presence of two distinctive peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, an agreement has been reached to establish a national task force on monitoring and reporting co-chaired by African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan Deputy Heads of Mission with the UNICEF Country Representative. This unique arrangement of three co-chairs is intended to facilitate coordination and fulfil the requirements as outlined in my report on children and armed conflict in 2005 (A/59/695-S/2005/72), which specified the significance of the role of Special Representatives in any given conflict situation. Furthermore, to facilitate more effective monitoring of violations, UNAMID will enhance its existing capacities on the ground through the establishment of child protection field presence in the three states of Darfur.

46. In Côte d'Ivoire, the persistence of sexual violence against children across the country has resulted in the need to reactivate and strengthen the country task force in order to monitor and report on such violations with immediate urgency. Efforts in that regard are currently under way.

## **IV. Information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict**

### **A. Information on grave violations against children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **Developments in Afghanistan**

47. While detailed documentation is still difficult to obtain, available information indicates that a number of children were recruited or used by armed opposition groups throughout the country, including the Taliban, the Haqqani network, Hezb-i-Islami, the Tora Bora Front and Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia. Cases were documented of children as young as 13 and 14 years of age who carried out suicide attacks or were used to plant explosives. This was further reinforced by the documentation of cases of children in Government custody allegedly under national security-related charges, which confirmed that a number of such children detained had been lured into carrying explosives or trained in conducting suicide-type attacks against national and international security forces or Government officials. Two children revealed that they had been kidnapped from Afghanistan and taken to Pakistan, where they underwent military training. Several cases of Pakistani

children used to conduct military-related operations in Afghanistan were also confirmed. Children also continue to be associated with the Afghan National Police.

48. During the reporting period, more than 1,000 children were killed or injured in conflict-related violence, victims of, inter alia, improvised explosive devices, air strikes, rocket attacks and mines and unexploded ordnance accidents. This is a marked increase from last year and is due mainly to the growth and spread of the insurgency, with armed groups being responsible for the vast majority of incidents. The southern region of Afghanistan (Helmand, Uruzgan, Kandahar) remains the most volatile, with the highest number of civilian casualties, including children, closely followed by the south-east (Khost, Ghazni) and east (Kunar, Nangarhar). A total of 128 children were killed by armed opposition groups, including the Taliban, in 2009. The reported child casualties were caused by suicide attacks, assassinations and improvised explosive devices, including at least five children who were killed while positioning or using explosives against pro-Government targets. Furthermore, from January to December 2009, 55 children were killed and 199 injured in mine accidents, the vast majority (205) of whom were boys. While the number of deadly air strike incidents remains limited overall, aerial bombings by international military forces caused the death of 131 children in 2009.

49. Available information points to sexual violence, including that against children, as a widespread phenomenon. The practice of *bacha bazi* and sexual abuse against boys is also a matter of concern. The general climate of impunity and the vacuum in rule of law has adversely affected the reporting of sexual violence and abuse against children to the authorities and the prosecution of perpetrators. According to the July 2009 report entitled *Silence is Violence*, drafted by UNAMA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, perpetrators also include and are linked to local power holders, such as Government or elected officials, powerful commanders, members of illegal armed groups and criminal gangs.

50. The burning of schools or school equipment, forced closure, use of school facilities, damage from attacks, fighting or explosions from improvised explosive devices in the vicinity of school buildings or targeted military attacks and threats against pupils and educational staff have increased since my last report. A total of 613 incidents were recorded from January to November 2009 compared to 348 incidents reported in 2008. Those incidents were largely perpetrated by groups opposing the Government, but also by conservative elements in some communities that are opposed to the education of girls. Such incidents have spread throughout the country, with a notable increase in areas around Kabul, Wardak, Logar and Khost, and in the eastern provinces of Laghman, Kunar and Nangarhar. The situation in the southern region remains of great concern, while attacks have further spread to northern provinces previously considered relatively safe, such as Takhar and Badakhshan. Reports indicate alarming figures of schools closed in certain areas, such as in Helmand (more than 70 per cent) or in Zabul (more than 80 per cent). During the reporting period, at least 23 pupils were killed and 342 suffered serious or minor injuries from such incidents, while 24 teachers and education personnel lost their lives and 41 were injured throughout the country.

51. There were also continued attacks on health workers and facilities, forcing many to close or scale down services, effectively cutting off hundreds of thousands of Afghan children from basic health care, in particular in Kandahar, Nimroz,

Kunar, Khost, Helmand, Wardak, Nangahar and Kunduz. While 31 incidents were reported in 2008, the number of incidents nearly tripled to 115 in 2009 and includes the abduction, killing and assault of medical staff, personal threats from armed groups, burning, looting and forced closure as well as the use of explosives in and around health facilities by armed groups. Abduction of health workers by armed groups, including vaccinators and support staff, was by far the most reported violation. Search operations conducted by national and international military forces in health facilities, and occupation of health facilities were also denounced as a serious breach of international standards.

52. Increased incidents targeting the aid community continue to adversely affect the delivery of humanitarian programmes throughout the country, with significant peaks in Kunduz, Kandahar and Herat. A total of 163 incidents attributable to armed groups, including complex attacks against humanitarian agency compounds and aid vehicle/convoy ambushes, and numerous threats to aid personnel were recorded in 2009.

53. Countrywide, approximately 110 children have been detained by the National Directorate of Security and international military forces on charges related to national security, including their alleged involvement or association with the Taliban and other armed groups. Access to detention facilities continues to be difficult and information on children detained by pro-Government forces remains limited. The use of harsh interrogation techniques and forced confession of guilt by the Afghan National Police and the National Directorate of Security was documented, including the use of electric shocks and beating.

#### **Developments in Burundi**

54. The United Nations has verified that all children associated with the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) were released through a formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in June 2009, and reunified with their families.<sup>5</sup> It has also been confirmed that FNL has ceased recruitment and since June no new reported cases of recruitment or use of children by the group have been recorded. On the basis of this information, FNL will be removed from the lists annexed to my report this year. The country task force will continue to monitor compliance by FNL and its alleged dissident groups to ensure that continuous efforts are made to prevent the recruitment or re-recruitment of children.

55. However, sexual violence against children continued to be of serious concern during the reporting period. An increase was noted with regard to the number of rape cases committed by civilians, while cases committed by members of security and defence forces have decreased since July. From January to November, four cases of rape were committed by members of the Burundi National Police, 7 by the National Defence Forces and 4 by FNL members. This is a marked decrease compared to the 42 cases attributed to those actors in 2008.

56. In addition, I remain concerned by the reports on militant activities of youth groups allegedly associated with certain political parties that are generating fear and suspicion. The United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi has received reports about members of the youth wing of the ruling Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) party, the

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<sup>5</sup> See para. 17 above for the total number of children released from FNL.



Imbonerakure, being involved in community patrols, guarding premises and accompanying public and police officials during arrest procedures, allegedly sanctioned by the authorities.

### **Developments in the Central African Republic**

57. Child recruitment continues to be a serious concern in 2009, with active mobilization of a large number of children into the ranks of self-defence militias throughout the country, in particular in Nana-Mambéré, Ouham-Pendé and Ouham prefectures. It is estimated that children constitute one third of the total self-defence militias. There are concerns that those militias are supported by the Government of the Central African Republic and are being used as auxiliaries by the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA). The United Nations has observed an increased and open presence of armed children linked to those militias along main roads in Bocaranga and Bouar/Niem. The Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) and the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP), which had split from UFDR, were also recruiting and using children in the frontlines in the Vakaga area of north-eastern Central African Republic. Between 200 and 300 children remain present in the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD),<sup>6</sup> the Forces démocratiques populaires de Centrafrique (FDPC) and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ). Furthermore, approximately 100 children are estimated to be associated with Chadian *zaraguinas* present in the Nana-Gribizi and eastern Ouham areas. The *zaraguinas* are from the Central African Republic, the Sudan, Chad, Cameroon, Mali and Uganda, and on occasion are made up of elements from the Central African Republic rebel groups or from the Chadian and the Central African Republic armed forces.

58. The situation in the south-eastern region was particularly alarming, following repeated incursions and the presence of LRA in Obo, Bambouti, Zemio, Djema and Mboki villages, in Haut-Mbomou prefecture. LRA continues to abduct and forcibly recruit children and use them as combatants, spies, sex-slaves and porters. A total of eight Central African children and young mothers who had escaped were received in reception centres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and repatriated under United Nations auspices. At least 23 other Central African children reached their communities in Haut-Mbomou on their own from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo and/or southern Sudan.

59. Incidence of rape and sexual violence against children by armed elements is of grave concern. The United Nations confirmed 108 cases of sexual violence against children in the north-west in the reporting period, with rebel groups and armed bandits (*coupeurs de routes*) among the perpetrators.

### **Developments in Chad**

60. Recruitment and use of children, in particular in eastern Chad, by the Armée nationale tchadienne (ANT) and different armed groups continued in 2009. All the children recruited were boys, mainly from 14 to 17 years of age, with several as young as 12 years of age. The Government of Chad stated that there was no policy to recruit children; however, on several occasions, Government officials have

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<sup>6</sup> See para. 20 above for the total number of children released from APRD.

admitted the presence of children among their ranks. During the reporting period, MINURCAT documented 26 cases of child recruitment by ANT. According to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, 15 of those children were refugees and were recruited in March 2009 by ANT, which promised the children CFA francs 400,000 each (US\$ 900) to join the armed forces. To date, 19 children remain associated with ANT.

61. Persistent and corroborated reports have also indicated the active recruitment of Sudanese children from refugee camps by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), in many instances with the full complicity of local camp leaders. At least 17 children were recruited, with some having been used as combatants in clashes between JEM and the Sudan Armed Forces in south Darfur. Throughout 2009, MINURCAT also received 56 reports of children disappearing under suspicious circumstances from the Abéché, Farchana, Goz Beida and Iriba refugee camps, of which 16 children were confirmed to have been recruited by JEM. The remaining 40 children were also suspected to have been recruited.

62. A total of 84 children were identified among Union des forces révolutionnaires (UFR) combatants captured by Government forces following clashes in Am Dam in May, although interviews with the children and adult combatants indicate that the number of children who took part in the battle was significantly higher. From June onwards, a massive process of voluntary defections from Chadian armed opposition groups took place. Approximately 5,000 former members of such groups, mainly from the Mouvement national (MN), a coalition made up of the Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement rénové (UFDD-R) of Issa Moussa Tamboulet, the Mouvement national pour le redressement (MNR) of Mahamat Ahmat Hamid and the Front pour le salut de la république (FSR) of Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane, as well as from other armed groups,<sup>7</sup> laid down weapons and joined Government forces. Among those who disarmed, 155 children were identified and released. There are no more children associated with those groups.

63. Within the MINURCAT area of operations in eastern Chad, it has been established that the mine threat is relatively low. However there is concern about the possibility of new mines being laid by Chadian armed opposition groups. In 2009 the Mine Action Unit identified 36 new casualties resulting from mines and explosive remnants of war in the Wadi Fira, Quaddai, Salamat and Sila regions, including 19 persons killed and 17 injured. Children from 3 to 15 years of age were the biggest casualty group, with 11 killed and 17 injured.

64. In eastern Chad, women and girls face the threat of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the militia, armed groups and ANT, and some cases have been recorded. However, owing to the lack of comprehensive data and information, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that sexual violence against children is a systematic feature of the conflict in Chad.

65. The prevailing insecurity in eastern Chad and the recent surge in attacks against aid workers and humanitarian assets have forced some aid agencies to suspend operations in some areas in the east, thus leaving thousands of children in need of relief support. The kidnapping of humanitarian workers has become a new and disturbing trend in eastern Chad.

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<sup>7</sup> See para. 21 above for the total number of children released from the Mouvement national pour le redressement and other armed groups.

### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

66. Child protection officers in the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) continue to monitor compliance by FDS-FN and militia groups with their respective action plan commitments on recruitment and use of child soldiers by conducting regular verification visits to checkpoints, areas around camps or military sites, police stations and customs posts. Both the leadership of FDS-FN and militia groups agreed to an "open door" policy with UNOCI, whereby any allegations of the use of child soldiers can be immediately investigated with their full cooperation and with unrestricted access. During the reporting period, there was no substantiated evidence of child-soldier use by those parties.

67. The prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children remains the most urgent concern in Côte d'Ivoire, with no substantial improvement compared to the previous reporting period. The situation is more serious in the northern parts of the country controlled by FDS-FN and is aggravated by the continued impunity of perpetrators. There is a similar concern in the western parts of the country under the control of pro-Government militias.

68. The number of cases of killing and maiming of children has also increased notably in 2009 and is linked to the other grave violations, such as abduction or rape and sexual violence. Although in several instances the perpetrators were identified as FDS-FN elements, the majority of violations are perpetrated by individuals or groups, often unidentified, who take advantage of the current lack of administration of justice. Perpetrators remain unidentified for a number of reasons: in most cases victims do not know their aggressor and they are reluctant to press charges owing to fear of reprisal or revenge, in particular in cases involving FDS-FN elements; poor administration of justice; and the general widespread culture of impunity that often results in many cases going unreported.

### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

69. In 2009 the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC) documented 848 newly recruited children (including 52 girls). Of those recruitments, 77 per cent took place in North Kivu province, 10 per cent in South Kivu province, 7 per cent in Katanga province, 4 per cent in Oriental province and 1 per cent each in Maniema and Kasai Oriental provinces.<sup>8</sup> Perpetrators include the national armed forces, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) (24 per cent), Mai-Mai factions (26 per cent), the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) (31 per cent), the various factions of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (10 per cent) and the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) (9 per cent). Furthermore, 15 cases of new recruitment of children were attributed to the Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI). There were no new recruitments by the Front nationaliste et intégrationnaliste (FNI).

70. A total of 473 new cases of child recruitment were attributed to FARDC. The increased presence of children within the ranks of the national armed forces compared to the previous reporting period was a result of the fast track process that integrated armed groups into FARDC, as well as new recruitment operations in

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<sup>8</sup> See para. 18 above for the total number of children released from the armed forces and groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Katanga and the Kasais. It appears that children recruited in those provinces during general recruitment drives have been transferred to such regroupment centres as Kamina, in Katanga, or Kitona, in Bas-Congo, for military training. The documentation of 64 children in the Kamina centre indicates that the Presidential Guard recruited them before and during their deployment in Haut-Uélé (Oriental province). Child protection actors experienced several obstructions and sometimes blunt refusals from FARDC to access those sites and identify children for their release. Many of the children that have escaped from remaining armed groups, but especially from FDLR, reported that they were detained by FARDC elements, sometimes over extended periods of time.

71. In the first four months of the year, 238 new cases of child recruitment by CNDP were registered in North Kivu before the military wing of CNDP officially ceased to exist. However, in the second half of 2009, a new surge of recruitment and re-recruitment of children, in particular in Masisi territory, North Kivu, was attributed to integrated former CNDP elements within FARDC. A total of 154 children were reported to have been recruited by former CNDP elements currently operating as FARDC.

72. No specific trends or patterns of killing and maiming of children could be identified during the reporting period. Nevertheless, 23 cases of killing and 12 cases of maiming were documented. Nine cases of killing were attributed to FDLR, six to FARDC, two each to the National Police and PARECO, and one to FRPI. In three cases, the group could not be identified. Four cases of maiming were reportedly perpetrated by FARDC, four by FDLR, one by the National Police and three by unidentified armed men.

73. Sexual violence against children continued to be a widespread phenomenon despite a slight decrease compared to the previous reporting period. In Oriental province and the Kivus, of 2,360 cases that were reported to have been committed against children, 447 have been attributed to security forces and armed groups, 38 cases were allegedly committed by FARDC, 30 by the National Police and 379 by several Mai-Mai groups, FDLR, FRPI, the Front nationaliste et intégrationnaliste (FNI), LRA and non-identified people in uniform.

74. In December 2008 a new surge of abduction of children and killings in Haut-Uélé district of Oriental province was attributed to LRA. Attacks against civilians by that group, including killings, abductions and pillaging, which triggered significant population displacements, continued in 2009. During the reporting period, 130 children (77 boys and 53 girls) were reportedly abducted by LRA. Most of them were abducted for the purpose of recruitment and 14 were reported to have suffered sexual violence. Of those children, seven were allegedly recruited in the Sudan and two in the Central African Republic.

### **Developments in Haiti**

75. The devastating earthquake that struck Haiti on 12 January 2010 has dramatically increased the vulnerability and risks of children to abuse and exploitation, since such conventional protection environments as children's families, schools and churches have been weakened and destroyed, and security and order have been disrupted. Thousands of children have been orphaned, lost or otherwise separated from their families, while many more face serious threats of abduction, trafficking, sexual exploitation and association with criminal elements. According to

UNICEF, half of the Haitian population is under 18 years of age, and almost 40 per cent is under 14 years of age. Concerted efforts must be made to protect children, including ensuring that priority is given to reinforcing security and control along the border with the Dominican Republic and at international airports, establishing rapid registration and tracking systems as well as safe spaces for separated children, reuniting children with their families or caregivers and providing physical and psychological support for the long term. Furthermore, criminal elements who have escaped from prison constitute a serious threat to the security of children, especially in terms of recruitment of children to criminal gangs. The Government of Haiti has been heavily involved in investigating cases of abuse against children, as well as their movement across borders without proper authorization.

76. Prior to the earthquake, efforts by the Haitian National Police, working in close cooperation with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), dismantled a number of kidnapping rings towards the end of 2009, which resulted in a significant decline in reported kidnappings of children from 89 cases in 2008 to only 21 cases (15 girls and 6 boys) in 2009. The arrests of armed elements and gang leaders involved in child abductions and an improved security situation, as well as the increased capacity of the Haitian National Police to solve abduction cases were factors that contributed to the reduction in the number of children abducted. According to information gathered by MINUSTAH with regard to those abductions, children remain particularly vulnerable within school surroundings and on their way to or from schools. It has also been observed that girls who are abducted are commonly exposed to sexual abuse and rape during captivity.

77. Killing and maiming of children within the context of armed violence in Haiti were relatively rare during the reporting period. Statistics collected by United Nations police serving with MINUSTAH demonstrated a decline in the number of children killed over the last two years, from 38 cases in 2008 to 21 cases in 2009.

78. The rape of children committed by armed elements in the context of insecurity and impunity continued to be reported, predominantly in the urban areas of the West department. According to information received by United Nations police serving with MINUSTAH, 162 children, including 3 boys, from 2 to 18 years of age, were victims of rape from 1 January to 9 December 2009. According to the Concertation nationale contre les violences faites aux femmes, the principal coordination mechanism for sexual and gender-based violence in Haiti, of 291 cases of sexual violence documented in the West, North-east and South-east departments, 186 cases were committed against children. It was also reported that although gang rapes against children appeared to have decreased in general, cases in the proximity of areas affected by armed violence had increased. Despite efforts to document incidences of rape and sexual violence, a large number of cases remain underreported.

79. It is important to note that reference to “heavily armed groups” was no longer applicable to the Haiti security situation prior to the earthquake. MINUSTAH instead refers to “criminal syndicates” in areas affected by armed violence, such as Martissant, Bel-Air and Cité-Soleil. Those groups are comprised of about five persons, are well organized and armed with clear criminal motivations. They have been seen using children to, inter alia, provide early warning to members when security forces are conducting operations, carry weapons and intervene in armed

confrontations, act as spies, carry out arson attacks or destroy private and public property, and undertake various other services for the groups.

80. There has been an increase in the number of children in detention since the last reporting period, with 328 children detained at the end of 2009 compared to 297 children (including 30 girls) in 2008. The arrest of children charged with association with criminal and armed activities, including such serious crimes as kidnapping, rape and murder, continued to be reported. In the West department, approximately 56 per cent of children (14 per cent of whom were girls) arrested were charged with crimes associated with criminal and armed activities, in addition to nine children suspected of association with gangs involved in criminal activities in Gonaïves. The prolonged pre-trial detention of children and the lack of separate and adequate detention facilities for children remained a serious concern during the reporting period.

### **Developments in Iraq**

81. Police and military sources, community members, the media and United Nations partners have reported the continuing recruitment of children by armed groups for acts of terror, including as suicide bombers. The children were reported to have been tricked, coerced or enticed with financial incentives. Some of the children used as suicide bombers were girls. Apart from Al-Qaida in Iraq, several insurgent groups reportedly have children in their ranks and have used them in conflict-related activities. Al-Qaida in Iraq had taken responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Ninewa, Kirkuk, Salahadin and other areas in Iraq in 2009, in which, according to United Nations partners, children were used. Information provided by the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) in Kirkuk relayed four cases of children, from 14 to 16 years of age, used by insurgents as suicide bombers or to throw grenades at security forces, in Kirkuk in April and May 2009.

82. Since the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in April 2009, 142 violent incidents, in which children were reported to have been killed or injured, were documented. In 10 of those incidents, where it had been possible to confirm the information, a total of 223 children were killed or injured. In a double truck-bombing in Ninewa (Khazna village in Bartala district) on 10 August, 177 civilians were killed or injured, of whom 76 were children. Another huge bomb explosion outside a mosque in Mosul resulted in 236 persons killed or injured, of whom 87 were children. The large number of child casualties was attributed to the fact that many of the bomb attacks took place in public areas, including markets and outside mosques, where children tend to gather.

83. The high profile attacks on Government institutions and security forces suggest a new trend and tactic by insurgents. However, they have also resulted in large casualties among children. The Baghdad bombings of 25 October, targeting the Ministry of Justice and the Baghdad Provincial Council building, hit a bus carrying children from a day-care centre next to the justice Ministry, killing the driver and 24 children on board, as well as wounding 6 other children. The Islamic State of Iraq group claimed responsibility for the bombings.

84. A total of 110 children have been arrested by Iraqi authorities on suspicion of being involved in terrorist activities or have been convicted for their involvement in a terrorist activity. United Nations partners reported that 25 of those 110 children, the majority of whom were from 15 to 18 years of age, from a juvenile rehabilitation

facility in Ninewa, are accused of being involved in terrorist activities, 4 of whom have since been convicted. Other reports indicate that 62 male adolescents were arrested by Iraqi security forces and detained in a juvenile detention centre in Baghdad for alleged terrorism under the anti-terrorist legislation. Efforts to gather information on the remaining 23 children have been futile so far. There are also allegations that suggest significant numbers of children are being detained in Tikrit and Basra.

### **Developments in Lebanon**

85. Owing to the five-month delay in forming a Government after the 2009 parliamentary elections, the United Nations has faced some major difficulties in taking up child protection issues with the Government of Lebanon. The collection of accurate and credible evidence on the association of children with armed groups remains problematic because of the lack of independent monitoring mechanisms. A monitoring and reporting mechanism to track emerging patterns of children's involvement in political violence, which was agreed to by the Government following the visit of my Special Representative to Lebanon in 2006, has yet to be established.

86. The United Nations, child protection partners and human rights agencies were concerned with the continued politicization of youth and children, and their active participation in armed clashes between opposing political forces, often involving the Lebanese Armed Forces. In the past, this has led to the arrest of children under terrorism charges. Some of these children were held owing to their alleged association with Fatah al-Islam. A total of 12 children are currently awaiting trial by the Justice Council or the military courts, neither of which conforms to international child protection standards and therefore offer little protection to children.

87. The presence of cluster munitions used by Israel during the 2006 war continues to present a serious danger to the civilian population living near contaminated areas. Children are especially exposed to the risk of serious incidents associated with such munitions. After repeated requests by the United Nations, the Government of Israel transferred cluster bomb strike data to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in May 2009, which has enabled the Lebanese Mine Action Authority and the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre to identify previously unknown strike sites and begin clearance. The Lebanese Armed Forces consider this data to be incomplete and call for further submissions. In 2009 30 separate accidents occurred, mostly in south Lebanon, one of which was fatal. Among the injured, four were children below 14 years of age. Since July 2006, 276 civilians have been injured or killed, among them 96 children.

### **Developments in Myanmar**

88. The United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting continues to face challenges related to access to Government armed forces (Tatmadaw Kyi) recruitment units, schools and camps in order to carry out its monitoring and verification exercises. The task force also had extremely limited access to non-State armed groups during the reporting period and was unable to establish contact with many of those groups owing to Government restrictions. Therefore, although there have been reports of the recruitment and use of children in all the groups listed in my previous report, the United Nations has not been able to fully verify, or in the

cases of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), the Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) and the United Wa State Army (UWSA), to obtain any new information.

89. New information received by ILO indicates that recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw Kyi continued during the reporting period.<sup>9</sup> Reports have recently been received from Shan state (north) and Ayeyarwaddy division, indicating that the Tatmadaw Kyi is ordering Village Peace and Development Council chairmen to organize mandatory military trainings for village militias known as "Pythusit". A trend may be emerging in both those regions, where adult males, who are the primary breadwinners of the family, are unable to attend the military training sessions and are sending their children instead. There are also reports that in some instances in Ayeyarwaddy division, children who have completed the village militia training are being recruited into the Tatmadaw Kyi. The country task force is still attempting to verify those reports.

90. ILO has verified a report that an under age boy who was recruited into the Tatmadaw Kyi and had taken a direct part in hostilities, had been convicted of murdering a colleague and sentenced to death. The sentence has not yet been carried out and the case has been urgently raised by ILO with the Government authorities in respect of his recruitment, his treatment under the law and his future.

91. In Kayin state, information received indicated that the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) had scaled up its recruitment efforts and many children reportedly have been recruited in 2009. The reports also indicated that DKBA was actively recruiting in order to meet the quota of 6,800 soldiers to form border guards under the command of the Tatmadaw Kyi as part of a plan allegedly agreed by the Myanmar Government and some non-State armed groups. Many children, all armed, were seen working for DKBA-run businesses, in particular DKBA-run toll gates. In one of the townships in Kayin state, locals estimate that at least 50 children are working for DKBA in their township alone. The country task force has verified four cases of recruitment of children from 10 to 16 years of age, including one girl, who were used as porters.

92. Reliable information received in March 2009 through the country task force indicated that every household in Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang Army) areas with more than one child has to provide at least one child to the group. According to the reports, both boys and girls, including those under 15 years of age, are recruited and families that have more daughters than sons will, in most cases, send their girls. Some child soldiers have also been witnessed manning the Kokang Army checkpoints during the clashes in Kokang state in August 2009. However, since the defeat of the Kokang Army shortly thereafter, there are indications that the group has disintegrated and it is unclear as to what has happened to the child recruits.

93. On 18 April 2009, the Executive Committee of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) issued a press release, in addition to a communiqué sent to my Special Representative in February 2009, highlighting the fact that it has invited the United Nations on several occasions to monitor its military bases and areas of operations, has offered open and independent access for compliance verification

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<sup>9</sup> See para. 23 above for the total number of children released from the Tatmadaw Kyi.



and has expressed its willingness to have an dialogue with the United Nations. It noted that, in accordance with the Karenni state constitution, article 29 (5), all under age children shall be free from conscription into the Karenni Army and appealed for the group to be removed from the annexes. On 25 April, the Karen National Union (KNU) issued a similar press release, in addition to calling upon the Government of Myanmar not to limit United Nations access to its areas. The groups also committed to investigate any allegations of child recruitment received. During the reporting period, a boy 14 years of age was confirmed present in KNU as was a boy 17 years of age in KNPP.

94. Villagers and internally displaced persons, including children, in locations along the eastern border areas of Myanmar continue to suffer serious threats to their lives from the effects of the use of anti-personnel mines. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Tatmadaw Kyi and DKBA soldiers have been responsible for laying mines in Karen areas. Two cases of boys 13 years of age, maimed by landmines, were recorded during the reporting period. It is important to note that, owing to the limited scope of data collection and the lack of access to contested and ceasefire areas of the country, there may be more casualties that remain unreported.

95. Since the clashes in Kokang in August and the resulting tension that had spread to Wa state, local district authorities in Wa have prevented access to the north-western area that is close to the border with China because of the scaling-up of the United Wa State Army (UWSA) presence. As a consequence, food-for-education programmes, benefiting around 1,450 children from 46 community schools in that area, were suspended.

### **Developments in Nepal**

96. There were no cases of recruitment or use,<sup>10</sup> killing and maiming of children or sexual violence against children by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) during the reporting period. However, reports indicate that many children are involved in the youth wings of major political parties, such as the UCPN-M-affiliated Young Communist League (YCL), the United Marxist Leninist-affiliated Youth Force and the Nepali Congress-affiliated Tarun Dal. Friction between cadres from those youth wings has continued, with violent clashes taking place in the eastern and mid-western regions, resulting in injuries on all sides. The country task force reported that a significant number of children participated in 42 protests and demonstrations in 2009, of which 14 were organized by UCPN-M and its sister organizations, including YCL and the All Nepal National Independent Students Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R). While all political parties are accountable for the activities of their respective youth wings and should ensure that the activities are carried out within the limits of the law, a particular responsibility rests with UCPN-M to fulfil its commitments to end the violent activities of YCL. Furthermore, the protests resulted in the frequent closure of schools: 120 separate instances of school closures were reported, of which 36 were related to the series of protests, rallies and demonstrations organized by UCPN-M and its sister organizations.

97. In 2009 64 casualties, including 7 deaths and 28 severe injuries from victim-activated explosions caused by mines, improvised explosive devices and such other

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<sup>10</sup> See para. 9 above for more information on the action plan signed by the United Nations, the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), and the total number of children released as a result.

explosive devices as hand grenades and socket bombs, were documented. A majority of incidents involved children from 5 to 14 years of age. In one case of the explosion of an improvised explosive device, a Tarai-based armed group, the Tarai Rastriya Mukti Sena, claimed responsibility. In three other cases, other Tarai-based armed groups, including the Madhesi Freedom Tigers, the Nepal Defence Army and the Great Madhesi Revolutionary Army, were identified as perpetrators.

98. Public security remains an issue of serious concern in many Tarai districts and impeded the ability of the country task force to monitor and verify information on grave violations against children. However, 10 cases of children abducted by Tarai armed groups and criminal gangs were documented. Some children were also found to be involved with Tarai armed groups as messengers and, in some cases, children were used for cross-border smuggling.

### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

99. At the close of 2009, the effects of Israel's military operations in Gaza, codenamed "Operation Cast Lead", from 27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009, were still being felt across the Gaza Strip. Thousands of Gaza residents, including children, are still living in alternative or temporary accommodation and many schools, health facilities and parts of vital water and sanitation infrastructure networks have not been rehabilitated or repaired. The ongoing blockade by Israel and the resulting lack of necessary materials in Gaza make such repairs and rehabilitation difficult.

100. A total of 374 Palestinian children were killed and 2,086 were injured during the reporting period, including at least 350 killed and 1,815 injured in Gaza alone during "Operation Cast Lead" by Israeli forces. The Israel/occupied Palestinian territory working group on grave violations against children confirmed 12 cases of Palestinian children who were killed while bearing arms and acting as combatants during "Operation Cast Lead". The working group also confirmed one case of recruitment of a 16-year-old boy by the armed group Ezz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades. The actual number of cases is believed to be higher and there had been other reported incidents of children being trained and/or used by Palestinian militant groups in Gaza. Community members are, however, reluctant to provide information on this practice.

101. The working group confirmed reports of seven Palestinian children used by Israeli soldiers as human shields in three separate incidents during "Operation Cast Lead." The office of Israel's Military Attorney-General is investigating those incidents, although the United Nations is unaware of the actual process under way or the outcome of the investigations to date. On 11 March 2010, the Military Advocate for Operational Affairs brought criminal charges against two Israel Defense Forces staff sergeants who ordered a nine-year-old Palestinian child to open bags and suitcases suspected of being booby-traps. The criminal investigation of this case was launched in June 2009, following the report of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. The indictment was filed with the District Military Court for offences of excessive authority that endangers life or health and of unbecoming conduct.

102. Since the end of the offensive in January 2009, 24 children were killed and 271 were injured in incidents involving Israeli gun and tank fire in the Gaza buffer zone as a result of unexploded ordnance, and in settler-related incidents in the West

Bank and East Jerusalem. One Israeli child was killed during the reporting period and three Israeli children were injured in two separate incidents in the West Bank. The working group was able to verify three incidents of Palestinian inter-factional fighting during 2009, resulting in the injury of six children and the deaths of two others. The two children, allegedly affiliated with the Jund Ansar Allah group, were killed in armed clashes between Hamas-affiliated security forces and members of the Jund Ansar Allah group in the southern Gaza town of Rafah.

103. No children were harmed as a result of rocket attacks from the Gaza Strip on Israeli communities in adjacent areas. However, attacks and the threat of attacks are known to cause high levels of prolonged anxiety among Israeli children residing there and among Palestinian children in Gaza.

104. In 2009 the working group documented at least five children who were requested to become informers for the Israeli intelligence while being subjected to violent interrogation by the Israeli authorities. The actual figure is suspected to be much higher, but as testifying puts the lives of the concerned children at risk, the United Nations does not actively seek information on this practice.

105. The number of Palestinian children arrested and detained by Israeli military authorities rose sharply at the beginning of 2009, immediately after the start of "Operation Cast Lead", but has decreased steadily since then, although remaining systematic and widespread. As of December 2009, 305 children were being detained. There are serious concerns regarding the rise in the number of young children, from 12 to 15 years of age, being detained, with 42 children in that age category being held in Israeli detention in December 2009 compared to 30 in December 2008. The United Nations has documented over 87 reports of ill-treatment and torture of Palestinian children during the reporting period, including 6 reports of threats of rape and sexual assault against the children to elicit confessions or in some cases collaboration from child detainees. Israeli authorities stress that the Israel Security Agency operates in strict compliance with Israel's Supreme Court ruling (HCJ 5100/94), which states that investigations are free of torture, cruel inhuman treatment and any degrading handling, and absolutely prohibits the use of "brutal or inhuman means" in the course of an interrogation. Israeli authorities also stress that note should be taken of Israel's commitment to investigate any allegation, irrespective of the source, and of Israel's concern that more information should be provided in order to enable the appropriate authorities in Israel to investigate and respond substantively, where appropriate.

106. On 29 July 2009, the Israeli military commander in the West Bank, Major General Gadi Shamni, issued a new military order (Military Order No. 1,644) establishing a juvenile military court in the West Bank. This attempt to incorporate juvenile justice standards within the military court system was met with concern by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child during its session in January 2010. Since the order came into effect on 1 October 2009, lawyers have observed that the military court judges, who adjudicate on juvenile matters in the West Bank, also continued to preside over cases involving adults. However, unlike previously, children under 16 years of age are now tried separately from adults and are brought into the courtroom individually, but are still taken to the courts from the detention facilities with adults.

107. In Gaza, 18 schools were destroyed and more than 260 were damaged, including 5 schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for

Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by Israeli forces during “Operation Cast Lead”. In some cases, the Israel Defence Forces forcibly entered school compounds and used schools as interrogation centres. The lack of materials for reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools, coupled with chronic shortages of educational supplies as a result of an ongoing blockade forced thousands of students to learn in overcrowded schools operating on double shifts and often under unsafe and unsanitary conditions. To date, very few of the destroyed or damaged schools have been rebuilt or repaired. In addition, discrimination and neglect by Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem and Israel-controlled area C of the West Bank have also jeopardized children’s right to education. Inadequate structures, including tents, shacks and crude cement structures, are being used as schools owing to the difficulties in obtaining building permits needed to expand and upgrade existing schools and build new ones to accommodate the student population in area C, while in East Jerusalem, each year large numbers of Palestinian children are denied admission in the municipal schools run by the Jerusalem municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education owing to a shortage of over 1,000 classrooms.

108. Almost half of Gaza’s health facilities were damaged or destroyed during “Operation Cast Lead” and Gaza’s health-care system is currently unable to provide adequate responses to children’s health-care needs. As a result, some patients must seek treatment outside Gaza — in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Egypt, Jordan and Israel — for a wide range of medical assistance. During the reporting period, while 1,407 of 1,648 applications for children who sought to obtain medical assistance outside Gaza were approved, nine children in Gaza died while waiting for the appropriate permits to travel outside Gaza. In 2009 there was also an increase in the number of interrogations at Erez crossing, including the interrogation of children leaving Gaza for medical treatment.

109. Throughout 2009, the continuing high rate of settler violence against children was registered. Palestinian children continue to be shot, beaten and threatened while walking to school, grazing their livestock or playing outside their homes. According to reports, it has been revealed that a new pattern of violence has emerged since 2009, which suggests that Israeli settlers undertake attacks against Palestinians and their property in response to attempts by the Israeli authorities to dismantle “unauthorized” settlement outposts, raising additional concerns regarding the protection of Palestinian children. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has documented at least two such incidents, in which 11 children were attacked by settlers. It is suspected that there are many more incidents that remain unreported. Perpetrators are never held accountable. This underscores the need for greater enforcement by the Israeli Government of the rule of law where violent settlers are concerned.

### **Developments in Somalia**

110. Over the past year there has been growing evidence regarding the widespread recruitment and use of children by all warring parties. The United Nations carried out research in June 2009 which confirms that the recruitment of children has become more systematic and widespread. The insurgent group Hizbul Islam reportedly had 30 persons dedicated to recruiting children and the group is estimated to have around 500 active child soldiers. While very active in the central and southern regions, Al-Shabaab is also reportedly recruiting in Puntland and Somaliland, and is training children in Bay, Bakool, Galgaduud, Hiran, Mogadishu and

Raskiambooni. In March 2009 alone, Al-Shabaab reportedly recruited 600 children. At the Galduuma base, on the border of Bay region, Al-Shabaab has allegedly recruited 1,800 children, some as young as 9 years of age. In Raskiambooni training camp, Al-Shabaab trains boys, some as young as 12 years of age, and every six months, 270 students graduate to operational units.

111. While recruitment of girls has been rare and is generally regarded as socially unacceptable, there are documented accounts of girls working for armed groups, in particular in cooking and cleaning. Girls are also brought in to transport detonators, for logistics and for intelligence collection, though they do receive weapons training as well. An Al-Shabaab training camp for about 120 girls is located near Kismayo, where girls learn intelligence-gathering techniques, how to transport explosives, and driving. Girls are also reported to be recruited for marriage to young combatants.

112. The current Transitional Federal Government is also reported to be recruiting and using children, although the recruitment pattern by the Government forces is said to be less systematic. During the early months of 2009, the Transitional Federal Government, especially members of the former opposition group, the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia-Djibouti, is alleged to have trained about 3,000 new recruits, approximately 50 per cent of whom were under 18 years of age. Before its defection to the Hizbul Islam, the freelance KM60 militia, aligned to the Transitional Federal Government, also had about 50 children in its ranks. Those numbers have increased now that the militia is part of Hizbul Islam.

113. Humanitarian actors have expressed concern over the recruitment of young men and boys from north-eastern Kenya, including from Dadaab refugee camp, to fight alongside the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government and the Government of Kenya have denied press reports making such allegations. The Minister of Defense of Kenya and other members of Parliament stated in mid-November 2009 that a training programme exists, but claim it is intended for Somali recruits to join the Transitional Federal Government army and police. No Kenyan or Somali official has admitted to recruiting inside Kenya-based refugee camps, which contravenes fundamental principles of refugee law. In October 2009 the Kenyan Parliamentary Committee on Defense and Foreign Relations said it would look into the matter and expected to report to the House of the Parliament. The United Nations country team in Kenya has expressed concern with the Government of Kenya at the highest levels, urging the Government to redouble its efforts to ensure the protection of all children in Kenya. UNICEF and the United Nations country team continue to monitor the issue closely.

114. During the year, monitors reported more than 280 children as having been killed in the conflict and more than 550 wounded. However, the total number of child casualties is estimated to be much higher. Access by child protection monitors to first-hand information and to direct contact with child victims of the violence has been critically compromised by security concerns, especially in the second half of the year. Typically, in the current conflict, children are being injured or killed as a result of crossfire, mortar attacks, or grenade launches. Significant concerns have been raised by the shelling of civilian areas by the Transitional Federal Government and troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia during the last four months of 2009, and the indiscriminate nature of their return fire when attacked by insurgent groups, which has resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths, including a large number of children. Children also continue to be the victims of explosive remnants of war,

predominantly unexploded shells, grenades and mortars from the recent conflict, but also landmines or pieces of ordnance remaining from previous years of clan fighting and border disputes. Since the United Nations began systematic surveillance in the second half of 2009, 49 child casualties have been recorded, including 14 deaths as a result of those incidents.

115. Reports of sexual violence against children have remained at the same levels during 2009 as compared to 2008, but that is a generalized abuse occurring in all regions of the country and there is no indication that it is being used as a tactic of war by the parties to conflict. Reported cases of sexual violence by uniformed and armed individuals have decreased since my last report, and less than 1 per cent of the 415 documented cases of rape were confirmed as perpetrated by either Government-associated armed forces or anti-Government groups.

116. In 2009 more than 60 schools were closed in Mogadishu, while more than 10 schools were temporarily occupied by armed forces. Schools were damaged and destroyed, and students were killed or injured, during exchanges of fire between forces of the Transitional Federal Government and anti-Government armed groups. In other instances, soldiers threatened students and teachers, and destroyed school facilities. Hospitals were also hit by mortar shells, resulting in their temporary or permanent closure, and were compromised by the lack of sufficient manpower, supplies of medicines and other equipment. Medical personnel received death threats, including those in Medina Hospital, Mogadishu, who were accused of treating Government soldiers and receiving support from enemies of Islam.

117. Humanitarian access in general has vastly deteriorated during the year. The new wave of hostility against humanitarian aid work in Somalia is putting the lives of Somali children at great risk. United Nations agencies have now withdrawn all international staff and most of their national staff from central and southern Somalia. That action followed the takeover of the UNICEF office in Jowhar in May and the United Nations offices in Baidoa and Wajid in July by factions of Al-Shabaab. The looting and destruction of life-saving humanitarian supplies and equipment in the UNICEF office in Jowhar have enormously affected the ability of the Fund to deliver services to the most vulnerable children. The United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Political Office for Somalia, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security and, more recently, the United Nations mine action programme for Somalia, were accused by Al-Shabaab of working against the interests of Islam and instructed to leave immediately. In October 2009 Al-Shabaab announced that all international relief organizations were banned from operating in Somalia, in particular in areas that were under its control. Many partner organizations have reported threats and invasions into their offices. As such, their personnel are operating under a constant threat to their lives.

### **Developments in the Sudan**

118. Although there are no reports of active child recruitment by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the demobilization of children from the group remains a concern.<sup>11</sup> Some children who had previously been demobilized by the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission had

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<sup>11</sup> See para. 9 above for more information on the action plan signed between the United Nations and SPLA; see also para. 19 above for the total number of children released from the group.

voluntarily rejoined SPLA in order to carry out military and domestic chores for the army. While SPLA has made efforts to remove children from payrolls, some children interviewed stated they were still receiving salaries to support their families. Joint field visits to Unity state by UNICEF, UNMIS, the SPLA Child Protection Unit, the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the Ministry of Social Development in August 2009 revealed that some of the children who were demobilized, reunified with their families and attending school in Warrap state had re-joined SPLA in Unity state after they were informed by SPLA officers that their salaries were ready to be collected. Children also remain or return to military barracks as they have access to food, shelter and even some schooling provided by SPLA. However, SPLA expressed concerns regarding the inadequate provision of reintegration services for the released children and it had little choice but to provide such services to the children itself. The lack of provision of such services by the United Nations is due to the lack of capacity and resources, among other constraints. This has made it increasingly difficult for the United Nations to continue advocating for the release and integration of children. Furthermore, there have been reports of re-recruitment of 33 former child soldiers by SPLA in Blue Nile state and the families of 23 of those children confirmed the re-recruitment. UNICEF, UNMIS and the North Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission are following up on this as a matter of priority with SPLA forces in Kurmuk.

119. In Darfur, the association of children with the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), Government forces such as the Central Reserve Police and Border Intelligence Forces, and pro-Government militias remains a concern, although the numbers have decreased compared to the previous reporting period. It should be stressed that the Government has no policy to recruit children and directives have been issued in that regard. In 2009 there were 20 reported incidents of association of children with SAF, involving 65 children, in all three Darfur states. In addition, UNICEF documented a total of 315 children associated with armed groups: 72 children in North Darfur; 166 children in West Darfur; and 77 children in South Darfur. Those children were observed with SLA/MM, SLA/Abdel Wahid, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Chadian opposition armed groups and unknown armed elements.<sup>12</sup> The majority of children were observed in West Darfur state, though logistical and security issues affected monitoring ability in North and South Darfur.

120. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) sporadic attacks and incursions into villages and abductions continue to cause civilian deaths and remain a threat to children in southern Sudan, in particular in Western Equatoria state. As a result of such attacks, 177 Sudanese children have been abducted, 18 have been killed and 19 have been injured in 2009. The number of children who escaped or were rescued from LRA increased in 2009 as a result of the joint military operations by the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF), FARDC and SPLA. From January to November 2009, a total of 192 LRA-affected children, including 154 Sudanese, 35 Congolese and 3 Ugandans, were rescued. Ten girls who returned were pregnant or had babies. Of the 154 Sudanese children, 9 were repatriated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 6 from the Central African Republic. In addition, 9 Congolese children were handed over by the UPDF to FARDC and 37 persons

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<sup>12</sup> See para. 19 above for the total number of children from armed groups in north Sudan, including Darfur.

were repatriated to the Central African Republic. The majority of Ugandan children picked up by UPDF forces operating in southern Sudan, however, are returned directly to Uganda without the United Nations in Sudan being notified, despite requests to do so.

121. A presidential amnesty was granted for the remaining children who were involved in the JEM attacks on Omdurman, Khartoum state, in May 2008, in line with advocacy by child protection partners. All detained children were released and no criminal measures were taken against them. The children have been handed over to their families and are currently benefiting from reintegration services.

122. An upsurge in inter-communal violence in Jonglei state among the Lou Nuer, Dinka and Murle accounted for many of the deaths and child abductions reported in 2009. Since March 2009, there have been four brutal massacres involving at least 2,500 victims, most of whom were women and children. The increased targeting of women and children in inter-communal conflicts occurring throughout southern Sudan has been a recent and disturbing trend.

123. Child abduction also continued in the context of conflict between and within tribal communities in Jonglei state. Official figures provided by the Jonglei state Government indicated a total of 227 children who were abducted both by the Murle and the Lou Nuer groups in Pibor county from November 2008 to November 2009. Most of the cases were attributed to the Murle, although the identity of perpetrators can be difficult to ascertain and abductions are not exclusive to the Murle. It is believed that most cases go unreported and that overall numbers could be significantly higher. There has been minimal progress in securing the release of those children. As of the end of the reporting period, approximately 30 children from Jonglei state, Central and Eastern Equatoria States and the neighbouring Gambella region of Ethiopia have been rescued from their abductors.

124. In Darfur, cases of rape and sexual violence against children were often allegedly committed by men in uniform and attributed to military, police personnel, armed-group factions and militia men. However, in general, victims and witnesses provide little information on the identity of the alleged perpetrators and the uniforms alone do not always substantiate the alleged perpetrators' affiliation. Other alleged perpetrators do not wear uniforms and are unidentified. The persistent allegations indicate that sexual violence remains a major concern in Darfur, taking into consideration that many cases remain unreported owing to stigma and fear. The climate of conflict resulting in insecurity and breakdown of law and order exacerbates the prevalence of sexual violence; however, there has been no substantiated evidence during the reporting period that such violations are systematically perpetrated upon orders by the leadership or field commanders of the parties to the conflict.

125. It is anticipated that the recent developments deriving from the Doha peace dialogue and normalization of relations between the Sudan and Chad may have positive implications for children.



## **B. Information on grave violations against children in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Colombia**

126. The Government of Colombia is continuing to implement a comprehensive policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups. It has established a high-level Intersectoral Commission that sets up social, family and institutional networks aimed at reducing the risks of recruitment of children, focusing on those departments and municipalities that are especially vulnerable. The Government also continues to carry out programmatic efforts to reintegrate into their communities those children who have been separated from illegal armed groups.

127. During the reporting period, recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups continued as an extensive, systematic and habitual practice. Although the true magnitude and territorial coverage remains unknown, the United Nations observed a significant increase in the information received on cases of recruitment of children by the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Cesar, Chocó, Guaviare, Meta, Nariño, Putumayo, Tolima, Valle and Vaupés; as well as by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN).<sup>13</sup> The children were used in hostilities, to recruit other children, to act as spies and gather intelligence, to serve as sex slaves and to provide logistics support. Resistance or attempts to escape have exposed some children to torture or death. Reports indicate that schools remained a major venue for recruitment by those groups. Many adolescent girls considered pregnancy as a means to avoid being recruited by illegal armed groups. Threats of child recruitment continued to cause the displacement of local populations, in particular in the departments of Putumayo, Vaupés and Nariño, in 2009. There is also evidence that indigenous children have been increasingly subjected to recruitment.

128. Recruitment and use of children is also a practice by illegal armed groups that were formed from units of the demobilized former United Self-Defences Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)). Those groups are not homogeneous in terms of their motivation, structure or modus operandi. The Government considers all those groups to be criminal gangs which are principally involved in illegal activities, especially in the production and commercialization of drugs. However, while many are dedicated only to common criminal activities, others operate in a manner similar to that of the former paramilitary organizations. Some of the groups have a military structure and chain of command, and are capable of exercising territorial control and sustaining military-type operations. Moreover, they have a political and ideological orientation similar to that of the former AUC. In May 108 members of an unidentified illegal armed group, among them 12 boys and 2 girls, surrendered to the National Armed Forces in the department of Chocó.

129. Information was received on the use of children for intelligence purposes by members of the National Armed Forces, in violation of the Code on Children and Adolescents (Law No. 1098) and directives by the Ministry of National Defence. Reports indicated that members of the Army had offered food as an incentive to

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<sup>13</sup> See para. 24 above for the total number of children released from FARC-EP and ELN.

boys and girls in exchange for information on the presence of illegal armed groups in rural areas of Valle del Cauca. The National Armed Forces also continue to use children in civic-military activities and maintain specific programmes for children despite the fact that the Code on Children and Adolescents expressly requires the State to refrain from using children in military activities, psychological operations, civic-military campaigns and similar programmes. In the first half of 2009 members of the Army entered rural schools in Meta department in order to make contact with the students within the framework of the *lanceritos* programme, through which children were taken to the Brigade Command facilities, participated in helicopter tours and received food. There is a concern that such activities, when undertaken in conflict-affected areas, may put children at risk and expose them to subsequent retaliation by members of illegal armed groups.

130. Children continue to be victims of indiscriminate attacks carried out by illegal armed groups, or caught in clashes between illegal armed groups or between illegal armed groups and national security forces. In some instances, children have been threatened with death or killed by illegal armed groups on suspicion of being informants for the national army. According to the Presidential Programme for Comprehensive Action against Anti-Personnel Mines (PAICMA), from January to October, anti-personnel mines laid by illegal armed groups, mainly by FARC-EP and ELN, resulted in the deaths of 9 children and injury of 24 children.

131. Information received confirmed cases of sexual violence committed against children by illegal armed groups. Although there is no systematic information on the number of cases of sexual violence against children perpetrated by illegal armed groups, there is evidence that child members of such groups are subjected to grave sexual violence. They are required to have sexual relations with adults at an early age and many girls have been forced to abort if they become pregnant. Three cases of rape and sexual violence by members of security forces were also documented in 2009.

132. Schools have been damaged as a result of hostilities and, in many instances, owing to anti-personnel mines planted by members of FARC-EP. There are also concerns about the continued occupation of schools by members of the National Armed Forces in Cauca department during the reporting period. In addition, military barracks or police quarters have been installed in close proximity to several schools in conflict areas in Putumayo and Nariño departments.

133. Clashes among illegal armed groups, or between the armed groups and the National Armed Forces, the presence of landmines, as well as attacks by FARC-EP on humanitarian missions, have largely limited humanitarian access and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to villages in conflict-affected areas, such as Arauca and Putumayo.

134. In March the Government approved Presidential directive No. 001, a comprehensive initiative to strengthen the coordination of military and social efforts in strategic zones of Colombia, as part of the overall objectives established in the Government's democratic security policy. In August the 29th Command of the FARC-EP declared all the projects within the framework of Presidential directive No. 001 in Nariño department to be legitimate military targets. That threat was also made to international cooperation agencies, which could potentially jeopardize the delivery of humanitarian assistance and thus affect children. Dialogue is ongoing

between the Government and members of the humanitarian community on the implications of that policy for access and safety of humanitarian personnel.

#### **Developments in the centre/east states of India**

135. Reports of recruitment and use of children by the Maoist armed groups, also known as the Naxalites, especially in some of the districts in the Chhattisgarh state were received by the United Nations. According to a statement by the Ministry of Home Affairs on 20 October 2009, information gathered from intelligence inputs has indicated forced recruitment of children by the Naxals in areas south of Chhattisgarh. The statement also refers to the Naxals exhorting villagers to provide five boys or girls for their armed group. Those reports are consistent with findings by India's National Human Rights Commission, which stated in its submission to the Supreme Court in August 2008 that the Naxals forced many families to send at least one adolescent boy or girl to join their ranks. Other credible reports indicate that many children are abducted or forcibly recruited from schools. The Naxals have claimed that children were used only as messengers and informers, but have admitted that children were provided with training to use non-lethal and lethal weapons, including landmines. It must be noted that the Naxalite problem is spread over several states in the centre/east of the country.

136. The Naxals have also carried out systematic attacks on schools in order to intentionally damage and destroy Government structures and to instil fear among the local community. This has been confirmed by the National Human Rights Commission in its findings (as well as by the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, following its visit to Dantewada district, Chhattisgarh, in January 2009) that some schools remained closed or abandoned as a result of continued Naxalite bombings of school buildings, especially those occupied by security forces for protection. The state Government and Jharkhand police indicated that they had vacated 28 of 43 schools in Naxalite-affected districts of the state and were in the process of vacating 13 more. However, by September 2009, the Jharkhand High Court issued a ruling calling for security forces to vacate all educational premises as early as possible.

137. The Government of India strongly condemns the acts of the Naxalites and has committed itself to control those activities. The Government, together with concerned state authorities, has undertaken specific actions, including awareness-raising programmes through the media and mass contact, establishment of new schools under its programme for universal elementary education (*sarva shiksha abhiyan*) in all villages as well as ashram schools, and the strengthening of integrated child development and pre-school education centres in all areas.

#### **Developments in north-west Pakistan**

138. In a statement made on 28 July, the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs of Pakistan, Syed Hamid Saeed Kazmi, said that children were being recruited by terrorist and extremist groups and used for suicide attacks, and that the enticement of children to join such groups was the most serious challenge facing the Government. Furthermore, in the submission of its States party report of 19 March to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Government of Pakistan stated that it was taking strict measures to stop recruitment of children by non-State actors, in

addition to initiating reforms to streamline and regulate the madrasahs that were the major source of children going into armed conflict.

139. The United Nations in Afghanistan confirmed several cases of children from Pakistan used in hostilities in Afghanistan, as well as two cases of Afghan children who were abducted and taken to north-west Pakistan where they underwent military training. This calls for more attention to cross-border issues.

### **Developments in the Philippines**

140. It should be noted that reports on grave violations against children may only be indicative, as the country task force continues to face tremendous challenges with regard to the monitoring of child rights violations. The limited number of verified incidents may be attributed to a number of factors, including inadequate human resources capacity for the monitoring and reporting mechanism, as well as safety and security considerations in affected areas. A significant portion of south-western Mindanao continues to be highly restricted to United Nations travel, as armed skirmishes between non-State groups and Government forces intermittently erupt, a situation compounded by the tangible threat of abduction. That situation complicates the verification, monitoring and response activities for grave child rights violations, in particular in the restricted areas of Zamboanga, Sulu and Basilan provinces in Mindanao.

141. During the reporting period, reports on recruitment and use of children by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)<sup>14</sup> and the New People's Army (NPA) were received consistently according to United Nations partner organizations, although the reports could not be verified. In addition, although children have been reportedly associated with Abu Sayyaf units, no accurate estimate of the number of children is currently available. A total of six cases of children used by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to carry supplies, for intelligence purposes, or who had been illegally detained for their alleged association with MILF recalcitrant commands or NPA have been documented by the country task force. In one case, three children were blindfolded and mistreated by elements of the 7th and 40th Infantry Battalions of the Philippine Army (IBPA) in an attempt to obtain confessions regarding their membership in MILF.

142. From January to December 2009, 12 children killed and 40 injured were recorded. There has been a considerable increase in incidents involving the use of improvised explosive devices in populated areas, in particular by the Abu Sayyaf, causing more casualties among the civilian population, including children. Mortar shelling by AFP during clashes with MILF has also caused serious injuries to some children.

143. Ten incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals have been verified by the country task force from January to December 2009, where in several instances children were injured as a result. All incidents resulted from ongoing clashes between the military and non-State armed groups. Furthermore, accounts of schoolteachers abducted in Zamboanga and Sulu provinces by members of the Abu Sayyaf caused fear among the civilian population and disrupted the learning activities of children in conflict-affected areas.

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<sup>14</sup> See para. 9 above for more information on the action plan signed between MILF and the United Nations.

### **Developments in the southern border provinces of Thailand**

144. The overall situation improved somewhat in 2009 owing to measures taken by the Royal Thai Government, in close cooperation with the local communities. Nevertheless, information based on interviews by child protection partners with Government officials, family members of affected children, members of civil society, village headmen and religious representatives indicates that there are concerns relating to the involvement of children in activities of armed groups in the southern border provinces of Thailand in 2009. Credible reports indicate that children begin carrying out tasks for armed groups from approximately 13 years of age, which may include acting as lookouts, spraying graffiti messages and destroying State property. The United Nations country team in Thailand has informed my Special Representative that it is not in a position to monitor, report or verify allegations of grave violations against children in the conflict-affected areas of southern Thailand, based on its activities in the area.

145. The ongoing serious commitment and efforts by the Royal Thai Government to protect the safety and enhance the development of children in the southern border provinces are commendable. In my annual report last year, reference was made to the intention of the Government to investigate any alleged abuse by State authorities, such as the irregular detention of children, and to undertake a systematic review of its laws, including the Emergency Decree. According to the Government, it carried out in 2009 a systematic review of relevant laws and formal investigation mechanisms, as well as human rights training for security personnel. However, there are credible reports that indicate that children detained for alleged association with armed groups are not guaranteed their rights under Thailand's Juvenile Justice Act. That remains a concern, while the Government maintains that to date there are no children in irregular detention.

146. The overall trend of attacks on schools, teachers, students and education personnel in 2009 was similar to the one observed in 2008. According to the Ministry of Education, 9 schools were burned and 10 teachers and education personnel as well as 32 students were killed or injured in 2009, while 6 schools were burned and 14 teachers and education personnel as well as 31 students were killed or injured in 2008.

### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

147. There has been no evidence of significant recruitment by the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP)<sup>15</sup> in 2009. TMVP, formerly led by Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan (also known as Karuna), has been reconstituted and is now under the control of former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadre Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan (also known as Pillayan). From December 2008 to November 2009, 21 cases of child recruitment were reported, 78 children were released and only 5 children remain associated with the group. TMVP declared that those children were not in their ranks and police investigations are ongoing in each of those cases. In addition, 60 persons who were recruited as children and are currently over 18 years of age remain associated with the group.

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<sup>15</sup> See para. 14 above for more information on the action plan signed by TMVP, the Government of Sri Lanka and the United Nations.

148. Reports of recruitment by LTTE continued to be received until the end of the conflict in May 2009. UNICEF verified and documented 397 cases of child recruitment, including 147 girls, by LTTE that occurred from 1 January to 19 May 2009. As of the end of November 2009, UNICEF recorded at least 34 children as well as 1,345 persons who were recruited as children but are now above 18 years of age, whose whereabouts remain unknown.<sup>16</sup> LTTE appears to have ceased to exist as a military organization in Sri Lanka.

149. During the mission to Sri Lanka by the Special Envoy of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, a number of reports were received on recruitment of children and threats of re-recruitment by Iniya Barrathi (who was part of the TMVP breakaway faction, under Karuna's leadership, and is referred to as "commander") in Ampara district in the Eastern province.

150. In the districts of Killinochchi and Mullaitivu (northern Sri Lanka), a total of 199 cases of children killed and 146 cases of children maimed were reported from 1 January 2009 to 19 May 2009, although the actual number of casualties is likely to be higher. The most affected age groups were the oldest and the youngest children — the majority of children killed were those up to 5 years of age (71 children killed and 28 maimed), while the older children, 13 to 15 years of age, and 16 to 18 years of age, suffered proportionally more by incidents of maiming (40 children in the first category and 37 in the second). The vast majority of children (97 per cent) were injured or killed in Mullaitivu district, followed by 3 per cent in Killinochchi district. According to interviews with internally displaced persons, a large number of casualties were allegedly due to artillery fire from the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and a number of casualties were allegedly due to artillery fire from LTTE. Four cases of child deaths and injuries were related to incidents that occurred in or near a hospital. In addition, children and youth continue to be at risk from the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance in northern Sri Lanka, although unexploded ordnance removal and de-mining activities continue.

151. Interviews with internally displaced persons also indicated that during the months leading to the end of the conflict, there were reports of rape during flight and of sexual harassment, especially towards former female LTTE cadres, including girls. Some women and girls trying to flee the conflict areas had their hair forcibly cut by LTTE as a deterrent to fleeing, knowing that women with short hair would be suspected by the Sri Lankan Army of being LTTE cadres and would likely be treated differently from other internally displaced persons. Some young girls were forced by their families to marry their relatives to avoid forced recruitment by LTTE. Within the internally displaced person sites, exploitation of women and girls appeared to be perpetrated by various actors through promises of favours, money or marriage and through threats.

152. To date, nine schools are being used by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF) to detain adult "surrendees" who were identified as former combatants. The schools remain only partially operational for the education of children, affecting a population of 5,753 children. SLAF barracks are established within school compounds, and classrooms as well as other school facilities are being used by the forces, causing high levels of disruption to the schools' normal routine. Despite the

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<sup>16</sup> See para. 22 above for more information on the total number of "surrendee" children formerly associated with LTTE.

separation by barbed wire between the school and the “surrendee” site, adult “surrendees” are seen walking around the schools. The need to transfer the “surrendees” out as soon as possible has been brought to the attention of the relevant military and civilian authorities on several occasions, including by Major General (ret.) Cammaert during his December mission, and the Government has made commitments in that regard.

153. The emergency that arose from the last phase of the conflict, including the insecurity and the large number of persons displaced, posed a serious challenge for national authorities and the international community to provide assistance and respond to the conflict-affected population, including children. Access to the areas directly affected by the conflict was extremely limited and access to the displaced population was also difficult not only for protection organizations but also for relevant Government bodies. LTTE continued to prevent civilians, including United Nations staff and other employees of humanitarian organizations, from leaving the conflict area. Some civilians were injured and killed during the fighting.

154. By May 2009, some 40 internally displaced person sites were established in various districts in the north and east of Sri Lanka. No freedom of movement was granted to the 280,000 internally displaced persons in the sites and access to those persons was curtailed for “national security-related issues”. Specifically, the authorities restricted vehicle access to the internally displaced person sites in Vavuniya district for the distribution of non-food relief items and other humanitarian assistance by agencies, and protection monitoring was not authorized. Access greatly improved by the end of June, although delays in granting access to some zones in the Vavuniya Menic Farm camps occurred. Access was also occasionally denied when cordon and search operations were being conducted in the internally displaced person sites. During the months of September and October, access was not fully granted to closed “transit sites”, specifically in Jaffna and Trincomalee districts, where internally displaced persons who were being released from the Menic Farm camps were held in their districts of origin, reportedly for further screening. By the end of October, however, over 12,000 internally displaced persons who were accommodated in transit sites in all five districts had been released or sent to rehabilitation centres and almost all of the transit sites are now closed.

155. The lifting of military security clearance for travelling out of Jaffna district on 18 November and the introduction of the pass system on 1 December at the internally displaced person sites in all districts have had a positive impact on humanitarian access and freedom of movement for internally displaced persons. The remaining concerns include restriction of access by non-governmental organizations to return areas and limits on access to rehabilitation centres where internally displaced persons suspected of association with LTTE are being held. As of the end of the reporting period, access to rehabilitation centres has been granted only to the World Food Programme, for the provision of food, to UNICEF, in order to manage the childcare centres, and to the International Organization for Migration, for the construction of non-temporary centres.

156. Other serious concerns remain with regard to the need for a more efficient registration system for separated and unaccompanied children that promotes early family tracing and reunification, as well as the need to address the issue of children who have been reported missing by their parents. Additional concerns include the care and protection of children with disabilities and with critical medical conditions.

As of the end of November, 1,221 separated, unaccompanied and orphaned children have been identified in the north of the country. Of those, 517 have been reunified with their families or relatives and 704 have been placed in residential homes. In addition, 162 parents have reported to probation officers that their children are missing and families continue to file requests for tracing their children at the Family Tracing and Reunification Unit established in Vavuniya in December 2009.

### **Developments in Uganda**

157. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has not operated in Uganda throughout the reporting period. In the past four years, the group has moved into the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic, as well as into southern Sudan. The root of the LRA insurgency began in Uganda, therefore the role of the Government of Uganda remains central to achieving a resolution.

158. Last December, the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF), with the cooperation of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and south Sudan (SPLA), have launched joint military offensives into northeast Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan territories in pursuit of LRA. The rebels have scattered and spread out in smaller groups in the region. Those groups carried out violent reprisal attacks against civilians, including killings, abductions and forced recruitment of children, rape and pillaging, that have led to the death and disappearance of hundreds of children and triggered significant population displacements. During such offensives, UPDF has come into contact with children who are either in the frontlines, associated with LRA or being held captive. There are a number of child protection concerns in that regard, including timeliness of release of such children to child protection agencies, their cross-border repatriation, the use of those children for intelligence purposes by UPDF and the lack of immediate access to psychosocial support and services for children who are severely traumatized. The United Nations has stressed to the Government of Uganda the need to establish appropriate protocols between UPDF and child protection actors, and between other concerned Government forces that would ensure timely access to UPDF military barracks for the identification and release of children to the United Nations and partners.

159. The cross-border repatriation of children associated with LRA has become a major component of the humanitarian response for the protection of children and women in LRA-affected areas, and has benefited from cooperation between the Governments of Uganda, south Sudan, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That cooperation needs to be reinforced and systematized. During the reporting period, 71 children and young mothers formerly associated with LRA were received in reception centres in northern Uganda as part of the repatriation and reinsertion process for LRA-affected children. Among the 71, 2 were subsequently confirmed to be Sudanese and 1 Congolese, and they were repatriated to their respective countries of origin.

### **Developments in Yemen**

160. Clashes between Al-Houthi groups and the Yemeni Government in Sa'ada governorate escalated into open hostilities on 12 August 2009, triggering the displacement of 250,000 persons from Sa'ada and neighbouring areas of Amran, Hajjah and Al-Jawf, and raising other serious protection concerns for the civilian



population, including children. UNICEF and child protection partners conducted several investigations in the conflict-affected areas in Sa'ada, Amran and Hajja in order to document incidents and cases of grave violations against children. The numbers quoted below only represent a portion of the cases that were accessible and verifiable, and may not entirely reflect the actual situation on the ground,.

161. It has been reported that as many as half of the total number of fighters, either from the tribal militia affiliated with the Government, called Al-Jaysh Al-Sha'bi (Popular Army), or the Al-Houthi rebels, are below 18 years of age. A total of 402 cases of children recruited by Al-Houthi rebels and 282 recruited by the Popular Army were documented, including 59 cases of children who were confirmed as having been abducted for the purposes of recruitment by those groups. The truce between the Government and Al-Houthi rebels on 11 February 2010 is a positive development. However, it is a priority to ensure, through action plans, access to, and identification and release of, children associated with armed forces and groups to child protection partners.

162. Although a clear estimation of the total number of children killed or injured during the current conflict is difficult to obtain, a total of 189 cases of children killed and 155 children injured was recorded. Of those cases, 71 per cent occurred as a result of direct shelling on civilian targets during military operations by both sides to the conflict, while 29 per cent occurred as a result of lack of access to humanitarian aid, especially food and health care. In addition, 59 cases of children were reported missing by their families after disappearing at the very beginning of the conflict. Parents and relatives do not know if the children have been killed, abducted or recruited.

163. Most of the schools in the conflict-affected areas are currently being used for military purposes either by Al-Houthi rebels or by Government forces, which make them a legitimate military target by both sides. It was confirmed that 17 schools were completely destroyed and 16 schools continued to be used as military bases during the reporting period. The Ministry of Education had to cancel the school year in the conflict-affected areas, in particular in Sa'ada and Harf Sufyan.

164. Approximately 70 per cent of health facilities in Sa'ada were either completely destroyed or used as military installations during the conflict, including 2 hospitals, 3 health centres and 13 health units destroyed, as well as 2 health centres used as military installations. That situation highly affected access by the community to health care both during and after the conflict.

165. Since the beginning of the conflict, the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies have raised serious concerns regarding the inability to deliver humanitarian assistance to the internally displaced persons and other affected population, in particular in Sa'ada governorate, Harf Sufyan and Al-Jawf. There are approximately 60,000 children who are trapped in crossfire areas between Al-Houthi rebels and Government forces/pro-Government militias. All efforts with the parties to conflict in order to open a safe corridor for humanitarian aid failed to reach any breakthrough. However, the truce cleared the way for Government officials and aid workers to carry out humanitarian needs assessment in previously inaccessible areas and to enable humanitarian assistance to reach civilian populations, including children.

166. There are reportedly more than 1,000 children being detained in prisons throughout the country as a result of the conflict. Those children were either captured from opposing forces during the conflict or suspected of being fighters or pro-Houthis. The United Nations does not have access to those children.

## **V. Information on the criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes**

### **A. Authority**

167. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1882 (2009), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict those parties to armed conflict that engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in patterns of killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children, in situations of armed conflict, bearing in mind all other violations and abuses against children, and noted that paragraph 3 would apply to situations in accordance with the conditions set out in paragraph 16 of its resolution 1379 (2001).

168. In paragraph 16 of its resolution 1379 (2001), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to attach to his report a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, in situations that are on the Council's agenda or that may be brought to its attention by the Secretary-General.

169. In paragraph 19 (a) of its resolution 1882 (2009), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to include in its 2010 report annexed lists of parties in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Council or in other situations of concern, in accordance with paragraph 3 of that resolution.

170. By paragraph 2 (a) of Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), information collected by the monitoring and reporting mechanism should be timely, objective, accurate and reliable.

### **B. Scope of the annexes**

171. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1882 (2009), the Security Council expanded the scope of the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports beyond the unlawful recruitment and use of children to include acts in violation of applicable international law involving patterns of killing and maiming of children and patterns of rape or other acts of sexual violence against children.

172. Within that expanded scope, the Security Council, in paragraph 19 (d) of resolution 1882 (2009) also requested that the Secretary-General include in his 2010 report on children and armed conflict information on the criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes to his periodic reports, bearing in mind the views expressed by all the members of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict during informal briefings. In devising criteria and procedures for listing and de-listing, the Secretary-General will be guided by paragraph 3 of resolution 1882 (2009), and the Council's request to list parties that engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in patterns of

killing and maiming of children and/or rape and other sexual violence against children.

173. The reference to acts in contravention of applicable international law suggests that the acts in question are not merely crimes under the national law of the State where the crime was committed, but rather acts that amount to a violation of applicable international law, including international humanitarian or human rights law. Isolated incidents of killing, maiming or sexual violence, which are not part of a pattern, as discussed below, would not be listed.

174. At the same time, the reference to “patterns” of violations rather than to “crimes” — whether war crimes or crimes against humanity — suggests that the Security Council did not necessarily intend to raise the threshold for inclusion to the actual commission of international crimes, which could only be met through an investigative or prosecutorial process.

### **C. Listing and de-listing criteria: the notion of a “pattern”**

175. The threshold for inclusion therefore revolves around the notion of a “pattern”. Based on the use of the notion in similar contexts, a “pattern” denotes a “methodical plan”, “a system” and a collectivity of victims. It is a “multiple commission of acts” which, as such, excludes a single, isolated incident or the random conduct of an individual acting alone and presumes intentional, wilful conduct. In proving the acts to be systematic, it would also be necessary to show that all such acts in contravention of applicable international law involving killing and maiming, or sexual violence, are being perpetrated in the same context and, from that perspective, are considered “linked”.

### **D. Specific listing criteria**

176. On the basis of the above-mentioned understanding of the notion of a “pattern” as a threshold for inclusion in the list, reference to the description of the acts in contravention of applicable international law involving killing, maiming, rape and other sexual violence is as follows. Killing and maiming should include mutilation, torture resulting in serious injury or death and killing in contravention of applicable international law. Rape and other sexual violence should include rape, sexual slavery and/or any other form of sexual violence.

177. Recruitment and use of children will continue to be the basis for listing and de-listing in conformity with past practice and in line with applicable international law.

### **E. Specific de-listing criteria**

178. A party will be de-listed on condition that there is United Nations-verified information that it has ceased commission of all the said grave violations<sup>17</sup> against children for which the party is listed in the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict, for a period of at least one reporting cycle.

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<sup>17</sup> See S/2005/72.

179. As part of the de-listing process, a party to the conflict, whether a State or non-State actor, is required to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to prepare and implement a concrete, time-bound action plan to cease and prevent grave violations committed against children for which the party has been listed in the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). The action plan should include:

- (a) A halt to violations and/or the pattern of violations concerned;
- (b) Official command orders issued through the chain of command of the armed force or group specifying a commitment to halt violations and to take disciplinary measures against perpetrators;
- (c) An agreed means of cooperation between the party concerned and the United Nations to address grave violations committed against children;
- (d) Access to territory under the control of the party and to bases, camps, training facilities, recruitment centres or other relevant installations, for ongoing monitoring and verification of compliance. The framework of access will be mutually agreed upon by the United Nations and the party;
- (e) Verifiable information regarding measures taken to ensure the accountability of perpetrators;
- (f) Implementation of an agreed prevention strategy by the party to address violations;
- (g) Designation of a high-level focal point in the military hierarchy of the group responsible for the fulfilment of action plan criteria.

180. It should be noted that once a party is de-listed, ongoing monitoring and reporting of the situation is required as long as the Secretary-General remains concerned that such violations may recur. The de-listed party must ensure continuous and unhindered access to the United Nations for monitoring and verification of compliance with commitments for a minimum period of one reporting cycle following de-listing, failing which it may be re-listed in the annexes, and the Security Council alerted to the non-compliance.

## **VI. Recommendations**

181. I welcome the signing of action plans by the Sudan People's Liberation Army, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and the Government of Nepal, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, as well as the progress made by parties in releasing children, addressing impunity for perpetrators through investigations and prosecution, implementing and/or reforming national legislation to put into practice international legal prohibitions, including criminal penalties, against child recruitment and undertaking other measures to prevent the killing and maiming of children and the rape and other forms of sexual violence against children highlighted in the present report.

182. The Security Council is encouraged to continue to insist that parties listed in the annexes to my report for the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, and/or rape and other sexual violence against children, in

contravention of applicable international law, prepare and implement concrete time-bound action plans to halt those violations and abuses, and to take measures against any parties that fail to comply.

183. The Security Council is also encouraged to call upon all parties mentioned in my report for committing grave violations against children to engage with the United Nations peacekeeping and/or political missions and United Nations country teams to undertake specific commitments and measures to address violations committed against children for which they are cited.

184. Concerned Member States should allow contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure the broad and effective protection of children, including for the purposes of preparing action plans to halt recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, and/or commission of rape and other sexual violence against children, as well as undertaking specific commitments and measures to address all other grave violations against children. The Security Council should encourage this. Such contact is not to prejudice the political and legal status of those non-State actors.

185. As the pace of the conclusion of action plans with parties to conflict accelerates, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict should convene United Nations departments, agencies and programmes and invite Member State commitment to devise a more stable and long-term funding structure for the provision of staffing and other resources required to fulfil all elements of the action plans. Donors are encouraged to ensure that adequate resources and funding are available to national Governments, the United Nations and partners for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been associated with armed forces and groups.

186. The Security Council is encouraged to weigh more vigorous measures against persistent violators who have been listed in my annual report for at least five years for grave violations against children. In that regard, the Council is encouraged to consider including child recruitment and use in the mandate of all its sanction committees, including counter-terrorism committees, to streamline the sharing of information between its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its sanctions committees, and to ensure that my Special Representative is invited to brief them on a more regular basis on specific information contained in my reports prepared in the framework of Council resolution 1612 (2005) and necessary actions.

187. To facilitate the work of the Security Council sanctions committees, its expert groups are encouraged to incorporate child protection expertise in their investigation and research teams, and to systematically include information on violations against children in their reports, recommendations and confidential lists/annexes.

188. In situations where there are no existing sanctions committees, the Security Council is encouraged to consider means by which targeted measures may be applied against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, including through direct referral of information and recommendations for measures by its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

189. The introduction of additional listing criteria, as provided for in Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), necessitates renewed attention to the provision of timely, accurate and reliable information to the Council, and the need to develop the capacity to document incidents and trends on killing, maiming and sexual violence

against children. In that regard, the donor community is urged to support relevant United Nations agencies, programmes, funds and peacekeeping and political missions, as well as national Governments.

190. In light of the current challenges in monitoring and reporting on sexual violence, the Chair of the United Nations country task forces on monitoring and reporting is requested to undertake efforts to improve the collection and verification of information on sexual violence against children by systematically liaising and engaging with entities working on other relevant mandates to ensure synergies and the exchange of information, as requested by the Security Council in its resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1888 (2009).

191. National Governments are encouraged, in collaboration with the United Nations, and through the participation of civil society and grass-roots organizations, especially those involving women and girls, to devise and implement national strategies against sexual violence that would include prevention, the provision of health, psychosocial, security and protection, and legal/justice services for survivors of sexual violence, and rigorous and timely investigation and prosecution of crimes of sexual violence. Such efforts should be pursued in coordination with other national efforts to address gender-based violence.

192. I am concerned by reports, in several country situations, of the use of children by national armed forces for military intelligence purposes and the interrogation of children who have been separated from armed groups. The Governments concerned are strongly urged to ensure that their national armed forces cease such practices and hand children over to child protection authorities as soon as possible after their separation.

193. Given the regional dimensions of some conflicts highlighted in the present report, relevant Member States, United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams should accelerate the development of appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns.

194. In accordance with the newly implemented child protection policy directive of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Security Council is urged to ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as political and peacebuilding missions, including by means of the deployment of child protection advisers. The need for such advisers, including the required budget, should be systematically assessed during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation and political mission. Child protection concerns should be reflected in all mission planning instruments and processes, including technical assessment, review missions and reports to the Council.

195. I am concerned about reports on the high numbers of civilian casualties, including children, during military operations, remind all parties to conflict of their obligations to ensure respect for international law and urge them to consider practical steps to spare civilians from the effects of hostilities.

196. The Security Council should require that when requesting peacekeeping operations to support, through provision of supplies or by other means, national forces that may be committing serious human rights violations, such support is conditional on compliance with international law.

197. Member States and non-State actors are urged to ensure that children and armed conflict concerns are consistently reflected in peace processes and peace agreements so that this issue is carried forward as a priority into the post-conflict peace consolidation and peacebuilding phases. The United Nations will help to ensure this, including by providing mediators, negotiators and heads of mission with adequate guidance in that regard.

198. The Security Council is encouraged to call upon all parties in situations of armed conflict to adhere to international normative instruments protecting educational facilities from attack. This includes protecting educational institutions as well as students, teachers and other education personnel. Special attention should be paid to the protection of girls' right to education, given the increased targeting of girls' educational facilities in some countries.

199. States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are encouraged to strengthen national and international measures for the prevention of recruitment of children into armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities. In particular, those measures include signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits the recruitment of children into armed forces or groups and their use in hostilities, exercising extraterritorial jurisdiction in order to strengthen the international protection of children against recruitment, taking measures to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and submitting timely reports under the Optional Protocol to the Committee.

## **VII. Lists in annexes to the report<sup>18</sup>**

200. The present report contains two annexes.<sup>19</sup> Annex I contains a list of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II contains a list of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children.

201. A conservative approach has been taken this year in determining the parties to be listed for killing, maiming and sexual violence against children, given the limited time for country task forces to orient themselves with the listing criteria and requirements pursuant to Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) in August 2009. The relatively low incidence of sexual violence against children reported does not reflect the depth and extent of that practice by parties; rather, it reflects the challenges encountered in collecting and verifying information on sexual violence.

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<sup>18</sup> Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the present report is guided by criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

<sup>19</sup> The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

202. The following parties have been on the annex lists for at least five years:

- (a) Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG);
- (b) Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN);
- (c) Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), including fast-track integrated units of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda and Bosco Ntaganda;
- (d) Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR);
- (e) Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI);
- (f) Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP);
- (g) Karenni Army (KA);
- (h) Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA);
- (i) Lord's Resistance Army (LRA);
- (j) Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO);
- (k) Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF);
- (l) New People's Army (NPA);
- (m) Pro-Government militias in Darfur;
- (n) Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA);
- (o) Tatmadaw Kyi;
- (p) Transitional Federal Government of Somalia (TFG).

203. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In that regard, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.



## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Afghan National Police\*
2. Haqqani network\*
3. Hezb-i-Islami\*
4. Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia\*
5. Taliban forces\*
6. Tora Bora Front\*

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD)\*
2. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP)\*
3. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR)\*
4. Forces démocratiques populaires de Centrafrique (FDPC)\*
5. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)\*†
6. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ)\*
7. Self-defence militias supported by the Government of the Central African Republic\*

#### **Parties in Chad**

1. Armée nationale tchadienne\*
2. Justice and Equality Movement (Sudanese armed groups backed by the Government of Chad)\*

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), including fast-track integrated units of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda and currently led by Bosco Ntaganda\*‡

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\* Parties that recruit and use children.

† Parties that kill and maim children.

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

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)\*‡
3. Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI)\*‡
4. Front nationaliste et intégrationnaliste (FNI)\*‡
5. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)\*‡
6. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)\*‡

#### **Parties in Iraq**

1. Al-Qaida in Iraq\*

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)\*
2. Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council\*
3. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)\*
4. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)\*: this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar
5. Karenni Army (KA)\*: this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar
6. Karenni National People's Liberation Front (KNPLF)\*
7. Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army\*
8. Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)\*
9. Tatmadaw Kyi\*
10. United Wa State Army (UWSA)\*

#### **Parties in Nepal**

Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M)\*

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab\*†
2. Hizbul Islam\*
3. Transitional Federal Government (TFG)\*†

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

##### **Parties in southern Sudan**

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)\*
2. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)\*‡

**Parties in Darfur**

1. Chadian opposition groups\*
2. Police forces, including the Central Reserve Police and Border Intelligence Forces\*
3. Pro-Government militias\*
4. Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)\*
5. Parties signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing)\*
  - (b) Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy\*
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abu Gasim/Mother Wing\*
  - (d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will\*
  - (e) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minnawi\*
  - (f) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Peace Wing\*
6. Parties not signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)\*
  - (b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid\*
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity\*

## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)\*
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)\*

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)\*
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)\*
3. New People's Army (NPA)\*

#### **Parties in Sri Lanka**

Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) (former element of Karuna faction, Iniya Barrathi)\*

#### **Parties in Uganda**

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

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\* Parties that recruit and use children.



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## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2010 (as well as some developments that have extended beyond the reporting period), is submitted pursuant to presidential statement S/PRST/2010/10 of 16 June 2010, by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of its resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), as well as its presidential statements on children and armed conflict.

2. Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), the report provides information on grave violations committed against children, in particular the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence against children, the abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict in contravention of applicable international law<sup>1</sup> (see sect. IV). The report also elaborates on the progress made by parties to conflict on dialogue and action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children and the patterns of killing and maiming of children or rape and other sexual violence against children (see sect. II). It provides updates

<sup>1</sup> Applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children in armed conflict include, in particular, the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols thereto of 1977, the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, the Optional Protocol thereto of 25 May 2000, and the amended Protocol II and Protocol V to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions.



on the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (see sect. III), and describes progress made by the United Nations system in implementing specific requests of the Security Council (see sect. V). It also examines the grave violations related to attacks on schools and hospitals (see sect. VI), and outlines a series of recommendations (see sect. VII).

3. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, country task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations.

4. References to reports, cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. In several situations covered by this report, the deterioration in security conditions continues to hamper systematic monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children. Therefore, the information presented is indicative of the gravity of the violations committed against children, but not necessarily the scope and scale.

5. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, aimed at ensuring a broad and effective protection for children exposed and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.<sup>2</sup>

## **II. Information on progress made by parties to conflict on dialogue and action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children, patterns of killing and maiming of children or rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in armed conflict**

6. New action plans to address child recruitment and use, as well as to secure their release, were signed between the United Nations and the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/SLA/Free Will; Sudan Liberation Army/SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim); and the Government of Afghanistan, respectively. Updates on progress made in the implementation of action plans signed by the Government of Nepal and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), the Moro Islamic

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. Pictet (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Dusko Tadic*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).

Liberation Front (MILF), and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in 2009 and the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) in 2008 are also reflected below.

### **Afghanistan**

7. On 30 January 2011, the action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment into the Afghan National Security Forces was signed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Zalmi Rassoul, and my Special Representative for Afghanistan, and witnessed by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. In the action plan, the Government of Afghanistan committed itself to preventing underage recruitment in the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police, and the National Directorate of Security. In addition, the Government committed itself to addressing issues of sexual violence against children by its security forces, and of killing and maiming in contravention of international humanitarian law. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict also met with high-level stakeholders and obtained commitments from the *Ulema Shura* (Council of Clerics), the High Peace Council, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), donors and human rights actors to redouble their efforts in support of the action plan.

8. As steps towards the development of the action plan, the Ministry of Interior issued an executive order on 24 April 2010 prohibiting children from being recruited or used within ANP, requiring children found in ANP ranks to be separated within 30 days; and calling for investigations and disciplinary action against those found to be in violation of this order. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) undertook its first unannounced verification visit to the Afghan National Police recruitment and training centre in Kunduz City, Kunduz Province, in May 2010, and noted that the executive order was clearly posted on the walls of the centre, and trainers and new recruits were fully aware of its contents. Further, a Government steering committee on children and armed conflict, consisting of eight Deputy Ministers, the Director of the National Directorate of Security and the Presidential Adviser on Health and Education, was launched on 18 July 2010. The steering committee approved the action plan and established a technical working group, comprising focal points from relevant ministries and the United Nations to ensure its implementation.

9. While there are no ongoing discussions on action plans with armed groups, dialogue held at the community level in order to carry out protection activities has proven partially successful. Dialogue with armed groups on the recruitment and use of children is impeded by the current situation and the fragmentation within these groups. Additionally, given their ties with those groups engaging in criminal activities, it is often difficult to determine the identification and accountability of these groups for grave violations against children in conflict.

### **Sudan**

10. On 14 June 2010, an action plan was submitted by SLA/Free Will to the United Nations. Under this action plan, the armed group committed to, inter alia, the release of all children found within its ranks; fully cooperate with the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission; and grant access to the United Nations to monitor its implementation. In a progress report to my Joint

Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in August, in follow-up to the action plan, SLA/Free Will informed of the dissemination of a command order to all members of the armed group, and participation of its field commanders in child protection training.

11. A similar action plan was submitted by SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim) to the United Nations on 15 August 2010. Preceding the signing of the action plan, the armed group issued a command order on 9 April prohibiting its fighters from recruiting and using child soldiers, and designated two senior commanders as focal points to prepare and implement the action plan.

12. A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the United Nations on 21 July 2010, as a first step towards the signing of an action plan. This memorandum of understanding aimed at establishing an understanding of the basic principles of child rights enshrined in national and international laws, and outlining conditions for unhindered access to verify compliance with such laws, particularly that no child under the age of 18 is recruited or associated with JEM. The dispersal of JEM to remote areas of Darfur or neighbouring countries as a result of renewed clashes with Government forces, however, have contributed to delays in implementation of this memorandum of understanding.

13. On 22 December 2010, JEM/Peace Wing submitted a draft action plan to the United Nations, to be implemented in Geneina and Zalengi (Western Darfur).

14. On 23 December 2010, UNAMID and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) visited Gur Lumbung (Golum Bay) in Jebel Marra (Southern Darfur), a stronghold of SLA/Abdul Wahid, to discuss the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The armed group confirmed that while they do not actively recruit children, children may be associated with them. SLA/Abdul Wahid commanders pledged full commitment to continue dialogue with the United Nations and agreed to consider the establishment of an action plan.

15. There are ongoing discussions between the United Nations and the Sudanese Armed Forces on an action plan to end the association of children with the Sudanese Armed Forces. This action plan will also apply to its proxy groups. It is acknowledged that the Sudanese Armed Forces does not have a policy to recruit children. The Sudanese Armed Forces agreed to work towards an action plan in a meeting with the United Nations held on 21 October 2010, at the Ministry of Defence.

16. Finally, in Southern Sudan, the action plan that was signed between the United Nations and SPLA on 20 November 2009 lapsed in November 2010. A progress report on the implementation of the action plan was submitted by the technical committee comprising of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), UNICEF and the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to SPLA leadership for approval, including a request for a six-month extension in order to complete the identification and removal of all children remaining within the ranks of the group. In 2010, despite several challenges, considerable progress was made by SPLA in action plan implementation, with support of the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the United Nations. A child protection unit was established at SPLA general headquarters in Juba and in all SPLA divisions across all 10 States of



Southern Sudan. SPLA officers were trained on child rights and child protection, and similar trainings targeting SPLA soldiers were rolled out throughout the region in December.

17. Insecurity (such as in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Western Bahr el-Ghazal States), lack of cooperation from some SPLA commanders (such as in Lakes State) and poor road conditions were key challenges faced in the implementation of the SPLA action plan. In addition, access for child protection actors to assess the situation of children associated with SPLA in Kordofan State remained problematic during the reporting period. Attempts made by child protection actors to work with the Joint North-South Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission to officially register these children could not be achieved for security reasons. On 3 December, UNMIS raised these concerns with the SPLA Deputy Chief of Staff for Moral Orientation, who acknowledged the presence of children associated with SPLA in Kordofan State and committed to cooperate with the United Nations to release them. Furthermore, it was jointly agreed that the second phase of the action plan implementation would begin with assessments in the transitional areas, including in Jaw and Kurmuk, where children have been sighted within SPLA.

### **Nepal**

18. In line with the action plan signed on 16 December 2009, between the Government of Nepal, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), and the United Nations regarding the discharge of disqualified Maoist army personnel and related tasks, and in accordance with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the formal discharge of Maoist army personnel verified as minors was completed in early 2010; 2,973 Maoist army personnel were verified as minors. The discharge process took place in the seven main cantonment sites and included 1,843 persons verified as minors; the remaining 1,130 verified minors who were not present for this process were discharged with the signing of a declaration of discharge on 23 March 2010.

19. A United Nations monitoring team comprising representatives from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and UNICEF, in conjunction with the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), was established to monitor and report on compliance with the provisions specified in the action plan. Information collected and verified to date indicates that there are continuing links between some verified minors and the Maoist army, including monthly payments being made to the verified minors and accommodation, in the form of shared housing, being provided in different regions. A small number of verified minors have returned to the cantonment sites. However, there are also social-economic aspects to these continuing links, including difficulties faced by the verified minors in reintegrating into their communities and finding alternative employment. Despite concerns being raised with UCPN-M at the central level and with Maoist army commanders at the cantonment sites, few measures to redress these trends have been observed.

### **Philippines**

20. As part of the 1 August 2009 Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) action plan to address child recruitment and use, in January 2010 MILF issued a supplemental general order restating the policy of non-recruitment of children

within the MILF-Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces. The order also sets out punitive sanctions for non-compliance, and provides for the establishment of child protection units within the ranks of the Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces.

21. Rapid registration of children associated with MILF in line with the action plan is in progress across core communities in 18 of the 21 MILF base commands, in partnership with mutually agreed upon non-governmental organizations. Preliminary unverified results of the rapid registration indicate that 432 children (366 boys and 66 girls) may be associated with MILF. The training of additional data-gatherers and rapid registration covering the three remaining MILF bases, as well as systematic expansion to peripheral Moro-MILF communities, commenced in early 2011. In order to meet all its commitments, in August, the United Nations and MILF agreed to extend the action plan agreement for an additional 12 months.

22. On 2 November 2010, the Government of Philippines issued an official endorsement reaffirming its support for United Nations engagement with the New People's Army (NPA) on the development of an action plan. The Government recognizes that this initiative will contribute to the advocacy urging all parties to the conflict to respect the rights of children at all times, and likewise support the complementary tracks of the peace process currently pursued by the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process.

23. The absence of political representation, as well as the security risks involved, currently prevents United Nations engagement with the Abu Sayyaf Group.

24. Finally, the United Nations has initiated discussions with the Government, through the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, on the development of a strategy for engaging with government forces to protect children in armed conflict. Consistent with recommendations in my report on children and armed conflict in the Philippines (S/2008/272), on November 2010, the Government appointed Army Colonel Domingo Tutaan, Jr., as the chief Human Rights Officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

### **Sri Lanka**

25. In 2010, sustained efforts were made by the United Nations throughout the year to encourage the full implementation and completion of the action plan signed by the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulighal (TMVP), the Government of Sri Lanka and UNICEF in December 2008. The working group established in Batticaloa in January 2009, comprised of representatives from the local administration, the police, the Sri Lankan army, the Department of Probation and the United Nations, met on a monthly basis to follow up on their commitments in accordance with the action plan. Between June and July 2010, meetings were also held between the Police Department, Iniya Barrathi (former element of the Karuna faction) and the United Nations, to advocate and advance progress on the release of children who remain associated with the group. This resulted in an investigation being carried out on 30 August 2010 by the National Child Protection Authority and its police section, upon request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to establish the whereabouts of these children. Although a request for a full investigation into allegations of recruitment and use of children by Iniya Barrathi was lodged with the Government after the visit of Special Envoy Patrick Cammaert, limited progress has been made to date.

## **Chad**

26. The Government of Chad expressed its intention to prepare and implement an action plan to address the recruitment and use of children by the Armée nationale tchadienne in a meeting between my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Minister of Social Action, National Solidarity and Family in October 2010. A draft action plan has been prepared and is currently being discussed with the Government.

## **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

27. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not been forthcoming in engaging with the United Nations on an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), despite advocacy by child protection actors, including the country task force on monitoring and reporting, over the last several years. While efforts have been ongoing to professionalize FARDC, these efforts have not consistently involved a formal process to remove all children from FARDC units. Many children continue to be recruited and remain associated with FARDC units, particularly within former Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) units. Many children released in 2010 reported that they had been recruited several times, even after family reunification. This reaffirms the urgent need for a political commitment at the highest levels of the Government in order to move forward on the action plan and ensure its coherence with ongoing security sector reform efforts. In a positive move, new military directives were issued by the “Amani Leo” chain of command ordering the release of all children remaining in FARDC units.

## **Myanmar**

28. In Myanmar, progress was made in the action plan negotiations between the Government and the country task force on monitoring and reporting to end the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw Kyi. The Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Underage Minors, chaired by the Adjutant-General of the Tatmadaw, agreed to form a technical panel to negotiate the action plan. The panel met to consider the draft action plan put forward by the task force. In October and November, the task force was invited to discuss the action plan with the Government with a view to signing the action plan at the earliest opportunity. While the positive commitments made by the Government on the draft action plan are noted by the task force, some crucial elements of the action plan, including access for monitoring, require further discussions.

29. There has been no progress on dialogue with listed non-State armed groups in Myanmar. In 2010, the Government again refused access to these groups, despite continued high-level advocacy from the task force. Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) underlines the primary role of States in providing effective protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict. To date, however, prevention and response activities provided by the Government have involved the Tatmadaw, and have not reached children purported to be present in the other listed parties in Myanmar. Further, the protection of children in armed conflict has also not been included in the comprehensive strategy to negotiate transformation of ceasefire groups to border guard forces or to resolve the conflict with the Karen National

Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA), the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA) or the Shan State Army-South.

### **Somalia**

30. Dialogue with the Transitional Federal Government on child protection issues has been very limited. Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed committed to nominating a focal point to work with the United Nations towards the development of an action plan to address the issue of child recruitment with the Transitional Federal Government and its allied militia in a meeting with my Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict during her visit to Somalia. State Minister Zahra Ali Samantar was officially appointed by the Prime Minister in December as the focal point for child protection and human rights. Given the serious deterioration in the situation in Somalia with regard to the protection of civilians, and in particular children, throughout 2010, the development and implementation of a comprehensive time-bound action plan to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children should be given urgent priority.

31. While advocacy efforts on child protection issues have been possible with the Transitional Federal Government, it has not been possible to engage with Al-Shabaab and other insurgent groups owing to difficulties in contacting the group's leadership and concerns over the possibility of further compromising humanitarian access.

### **Colombia**

32. The Government voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on the condition that any dialogue between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations country team or the country task force on monitoring and reporting and illegal armed groups may be possible only with the previous and explicit consent of the Government of Colombia. There was no contact or dialogue between the United Nations system and armed groups on the preparation and implementation of action plans to address grave violations against children, delaying progress in the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). Upon inauguration and later in 2010, President Santos indicated that a Government precondition to starting peace talks with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) included a halt to recruitment and the release of children remaining in the guerrillas' ranks.

### **Yemen**

33. Ongoing dialogue between UNICEF and the Government of Yemen for the immediate release of children detained for their association with Al-Houthi led to the opening of discussions with the Ministry of Defence on the issue of child recruitment and use, including towards the preparation of an action plan to cease all grave violations against children.

34. To date, restrictions on access have made it very difficult for the United Nations to begin negotiations with the Al-Houthi armed group.

### **III. Information on progress made in the release of children from armed forces and armed groups**

#### **Chad**

35. One hundred and eighty-one children, including 25 girls, were released by the following armed opposition groups during the year: Front pour le salut de la République (FSR); Front uni pour le changement (FUC); Mouvement national pour le redressement (MNR); Rassemblement des forces pour le changement (RFC); Conseil démocratique et révolutionnaire (CDR); Union des forces de la résistance (UFR); Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement (UFDD); Union des forces pour le changement et la démocratie (UFCD); Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale (FPRN); Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad (MDJT); Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement-Fondamentale (UFDD-F); Mouvement pour la paix, la reconstruction et le développement (MPRD) and JEM.

#### **Central African Republic**

36. Between 2009 and 2010, 525 children, including 37 girls, were separated from the ranks of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et de la démocratie (APRD). Of the 525 children, 417 were separated in Paoua (Ouham-Pendé) in 2009 and 2010, and 108 in Kanga-Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi) in 2010. At the end of the reporting period, all these children were reunified with their families and communities. It should be noted that towards the end of 2008, 775 children had been separated from APRD, bringing the total number of separated children to date to 1,300.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

37. A total of 1,656 children (including 47 from Rwanda, 5 from Uganda and 2 from Central African Republic) escaped or were separated from armed forces and groups during the year. Of these, 71 per cent were released in North Kivu Province; 17 per cent in Orientale Province; 8 per cent in South Kivu Province; 2 per cent in Katanga Province; and the remaining 2 per cent in other provinces. A number of factors may have contributed to the higher number of children released in North Kivu, including the comparative ease of access to locations in North Kivu, and the greater number of child protection actors in the province from which children can seek protection and assistance. These children were released or escaped from the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (29 per cent); FARDC (21 per cent); the Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)-Mai-Mai (18 per cent); remaining Mai-Mai factions (15 per cent); Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC) (13 per cent); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (3 per cent); and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), the Forces républicaines fédéralistes (FRF), non-integrated elements of CNDP and the national police (1 per cent).

38. Of the 1,656 children, only 240 were separated by child protection actors, while the large majority escaped and approached United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) bases or service providers for assistance. Four hundred forty-seven of the children

released reported that they were recruited in 2010, indicating that 73 per cent of the children were therefore recruited before 2010 and have been associated with armed forces and groups for one to four years. Access to girls associated with armed forces and groups remained a challenge, as indicated by the small number of girls (121) among the children released. In addition to the 1,656 children released in 2010, 387 children who had separated from armed groups or forces in 2009 were also registered by the country task force on monitoring and reporting in 2010.

39. As part of MONUSCO support to FARDC during “Amani Leo” military operations, a conditionality policy issued pursuant to Security Council resolution 1925 (2010) required the screening of all FARDC units to verify the presence of children and, if found, their separation from FARDC ranks. Although over 50 attempts of screening were carried out in coordination with the FARDC units supported by MONUSCO, only five children were separated during the exercise. That was owed mainly to troops not being made available for screening. Despite numerous attempts to coordinate with FARDC and implement new military directives and the conditionality policy, no formal organized operation to separate children in 2010 took place; as a result, children continued to be present in the ranks of FARDC.

### **Myanmar**

40. According to official reports made available by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 110 child soldiers (all male) were released from the Tatmadaw Kyi through Government mechanisms during the year (bringing the total of child soldiers notified as discharged to the country task forces on monitoring and reporting since 2006 to 383). Of the 110 child soldiers, 40 were released in response to complaints lodged under the supplementary understanding complaints mechanism for the elimination of forced labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO). In 2010, 184 children received reintegration support from UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision and other child protection partners, in support of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

41. In 2010, the Government shared details of a number of new military instructions issued on the prevention of underage recruitment and granted greater access to UNICEF, on behalf of the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, to recruitment units to observe recruitment procedures. This did not extend to military training schools or operational units. During these visits, greater rigour in the screening process was observed. The rejection of prospective recruits due to invalid age verification documentation or to the fact that they were underage was also observed. Further, it was brought to the United Nations notice that the Directorate for Military Strength in Nay Pyi Taw holds a database of children rejected by recruitment units and who are not included in the lists of released children shared with the task force. This measure has been put in place to ensure that underage recruits rejected in one unit are not brought elsewhere for recruitment.

42. From the ILO experience, from late 2009 onwards, it appears that, of the four main recruitment units, recruitment unit No. 1 in Da-nyin-gone, Yangon, seems to be applying a more rigorous screening mechanism. In a number of cases, reports were received that underage recruits were initially rejected when presented to this centre, but were accepted at other more remote or less rigorous centres when presented there.

43. Although these steps reflected positive progress in terms of prevention and discharge and cooperation with the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, the Government had yet to draw up a plan to systematically identify and separate children being used by the Tatmadaw Kyi, and the discharge of children continued to be undertaken on an ad hoc basis as a response to complaints.

#### **Sudan**

44. The establishment of the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission by the Government of National Unity has greatly assisted efforts in the release of children from armed groups. From February 2009 to March 2010, the Commission, with the support of the United Nations, facilitated and organized the release of 957 children by SLA/Free Will, SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim), SLA/Peace Wing, JEM/Peace Wing and the Popular Forces for Rights and Democracy (173 children in Northern Darfur, 534 in Southern Darfur, 250 in Western Darfur). In January 2011, SLA/Free Will and SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim) jointly released 84 children (44 from SLA/Free Will and 40 from SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim)) in Northern Darfur to the Commission as part of the implementation of their action plans.

45. Further, UNICEF and the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission officially registered 526 children formerly associated with armed groups in the three States of Darfur, including 53 girls. In addition, 149 children were registered in the Three Areas.

46. A total of 210 children associated with SPLA were released in 2010, of which 42 were confirmed by the United Nations as children listed on the payroll, trained and armed. In the majority of cases, children were used as porters, messengers, cooks and guards by SPLA officers. In Unity State, 89 children were released from SPLA Division 4 in April (from Pakur and Buoth barracks in Duar); 50 children from Division 5 (Mapel) in July; and 26 children (from Wunyik) in November. In Divisions 7 and 8 (in Panpandiar and Yomding), as well as in New Kush and the SPLA general headquarters, a total of 45 boys were released. Separately, in Blue Nile State, SPLA released 140 children of the 220 children registered. Efforts are under way to release the remaining 80 children in early 2011.

#### **Colombia**

47. According to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, 338 children (114 girls and 224 boys) have been separated from illegal armed groups between January and December 2010 and entered protection programmes. Of these, 246 were separated from FARC-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), 62 from the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), 1 from the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL), 8 from the former Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) and 21 from other armed groups the Government deems criminal gangs.

#### **Sri Lanka**

48. Since 1 December 2008, 122 children have been reported as released by TMVP, including 32 boys released in 2010.

49. On 25 May 2010, all 562 “surrendee”<sup>3</sup> children and youth, including 201 girls, identified at the end of the conflict as formerly associated with armed groups were released, upon completion of one year of rehabilitation as required by Emergency Regulation No. 1580/5(2008). All children were released through a Magistrate’s Court order, as well as a letter from the Commissioner General for Rehabilitation. All children, except one, have been reunited with their families. In line with Regulation 1580/5, monitoring of these children is ongoing by the Department of Probation and Child Care Services. In addition to highlighting the limited employment opportunities, which may improve given the joint plan of action for the Northern Province, the monitoring showed that at least 250 children formerly associated with armed groups in the north and east of the country are facing a number of security issues. Concerns range from being requested to report regularly to the nearby military/police posts, visits by military and police/intelligence staff to their house, arrests by the police, to being required to report and sign at the local military or navy post before leaving their administrative division of residence.

#### **IV. Information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict**

##### **A. Information on grave violations against children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

###### **Developments in Afghanistan**

50. The recruitment and use of children by anti-government elements, including the Taliban and its various factions, Haqqani network, Hizb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Tora Bora Front, Latif Mansur Network and Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia, was observed throughout the country in 2010. Children were used by them to carry out suicide attacks, plant explosives and transport munitions. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting verified 23 incidents of recruitment and use of children by armed groups. Half of these incidents were reported from provinces near the border with Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran. All recruited children are male, between the ages of 9 and 17, and most of them were recruited in southern and western regions.

51. There have been continued reports of cross-border recruitment and use of children by armed opposition groups, including the Taliban, from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Many have been forced to carry explosives across the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, often without their knowledge, while others have received more advanced training in weapons. One boy, aged 15 years, recounted that he was kidnapped by the Taliban at the age of 13 and taken to Pakistan, near the Turham border, where he was kept in captivity, among other Afghan children, for almost two years and received training in the use of weaponry. The boy was told that anyone who tried to escape would be killed. He was forced to join a Taliban fighting group and participated in armed clashes in Khyber, Kharkhano and other locations before escaping during an attack. He managed to find his way to Kabul, where he was

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<sup>3</sup> A “surrendee” under the Sri Lankan Emergency Regulation 1580/5(2008) of 15 December 2008, is a child leaving an armed group that has been identified and registered by the Government of Sri Lanka and verified by UNICEF.



arrested by the Afghan National Security Forces. He is currently serving a prison sentence in Kabul Juvenile Rehabilitation Centre for threatening national security.

52. The Government's policy is to not recruit children under 18 into the national security forces, and efforts are made to identify and remove children during the recruitment process. However, children continue to be found in the ranks of the Afghan National Police. This was especially true for local recruitment in rural district police stations and conflict-affected areas, where there were consistent reports of children associated with Afghan National Police units at checkpoints and police stations, including as drivers, messengers and tea boys. Insufficient age-verification procedures, extremely low levels of birth registration, opportunities to manipulate age in national identity documents, and the current recruitment drive within the Afghan National Police have led to such underage recruitment.

53. Sixty-six incidents of detention of children for crimes relating to national security and alleged association with armed groups were verified and documented. Children were often detained with adults in police custody and some reported abuse and mistreatment. The Afghan National Security Forces detained 62 children, while 3 children were arrested and detained by the international military forces. According to ISAF, there are an additional 300 detainees between the ages of 16 and 18 held in the detention facility in Parwan (formerly known as Bagram). This has yet to be verified and followed up by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting. A request has been made to ISAF for access to these children.

54. A total of 1,396 children were killed or maimed (486 killed and 910 maimed) in 2010. This is a 35 per cent rise compared to 2009, mainly owing to an increase in indiscriminate methods of warfare and asymmetric attacks by armed groups all around the country. The majority of incidents occurred in the southern and eastern regions. Seventy-two per cent of child casualties were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and Hizb-e-Islami and their respective factions. Improvised explosive devices, suicide attacks, and rocket and mortar shelling were the main causes of death and injury to children by these groups. Of grave concern is the killing of children by the Taliban on the suspicion that they were spies, or for being allegedly associated with or supporting the international military forces. One such case in Helmand Province and another case in Ghazni Province have been reported. Pro-Government forces (the Afghan National Security Forces supported by the international military forces) were responsible for 21 per cent of all child casualties in 2010, mainly caused by air strikes, artillery and operations conducted during night raids. Cross-fire accounted for the remaining 7 per cent of child casualties, for which it was impossible to determine which party was responsible. Furthermore, explosive remnants of war and landmines, left over from the preceding decades of conflict, continued to cause loss of lives and injury to children, mostly boys between 8 and 14 years old in the south and central regions.

55. Reports were received of sexual violence committed against children by members of the Afghan National Security Forces with no or limited follow-up by the authorities. Moreover, there continued to be reports of boys being sexually abused and exploited by armed forces and groups, including the practice of *baccha baazi* (dancing boys). Such incidents and their context continue to be difficult to document, but efforts are being made to further investigate.

56. Eight incidents of abduction of children by armed groups, including the Taliban, were verified in 2010. Children were abducted for various reasons, to

intimidate families perceived as pro-Government or to pressure an exchange or release of individuals detained by the authorities. Dozens of additional reports of abduction of children were received during the reporting period, but information on the perpetrators and their motives has been difficult to obtain.

57. A total of 197 education-related incidents throughout the country were verified. Incidents affecting education included direct attacks against schools, collateral damage, killing and injury of students and education personnel, threats and intimidations, and forced school closures. These incidents were mostly perpetrated by armed groups (86 per cent); 30 per cent of the incidents were carried out in September 2010, the month of the Parliamentary elections, when half of the polling stations were located in schools. Of the 47 verified incidents affecting health delivery, 33 were attributed to armed groups and 14 to pro-Government forces. Incidents included the abduction of medical staff, the looting of medical supplies, improvised explosive device attacks, collateral damage and intimidation. The highest incident levels were recorded in the north-eastern, eastern and northern regions. The occupation of schools and health facilities by pro-Government forces is a concern, including five verified incidents of school occupation by the international military forces in 2010.

58. Humanitarian access continued to be seriously affected by widespread insecurity, especially in the south and south-east of the country in 2010. Significantly increased levels of insecurity in these areas, as well as the northern, north-eastern and north-western regions, also hindered the capability of aid agencies to assess needs, assist vulnerable populations and monitor provision of assistance. Armed opposition groups were responsible for the majority of incidents, including the abduction of humanitarian personnel, intimidation, the looting of humanitarian aid, and armed attacks against the convoys and staff of humanitarian organizations. Abduction by armed opposition groups remained the most common violation (74 persons abducted in 30 separate cases). In a majority of instances, those abducted were released on the intervention of community elders and religious leaders.

59. In January 2010, President Karzai outlined a peace and reintegration programme aimed at promoting peace through dialogue with armed opposition groups. In the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme 2010 document of July 2010, however, no specific reference was made, nor resources or responsibilities allocated, for the particular needs of children directly affected by armed conflict.

### **Developments in Burundi**

60. Following the release of all children associated with the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) in April 2009 and the transformation of the movement into a registered political party, Burundi was removed from the annexes to my last annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). No new reported cases of recruitment or use of children were recorded in 2010. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting continues to monitor the situation of children in Burundi, given the security challenges that are present in a country emerging from conflict.

61. The operational framework for the reintegration of children formerly associated with FNL and its alleged dissidents, established in 2009 (comprising a government technical coordination team, UNICEF, United Nations Office in Burundi (BNUB), international NGOs and national civil society organizations),

continued to monitor the reintegration of 626 children, including 8 girls, during the reporting period.

62. The number of reported cases of rape and other sexual violence perpetrated by members of security and defence forces decreased in 2010 (6 cases) compared to 2009 (15 cases). According to BNUB, from January to November, the six cases of rape of children (7-16 years of age), including one boy, were committed by members of the Burundi National Police, National Defence Force (FDN) and national intelligence service. For most of the reported cases, no judicial case has been filed by the victims or follow-up taken by the authorities. In line with the national strategy to fight gender-based violence still to be adopted and as part of the joint programme signed with the United Nations, the Government is setting up a “one-stop” centre to provide medical and psychosocial support to victims of gender-based violence, including rape.

63. From January to November, BNUB registered the extrajudicial or arbitrary detention of 204 children (45 girls and 159 boys), including some children arrested for offences linked to national security. Among them is a 14-year-old girl suspected of subversion, and a 14-year-old boy suspected of involvement in mercenary activity. On a positive note, the Ministry of Justice established a child protection unit for providing protection and assistance to children in contact with the law.

#### **Developments in the Central African Republic**

64. The Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) and the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) reportedly continued to use children in the north of the country. Children were seen fighting for both armed groups during the attack on Birao in Vakaga prefecture by CPJP in November. The presence of children within the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) near Kabo (Ouham prefecture) and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLJC) in Vakaga prefecture was also reported. Further, while hundreds of children have been demobilized from APRD since 2008, reports have confirmed that children, including girls, remain associated with the armed group in Ouham, Ouham-Pendé and Nana-Gribizi. APRD commanders have denied using children, and have explained that children voluntarily joined APRD elements for food and protection. The United Nations has not been able to confirm the number of children still present in the ranks of APRD. The abduction of children by LRA, especially in the south-east of the country (Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures), remained of concern, along with reports that self-defence militias supported by local authorities had mobilized children into their ranks, principally in the north-west.

65. Attacks on villages in the north and north-west of the Central African Republic resulting in civilian casualties, including children, were documented during the year. In particular, in February, APRD attacked a campsite of members of the Peuhl ethnic group in Taley (near Markounda in Ouham prefecture), killing 18 people, including 4 children. CPJP attacked Kpata village (near Ndélé in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture) in October, killing one girl. Multiple LRA attacks in which children were killed were reported in Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures by survivors.

66. Incidences of rape and other sexual violence against children by armed elements continued to be of grave concern in 2010, even though they remain severely underreported. Of the hundreds of cases reported to the United Nations,

approximately 10 per cent of victims were children, with CPJP and zaraguinas (*coupeurs des routes*) among the perpetrators. In the east, the abduction of young girls by LRA for use as sex slaves was reported by several victims who were able to escape. Weak law enforcement systems, compounded by the absence of protective measures to separate victims of sexual violence from their known aggressors in the community, have contributed to a high level of impunity for such crimes.

67. The education system, especially in the east of the country, was considerably affected by insecurity owing to the presence of armed groups. While schools were not specifically targeted by LRA or other armed groups present in the east, the atmosphere of fear of incursions by armed groups, including LRA, have prevented parents from sending their children to school. From mid-May to September 2010, schools in several villages of Mbomou (Rafai and Dembia in particular) and Haut-Mbomou (i.e., Obo and Zemio) prefectures were closed owing to LRA activities. In addition, it was reported to the United Nations that CPJP occupied several schools in villages near Bria (Haute-Kotto prefecture) between May and July; while in October, schools in Ippy (Ouaka prefecture) were temporarily closed owing to the occupation of the town by CPJP.

68. During the year, there were cases of lootings of health centres in the east and north of the country during attacks on villages by CPJP (in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture) and by LRA (in Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou, Haute-Kotto and Vakaga prefectures), which adversely impacted access to health care by the population, including children.

69. Humanitarian access was a major challenge in several parts of the north and east (including Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga, Haute-Kotto, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures) owing to sporadic fighting between armed groups and FACA, as well as increased rebel group attacks throughout the year. Incidents linked to armed attacks and banditry, including kidnappings and killings of humanitarian workers, resulted in a substantial decrease of activities by humanitarian organizations in these areas, especially in Vakaga. Widespread insecurity in the LRA-affected prefectures of Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou considerably limited humanitarian aid and protection activities, especially to the displaced rural population. Restrictions on the passage of humanitarian convoys by the Government on major routes around Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran) until July 2010, as well as attacks on convoys by armed groups and looting of premises of NGOs by UFDR and FDPC, compounded the challenges associated with aid delivery to affected populations. On several occasions, negotiations for humanitarian access were complicated by a lack of clarity in the chain of command, in particular with FDPC in Kabo (Ouham prefecture).

70. In June, the Government of the Central African Republic signed the N'Djamena Declaration to end the recruitment and use of children within its armed forces. The Government's commitment to protect children affected by armed conflict was restated at the African Union ministerial meeting on LRA, held in Bangui in October. Other efforts led by the Government to protect children included the signing in September of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the

Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict<sup>4</sup> and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.<sup>5</sup>

71. In January, the revised Penal Code, which includes a section on crimes against children under discussion since 2003, was promulgated by presidential decree. Moreover, the Government decided, with the support of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to revise its existing law on the protection of women against violence in the Central African Republic to include the protection of children against all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. At the time of writing, the bill was still under review.

### **Developments in Chad**

72. The slow but progressive improvement in the security situation in 2010, and the normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan contributed to a decrease in the number of reported cases of child recruitment in Chad, compared to 2009. JEM was less visible and present in the refugee camps in eastern Chad; no new cases of child recruitment by JEM were reported to have occurred after May 2010. Furthermore, between May and August 2010, at least 40 former child combatants allegedly recruited by JEM prior to 2010 returned to the refugee camps. Prior to May, the recruitment of Sudanese refugee children by JEM from north-eastern Chad had been reported. Information corroborated by various sources pointed to local refugee leaders who in some cases acted as “facilitators” in the recruitment process.

73. On 17 September, a group of Sudanese men reportedly attempted to recruit children and youth from the Goz Amer refugee camp (Dar Sila region) to join the SLM/A. The recruiters targeted boys and girls, some as young as 12 years old. Although the group was reported to have enlisted at least 207 refugees, most of them children, they were prevented by the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (DIS) from taking the recruits with them, and the perpetrators were subsequently arrested by Chadian authorities.

74. Only eight allegations of child recruitment by the *Armée nationale tchadienne* (6 Sudanese refugee children from north-eastern Chad and 2 children among displaced communities in the Goz Beida area of south-eastern Chad) were received in 2010, compared to 26 cases in 2009. In addition, between May and August 2010, the presence of children within *Armée nationale tchadienne* forces was also observed in Adré, as well as within mobile brigades of the *Armée nationale tchadienne* in the border areas of Goungour and Sawa, Assoungoua department. The number of cases documented were isolated and allegedly carried out by low-ranking officers. In response, the Government, with the support of the country task force on monitoring and reporting, organized training sessions to build and reinforce the capacity and knowledge of rank-and-file officers of the *Armée nationale tchadienne* on child rights and child protection, in line with international norms and standards.

75. Children were also identified within several Chadian opposition armed groups, including those that joined Government forces following the signature of several peace agreements (peace agreements of July 2009 with *Mouvement national*; with *Front démocratique populaire* (FDP) of December 2009, and with MDJT of May 2010). For instance, 13 boys between the ages of 14 and 17 were identified among

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2173, No. 27531.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2173, No. 27531.

the 60 FPRN combatants captured by the Armée nationale tchadienne during the fighting between Armée nationale tchadienne and FPRN in April 2010. Furthermore, according to information received from the local population, children allegedly remain associated with FDP, whose forces are armed and stationed in the Central African Republic/Chad/Sudan border triangle; and MPRD in the hills of Korbol in Moyen-Chari.

76. Children represented the majority of victims of explosive remnants of war in 2010. Of the 17 incidents reported in the four eastern regions (Ouaddai, Wadi Fira, Dar Sila and Salamat), 14 involved children (all boys), and 2 were fatal. In addition, access to the Tibesti region, an intensely mined area occupied by MDJT was possible as a result of the peace agreement between the Government of Chad and MDJT. Demining activities by the Government, as well as mine education campaigns were carried out in the last quarter of 2010. Despite these efforts, the prevalence of mines and explosive remnants of war in Chad has been understated. With the departure of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) and the termination of its mine and explosive remnants of war clearance and road verification programmes, there is a serious risk that incidents of killing and maiming of children by explosive remnants of war may increase.

77. Sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls continued to be a widespread phenomenon in Chad. Perpetrators include members of armed groups and the Armée nationale tchadienne, but the majority of incidents were perpetrated by civilians. Two observations may be made from sexual and gender-based violence data collected in Chad by the United Nations. First, there is an ascending trend of reported sexual and gender-based violence cases among refugees, with 295 cases in 2006, 512 cases in 2007, 656 cases in 2008, 860 in 2009 and 650 by midyear 2010. This may not necessarily indicate that sexual and gender-based violence cases have increased, but rather the result of increased reporting owing to sustained work on sexual and gender-based violence. Second, it may reveal a behavioural change evidenced by survivors and their relatives willing to report cases. While underreporting remains a concern, particularly for rape or attempted rape cases, this trend may indicate growing trust in the protection mechanisms established by international actors, in close coordination with the communities, and in DIS.

78. Of the 650 cases of sexual and gender-based violence against refugee women and girls recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the first semester of 2010, nearly 30 per cent of victims were children, including children as young as 3 years old. Gender-based violence assaults, rapes and attempted rapes, including by members of the armed forces, were documented. Within the host population, two cases of rape against children by members of the armed forces were also documented. Impunity related to sexual and gender-based violence cases, particularly when the perpetrators are soldiers of the Armée nationale tchadienne, remains a major concern.

79. During 2010, 11 security incidents and attacks against humanitarian workers were recorded. This was attributed to three factors: DIS, with the support of MINURCAT, increasingly providing escorts and being able to react relatively promptly; the creation of the joint Chad/Sudan monitoring force and its deterrence effect; and the fact that other security forces, including the Armée nationale tchadienne and Gendarmerie, intensified their efforts to pursue and apprehend

perpetrators. However, this decrease came after a spate of serious security incidents in June 2010, including carjackings, kidnappings and abductions. As a result, one international NGO withdrew its international staff from eastern Chad and three others partially suspended their operations. In order to continue protection for humanitarian operations in view of the withdrawal of MINURCAT, the Government created the Bureau de sécurisation et de mouvement in six different locations (Abéché, Bahai, Guéréda, Iriba, Koukou, Goz Beida) to provide additional security to the humanitarian actors.

80. As part of its efforts to address the recruitment and use of children, the Government of Chad organized a regional conference in N'Djamena on ending the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups in June 2010. Bringing together representatives of Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan, the conference culminated in the signing of the N'Djamena Declaration, by which Governments committed to, inter alia, end child recruitment and use by armed forces and armed groups; establish a strategy to fight arms proliferation; implement relevant regional and international instruments on child rights and child protection; and harmonize national legislations.

### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

81. The prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children remains one of the many concerns in Côte d'Ivoire. Out of the 37 cases of sexual violence documented by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting at the national level, 7 were perpetrated by Forces nouvelles elements in the north. In the west, most of the cases of rapes allegedly attributed to pro-Gbagbo militia groups occurred during road attacks, which has become a new concern in the region. Three cases were reported in May, June and October 2010. Generally, it was difficult to identify whether perpetrators belonged to militia groups, as most of them were in civilian clothing. In San Pedro, two members of the Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire, aged 17, who had been arrested on 12 March for their involvement in the kidnapping and gang-rape of one of their peers, were released.

82. There were also concerns about the killing and maiming of children, with 23 cases recorded, of which 19 were verified. Of the 19, 11 cases occurred during the immediate post-electoral period mainly in the cities of Issia, Duékoué, Sinfra, Abidjan and Tiébissou. These cases were allegedly perpetrated by forces loyal to former president Laurent Gbagbo. The remaining allegations were not verified by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting at the time of writing, owing to the volatile security situation and the restrictions to movement of personnel in areas controlled by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo.

83. The involvement of children in campaigning activities and political demonstrations during the weeks leading up to the elections exposed them to reprisals, and in some cases resulted in children being physically harmed. In order to address this concern, the Forces nouvelles Chief of Staff and Integrated Command Centre officials were requested to instruct their personnel to ensure children are protected from any potential risks of violence or manipulation that are against their best interests.

84. A worrying trend of youth militarization was observed, particularly after the run-off election on 28 November 2010. Young people were recruited in various localities, notably in Abidjan, Bouaflé, Daloa, San Pedro, the Agnéby region,

Vavoua and Zuénoula, which are areas controlled by forces loyal to Mr. Gbagbo. Some were brought to Abidjan to undergo rapid military training in designated centres. There were also reports of forced abductions of youth who were taken to training centres. Upon completion of their training, some of the youth were sent to the field with military uniforms and weapons. In Yamoussoukro, the Compagnie des Scorpions Guetteurs, a militia group led by a Young Patriot, was reactivated, and reportedly recruited youth to infiltrate areas controlled by the Forces nouvelles.

### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

85. Child protection actors recorded 447 cases of child recruitment (including 49 girls) so far in 2010, representing about half of the number of recruitment cases reported in my last report (S/2010/181). This difference can be attributed to the surge of recruitments just before FARDC fast track integration in 2009. Of the recruitments that took place in 2010, 311 took place in North Kivu Province, 74 in South Kivu Province, 60 in Orientale Province and 1 in Bandundu Province. One child was reportedly recruited in Uganda and separated in North Kivu. Perpetrators include FARDC, FDLR, PARECO, Mai-Mai, LRA, FRPI/FPJC, CNDP, Police nationale congolaise, ADF/NALU and unidentified armed elements. The majority of children recruited in 2010 were used in military operations and were recruited more than once by the same or other groups. Of particular note is the ongoing recruitment and threats of re-recruitment, including from schools, in Masisi and Rutshuru territories by former elements of CNDP that have been integrated into FARDC. For example, in November 2010 in this area, at least 79 children who had been reunified with their families returned to transit centres for fear of re-recruitment.

86. A total of 26 cases of killing of children and 16 cases of maiming of children by armed forces and groups were documented in 2010 (compared to 23 cases of killing and 12 cases of maiming in 2009). Of the 26 cases, 13 were attributed to FARDC, 5 to LRA, 2 to ADF/NALU, 2 to FRPI/FPJC, 2 to PARECO, and 1 each to FDLR and Mai-Mai groups, respectively. Seven cases of maiming were reportedly perpetrated by FARDC, four by FDLR, three by Mai-Mai, one by PARECO and one by an unidentified group.

87. Sexual violence against children by security forces (army and the Police nationale congolaise) and armed groups continued to be a serious concern in 2010. A total of 141 cases (including two against boys) were recorded in 2010 by child protection actors, compared to 134 cases in 2009. Of the 141 cases, 73 occurred in North Kivu Province, 35 in Orientale Province (13 in Ituri and 22 in Haut and Bas Uélé), and 33 in South Kivu Province. Sixty-seven cases of sexual violence against children were allegedly perpetrated by FARDC, followed by FDLR (20 cases), LRA (15 cases), Police nationale congolaise (12 cases), PARECO (4 cases), FRPI (2 cases), Mai-Mai factions (1 case), ADF/NALU (1 case) and Agence nationale de renseignement (1 case). On 10 January 2010, an element of the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) reportedly raped a 16-year-old girl in Haut Uélé territory, Orientale Province. In 15 cases, perpetrators remained unidentified. Twenty-six children who were victims of sexual violence, including one boy, were under the age of 10. In addition to the 141 cases of sexual violence against children that occurred in 2010, 89 other cases that occurred in 2009 and earlier were also documented in 2010.



88. Ensuring accountability for perpetrators of crimes against children remained problematic. Despite the large number of reported cases of child recruitment, particularly by FARDC commanders involved in “Amani Leo” operations, no judicial action has been initiated against them. Bosco Ntaganda, Innocent Zimurinda and Beaudoin Ngaruye, all of whom are suspected of recruitment and use of children, remained in the command structure of FARDC. On the positive side, 28 security forces were arrested for sexual abuses against children (19 in South Kivu Province and 9 in Province Orientale). Among those arrested, 20 FARDC and two Police nationale congolaise elements were convicted. In addition, in the Kivus, two FARDC elements and one member of the Mai-Mai were convicted for the killing and maiming of children.

89. In 2010, at least 14 schools and 9 hospitals (10 in North Kivu, 8 in Ituri, 5 in South Kivu) were attacked by armed forces and groups (7 by FRPI/FPJC, 7 by FARDC, 3 by PARECO, 1 by FRF, 2 by FDLR, 3 unidentified). The attacks included 10 cases in which the buildings were destroyed, 18 cases of looting and 7 cases of occupation of the buildings.

90. Humanitarian access continued to be hampered in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo throughout 2010, not only as a consequence of armed group activity and military operations against these groups, but also because of the direct targeting of humanitarian staff. The number of recorded security incidents against humanitarian partners increased in 2010 by 10 per cent compared to 2009. All parties to the conflict targeted humanitarian personnel, severely limiting the provision of aid to vulnerable populations. While the national security forces and armed groups accounted for some cases (mostly FDLR and Mai-Mai), the majority remains unidentified. The trend was particularly worrisome in North and South Kivu, with Masisi, Rutshuru and Fizi territories being most affected. In South Kivu alone, the number of attacks against aid workers more than doubled in 2010 compared to 2009. In the Haut and Bas Uélé districts of Orientale Province, insecurity owing to the threat attributed to LRA and other tensions severely restricted the movement of humanitarian staff throughout the year. The provision of humanitarian assistance by United Nations agencies in the east has continued to depend largely on the capacity of MONUSCO to deploy troops to escort relief convoys and secure the areas where assistance is being delivered.

### **Developments in Haiti**

91. Since my last annual report, the security environment was marked by the 12 January 2010 earthquake, which displaced over a million people into precarious and internally displaced camps, and two rounds of presidential and legislative elections, on 28 November 2010 and 20 March 2011. More firearms are reportedly circulating, and gangs possess an estimated 17,000 of the 205,000 illegal weapons now in circulation. This poses an increased risk for children, who are recruited as gang members, especially as conventional social structures and protective environment — their schools and families, churches — remain disintegrated as a result of the earthquake. The political turmoil and the volatile security situation have also heightened the risk of opportunistic alliances by armed elements with political or private sector actors for political or criminal purposes. Further, trafficking of children remains a serious concern in Haiti. Many of these children are victims of mistreatment, sexual abuse, forced labour and criminal exploitation.

92. Although there was a decline in the number of child abductions prior to the earthquake owing to the arrest of armed elements and gang leaders involved in child abduction by the Haitian National Police in close cooperation with the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) (89 cases in 2008; 21 cases in 2009), the numbers increased slightly in 2010, with 27 children (including 13 girls) abducted for ransom or for assault, including by armed elements, predominantly in Port-au-Prince. Abducted girls were exposed to sexual abuse and rape during captivity. Underreporting to the authorities by families owing to fear of repercussions suggests that the total number of abductions may be higher.

93. According to official figures provided by national law enforcement authorities, 17 boys and 4 girls were killed during armed confrontations among Port-au-Prince gangs in 2010. During the last week of November and the first week of December alone, nine children were reported killed by armed gangs in Martissant as a result of the political unrest related to the first round of elections.

94. Despite more frequent patrols by the Haitian National Police, rape and other sexual violence against children committed by armed elements continue to be reported, particularly in the internally displaced persons' camps that have limited or intermittent access to law enforcement services. Several IDP camps were a base for escaped prisoners and gangs' operations. Sixty per cent of the 284 cases of sexual violence registered during the reporting period by an international NGO in Port-au-Prince were children under the age of 18; and the Haitian National Police recorded 279 cases of rape and sexual violence against women and girls and 1 case of male child rape in Port-au-Prince between January and October 2010. Given that collecting data on sexual violence cases in post-earthquake Haiti has been extremely challenging with no active case registration system in the country, information on the number of cases perpetrated against children in IDP camps was not available at the time of writing.

95. Children as young as 10 years old are reportedly being used by armed elements in and around Port-au-Prince to courier drugs, warn members when security forces are conducting operations, carry weapons and intervene in armed confrontations, convey messages, act as spies, collect ransom during kidnapping, carry out arson attacks or destroy private and public property. In Martissant, approximately 30 children reportedly belong to one armed gang.

96. Physical damage to rule-of-law institutions by the earthquake has exacerbated existing challenges, including the lack of adequate detention facilities and the prolonged pre-trial detention of children. Of the 342 children detained across the country in December 2010, 88 per cent were held in pre-trial detention and 14 per cent were girls. Children charged and undergoing a judicial process lacked adequate detention facilities. Nevertheless, the Direction de l'Administration Pénitentiaire has undertaken steps to resolve this issue, within the framework of the development strategic plan for the period 2007-2012.

### **Developments in Iraq**

97. Children were used in Iraq by Al-Qaida in Iraq to spy and scout, to transport military supplies and equipment, to videotape attacks, to plant explosive devices and to actively engage in attacks against security forces and civilians. There have been consistent reports received in 2010 by the United Nations from civil society groups, national authorities and security forces, as well as the United States Forces in Iraq

(USF-I), that Al-Qaida in Iraq operates a youth wing for children under the age of 14 called “Birds of Paradise” (also referred to as “Paradise Boys” or “Youth of Heaven”) to carry out suicide attacks against military, government and civilian targets. Information concerning this wing of Al-Qaida in Iraq is difficult to verify owing to the group’s clandestine nature and the difficulty in identifying its leadership and chain of command. However, Al-Qaida in Iraq reportedly targets vulnerable children for forced recruitment, such as orphans, street children and the mentally disabled. In other instances, insurgents have allegedly used children as proxy bombers who did not know they were carrying explosives that were intended to be detonated remotely without their knowledge.

98. At least 194 children were killed and 232 injured as a result of the continued conflict in 2010. The majority of these incidents took place in the governorates of Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk and Basra. Access to many parts of Iraq is limited to United Nations staff as a result of security conditions, and therefore verification of all incidents was not possible. As a result, it is believed by the United Nations that these figures may underrepresent the actual number of child casualties during the year. The largest number of casualties is attributed to Al-Qaida in Iraq and Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), which carry out indiscriminate attacks, including suicide bombers, car bombs, and roadside bombs, with the intention of creating terror among the population and engendering a climate of fear in public places where civilians, including children, tend to gather. ISI had taken responsibility for the attack on 31 October against Our Lady of Salvation Church in Baghdad that killed 55 people, including 3 children. In addition, children were also killed or maimed as a result of being caught in the crossfire between insurgent groups and military or police forces engaged in combat, or during checkpoints confrontations.

99. The ongoing security situation has in some instances compromised children’s access to education. In particular, threats and intimidation against specific groups remain a concern. For example, in October 2010, as a result of the attack by ISI against Our Lady of Salvation Church, it was reported that many schools in Baghdad, often sharing the same grounds as their churches, cancelled classes for several weeks out of fear of a similar attack taking place by ISI or another insurgent group intending to terrorize the community.

100. The detention of children by USF-I ceased during the reporting period. The United States-Iraq status of forces agreement requires that juveniles detained by USF-I be released, or, if sufficient evidence exists, that they be transferred to the Iraqi justice system for processing. As of June 2010, no juveniles remained in USF-I custody. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, supported by UNICEF, started a “justice for children” project, which combined prevention, protection, reintegration and restorative justice for children and youth in 2009. Four mobile legal teams continued to provide assistance to boys in pre- and post-trial detention in Baghdad and Basra in 2010. Many of these boys were accused of being involved in terrorist activities, which carries a 15-year jail sentence if convicted. Others had been in detention without a formal charge for more than 12 months.

### **Developments in Lebanon**

101. The United Nations and child protection organizations remain deeply concerned about the politicization of children and their potential participation in armed clashes between opposing political forces or in political demonstrations.

However, the collection of accurate and credible evidence on the association of children with armed groups remains problematic owing to the lack of monitoring mechanisms in Lebanon at this time. The Government of Lebanon has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

102. The impact of ongoing political volatility, acute socio-economic inequities, significant school dropout rates and high youth unemployment among Palestine refugees in comparison to the host population also constitute major risk factors for the increased association of children with political armed violence, or with violent extremism in some Palestinian camps. It should be noted that significant amendments to the Labour Code and the Social Security Law adopted by the Lebanese Parliament in 2010 aim at improving access to the private sector labour market by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

103. On a positive note, 9 out of the 12 children detained on national security grounds, some held owing to their alleged association with Fatah al-Islam, as reported in my last report, were released this year. Two of the detainees turned 18 during the year and were transferred to adult facilities.

104. The presence of cluster munitions used by Israel during the war in 2006 continues to pose a serious danger to the civilian population living near contaminated areas. Since the end of the conflict in August 2006, the number of incidents among civilians has reached 347, including 44 fatalities and 303 injuries, among them 102 children.

105. There are also ongoing threats related to landmines and unexploded ordnance, with 17 civilian casualties recorded during the reporting period. This includes the killing of one child and the maiming of three others in a single incident in a Palestinian camp in Beddawi (northern Lebanon), which is currently being investigated by the Lebanese Mine Action Centre. On 17 August, the Lebanese Parliament ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

### **Developments in Myanmar**

106. Of the 93 child soldiers notified as having been discharged from the Tatmadaw through government mechanisms from January to December 2010, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting verified that 40 had been recruited during 2010, with the remaining 53 recruited in 2009. However, this most likely does not represent the total number of children recruited, given that ILO received 201 complaints of child soldier recruitment in 2010 (a significant increase over the 86 complaints received in 2009), and there continued to be a steady stream of underage recruitment reports submitted regularly to the task force. In 2010, the task force regularly followed up on reported cases, but access restrictions in Myanmar continued to limit the number of cases that the task force is able to verify. Analysis of verified cases and credible reports indicates that, despite progress made by the Government, the patterns of recruitment of underage children into the Tatmadaw did not alter significantly, and still included the recruitment of working and unaccompanied children from the streets, railway stations or other public places, although the majority of children were recruited from their homes or villages. Most cases of recruitment were of children between 15 to 17 years of age, and the majority were from Yangon division. Children continue to be persuaded or duped by relatives (working in the Tatmadaw), soldiers (to earn a promotion or other incentives) and other brokers to join the Tatmadaw. The majority of children

interviewed after discharge stated that the recruiter had not requested for the age of the child, or had falsified the age of the child upon recruitment. Credible reports indicate that, in addition to children who are officially recruited into the Tatmadaw, children are used by the Tatmadaw as porters, and as labour for road construction, kitchen work, farming, and aides-de-camp to high-ranking officers. Reports also confirm the recruitment and use of children by village militias known as “Pyi thu sit”.

107. Children were still present in the ranks of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), based in Pa’an district of Kayin State. Three cases were verified, involving three boys between the ages of 11 and 15, who were recruited by DKBA battalions 555 and 907, respectively, prior to 2010. Testimonies by these children, who had separated from DKBA in 2010, point to the presence of many other children in the armed group.

108. Credible information indicated that children are also present in the ranks of the Kachin Independence Army, KNU/KNLA Peace Council, the Karen Peace Front, KNPP/KA, the Shan State Army-South and the United Wa State Army. However, the country task force on monitoring and reporting has been unable to establish contact with these groups or to directly monitor the presence of children in these groups owing to access restrictions placed on it by the Government. The Karen National People’s Liberation Front and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army/Kokang Army, listed in annex I of my 2010 report (A/64/742-S/2010/181), have now been integrated into the Tatmadaw border guard forces (Border Guard Force 1004 and Border Guard Force 1006, respectively). A DKBA breakaway faction has also been integrated into the border guard forces. Further, one case of a child associated with KNU/KNLA was verified in 2010. The boy reported that he performed administrative tasks for the group and that there were two other boys present in the camp.

109. Children in military attire were spotted in the Chin National Front/Chin National Army (CNF/CNA) in Tongzam and Tedim in north-west Chin State. This would be a breach of the CNF “deed of commitment” published on 15 March 2009, in which it reaffirmed that the group does not recruit any persons under the age of 18, and reiterated its commitment to facilitating independent monitoring and to developing a time-bound action plan, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

110. There were a number of media reports in 2010 of children being killed or maimed during skirmishes involving the Tatmadaw, DKBA, KNLA, KA or Mon Pyi Thit, or by landmines and unexploded ordnance. In a verified case, on 31 March 2010, two boys under the age of 10 accidentally detonated an unexploded round from a M-79 grenade launcher while playing in Hlaingbwe Township in Kayin State. One of the boys died instantly, whereas the second boy was seriously injured. The Tatmadaw, DKBA and KNLA make regular use of M-79 grenade launchers in that area. There were many additional allegations in 2010 of children being directly targeted and killed and maimed by parties to the conflict (the majority of cases reported involving the Tatmadaw and DKBA). The country task forces on monitoring and reporting was unable to verify these cases, owing to access limitations imposed on the task force by the Government of Myanmar.

111. Access to vulnerable groups in many areas of the country, including children, remained limited for United Nations agencies and other international humanitarian

actors in Myanmar. The Government continued to restrict access to various parts of the country, citing security concerns as the main justification for limiting the presence and travel of international (as well as national) personnel of relief agencies. Access was limited in ceasefire and non-ceasefire areas, including mixed administration areas.

112. There have been a number of media reports of attacks on schools or hospitals by the Tatmadaw and DKBA in Kayin State. The country task force on monitoring and reporting has been able to verify only two reports, as access is either severely limited or forbidden by the authorities. These involved an offensive conducted by Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalions 362 and 367 in Ler Doh Township, Nyunglebin District, Kayin State. Between 3 and 8 February 2010, the battalions caused a large number of people to be displaced and 13 schools with a total of 531 students to be abandoned. Of these schools, a high school and a nursery in Thi Baw Tha, Kwee Lah village tract were destroyed. In addition, Thi Baw Tha Clinic, serving approximately 3,000 people, was burned down. It is unclear whether villagers were able to return to their homes by the end of the reporting period, as access to this region is severely curtailed.

113. The Government shared documents that indicated that from January to May 2010, 43 Tatmadaw soldiers were either warned, demoted, had their pay and allowance cut, received a serious reprimand or were imprisoned in military and civilian jails, in connection with the illegal recruitment of children. This represents a significant increase compared to 2009, when only 22 disciplinary action cases involving military personnel were reported by the Ministry of Defence. However, the country task force on monitoring and reporting, while welcoming and noting the steep increase in sanctions and penalties meted out to perpetrators, remains of the view that this falls short of the urgent need for the Government to systematize disciplinary processes against perpetrators (both military and civilian). As far as the task force is aware, no civilians who may have aided and abetted underage recruitment have faced criminal prosecution. The Government has also failed to take steps to criminalize the recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups.

114. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting previously reported the welcome development of the Government accepting the principle that underage recruits charged with desertion should be discharged and released from prison on the basis of their illegal recruitment. ILO reports that, to date, 7 (1 in 2010) such imprisoned underage recruits have been released from prison and discharged from the military, with negotiations continuing for the release of another 10 such persons. Unfortunately, the arrests of young “deserters” have continued and no pro-active action to identify such persons currently imprisoned has been taken. Also welcomed is the Government acceptance of the principle that a child recruit attaining the legal age of majority does not legitimize his recruitment, his continued retention in the army or his being charged with subsequent desertion.

115. In 2010, there was a marked increase in reporting of underage recruitment into the country task forces on monitoring and reporting and other child protection organizations. This can be attributed in part to more effective cooperation between the Government and members of the task force on the issue, not only at the national level, but also at local level, where awareness of local officials has been increasing. Reporting has also increased in project areas where broader mechanisms for child

protection have been put in place by local officials with the support of child protection agencies and their local child protection partners.

116. On 4 November 2010, the Government enacted the People's Military Service Law, which, to the knowledge of the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, has not yet entered into force. The law stipulates that men between the ages of 18 and 35 and women between the ages of 18 and 27 may be summoned for military service for a period not exceeding 24 months (or 36 months in the case of a defined class of professional and skilled personnel). The task force remains concerned with the possible implementation of this legislation considering systemic issues for age verification. The Government of Myanmar has not yet signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

### **Developments in Nepal**

117. The Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) took part, as a political party, in the Constituent Assembly elections in 2008, and conflict-related violations against children have subsequently decreased significantly. However, armed elements operating with political and often criminal motives primarily in the southern Terai districts continue to have a serious impact on the overall security situation and have created new protection risks for children and increased their vulnerability to violations. However, no consistent pattern of violations can be established, and perpetrators are often unidentified, given that the situation in the Terai region is fluid and different armed groups quickly form, split and disappear.

118. In 2010, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting documented that 14 children were abducted and 4 were subsequently killed. Of the 14 cases, 12 abductions involved demands for ransom, while the motives of the other two cases were not known. In addition, 20 children sustained injuries caused by improvised explosive devices in different parts of the country. However, it was difficult to determine if the improvised explosive devices were remains from the former conflict or new contamination by the armed elements.

119. Mine risk education programmes led by the Department of Education, the Nepal Police and Armed Police Force, with support from UNICEF, have trained and equipped teachers, Nepal Police officers and Armed Police Force officers in the 25 most affected districts. Some 500,000 schoolchildren and 25,000 security personnel have been educated in avoiding the risks of mines and, importantly, explosive remnants of the conflict, which have caused more casualties than mines have in Nepal. A mine action section was established within the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction and has commenced its operation as the government focal point for coordinating mine action initiatives.

### **Developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

120. Eleven Palestinian children were killed and 360 injured (342 boys and 18 girls) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in incidents related to the armed conflict. Of the 360 children injured, 58 were under the age of 12; 83 per cent of the injuries occurred in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and 17 per cent in Gaza; 302 children were injured by the Israeli security forces, 40 by Israeli settlers, 11 by unexploded ordnance, and 2 by unidentified perpetrators. In addition, five children were injured by mishandling weapons and explosives, including one incident allegedly related to interfactional fighting by Palestinian

armed groups. No Israeli children were killed in 2010 as a result of the conflict, but two were injured, including one as a result of a rocket from the Gaza Strip on 21 December launched by an unidentified Palestinian armed group.

121. There are serious concerns regarding the increasing number of civilians, including children, shot and injured in the so-called Gaza buffer zone imposed by Israel, which covers the area up to 300 metres from the Gaza fence. The exact boundaries of the zone are unclear, given that it is not physically delimited, but is known to be an area where there are clashes between militants and the Israeli security forces. In May 2009, the Israeli Army made a statement indicating that any individual entering the zone would be endangering his or her life. However, Palestinians continue to collect gravel and scrap metal in abandoned settlements and industrial zones near the fence, which they later sell to support their families. In 2010, 40 boys and 4 girls were allegedly injured by Israeli fire in or near the buffer zone. Of those, 26 boys, some as young as 13, were shot while collecting gravel within 800 metres of the fence. In cases where sworn affidavits were taken, 19 children were shot in the leg, 2 in the arm and 1 child was shot in the head.

122. For the third consecutive year, the use of Palestinian children as human shields by Israeli security forces was reported, with three new cases documented in three separate incidents in the West Bank in 2010. A 16-year-old girl and a 13-year-old boy were used as human shields during house searches in two separate incidents in Nablus, and a 14-year-old boy was forced to walk in front of Israeli soldiers as a shield while stones were being thrown at them during clashes in Hebron. In the first prosecution of its kind, on 11 March 2010, two soldiers were charged with using a boy as a human shield during “Operation Cast Lead”. The soldiers were convicted by an Israeli military court on 3 October 2010 for “inappropriate behaviour” and “overstepping authority”. They were demoted from the rank of staff sergeant to sergeant and given three-month suspended prison sentences. To date, the measures taken by the Israeli security forces to prevent and punish the use of children as human shields have not reflected the gravity of such conduct.

123. As of December 2010, 213 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 were in Israeli detention or imprisoned by the Israeli security forces, including one girl on conflict-related charges. Two Palestinian children were held in administrative detention without charge or trial in 2010, including one boy having been detained for over 10 months. Of particular concern is the sharp increase in the last quarter of 2010 in the documented cases of arrest of young children in the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem. There are also increasing reports of violence and mistreatment of children by Israeli soldiers during patrols in Silwan, as well as during the arrest, transfer to detention and interrogation of children from East Jerusalem. According to Israeli police figures, 1,267 criminal files were opened against children accused of throwing stones in East Jerusalem between October 2009 and October 2010.

124. In 2010, 90 cases of ill treatment with regard to the treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention were documented by the United Nations and its partners, including through the sworn affidavits of children. Twenty-four of these children were below the age of 15, including two 10-year olds and one 7-year old. In more than 75 of these cases the excessive or extended use of hand-ties and blindfolds were reported, 62 children reported being beaten, 35 children reported position abuse and 16 children were kept in solitary confinement. In three cases,



children reported the use of electric shocks on their bodies and four reported being threatened with electric shocks in the course of their interrogation, which resulted in confessions made under duress. Particularly concerning was the fact that there was an increase in documented cases of sexual violence, with 14 cases (13 boys and 1 girl) in 2010 compared to 9 cases (8 boys and 1 girl) in 2009. The cases involved threats of sexual violence (13 cases) and 1 actual sexual assault through the use of electrical cables on genitals. The high number of instances of such treatment reported and documented suggests that ill treatment of children is common in the Israeli military justice system. There is evidence that some children do not report incidents of ill treatment while in custody, owing to concerns about repercussions for making such complaints, and doubts about the effectiveness of the complaints process.

125. One case of ill treatment of a Palestinian boy by the Palestinian Preventive Security Force was also reported and documented in 2010. The case refers to an incident involving an alleged association with Hamas. The boy was threatened and beaten for the purposes of obtaining a confession. He was released after having been detained in solitary confinement for eight days after having been denied access to a lawyer or to presentation before a judge.

126. There was an increase in the number of attacks on schools and education facilities by Israeli security forces and settlers in 2010 (20 cases), compared to 2009 (9 cases). These attacks resulted in damage to schools or interruption of education, placing the safety of the children in Gaza and the West Bank at risk. The majority of cases involved the presence of Israeli security forces within school compounds following raids, forceful entry, and search and arrest operations, including the use of tear gas on students. There were also three incidents involving air strikes and shelling by Israeli security forces that resulted in damage to four schools in Gaza, although schools did not appear to have been directly targeted in these incidents. There was also an increasing number of incidents in 2010 in which Palestinian students were prevented from accessing schools and had their safety compromised by Israeli security forces. Thirty-six such incidents were documented in the West Bank in 2010, purportedly involving security measures such as road closures searches, harassment or assaults at checkpoints by Israeli authorities and settlers. In other cases, children were exposed to settler violence as Israeli authorities did not provide military escorts to protect children who pass near historically violent settlements and outposts in the West Bank, particularly Hebron. In this regard, the Israeli authorities have not yet responded to the request of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in February 2009 to investigate the 2008 attack by Israeli settlers of children on their way to the Al-Tuwani School outside Hebron. Furthermore, they have failed to address the broader issue of settler violence against Palestinian children. In addition, the blockade on the Gaza Strip impacts on the availability, accessibility and quality of education in Gaza. Though the situation has improved since the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) commenced building 20 new schools after certain restrictions were lifted, UNRWA was unable to deliver education to a number of Palestinian refugee children owing to a shortage of school space resulting from the restriction on the importation of construction materials to rebuild schools destroyed or damaged during "Operation Cast Lead". Those children are therefore attending Palestinian Authority schools.

127. In 2010, Palestinian armed groups were responsible for eight incidents related to access to education, including two attacks on UNRWA summer schools in Gaza and one incident of a rocket that was fired into Israel and landed near a kindergarten in Ashkelon. Of particular concern was the attack in May on UNRWA summer camps located in Gaza by masked assailants. The attack and intimidation against UNRWA officials, for which no group has claimed responsibility, was apparently intended to have a negative effect on the attendance of the quarter million boys and girls who participated in those summer camps.

128. On 20 June 2010, the Israeli Security Cabinet declared the easing of the Gaza blockade, particularly pertaining to civilian goods and humanitarian access. While this has resulted in some improvement in the entry of construction materials, it amounts to only a fraction of what is needed to meet the humanitarian needs of the population of Gaza. Gaza's health-care system also suffers from a severe lack of adequate equipment and instruments. As a result, patients must seek treatment outside of Gaza. From January to November 2010, while 3,546 out of 3,851 (92 per cent) applications for children who sought medical assistance outside of Gaza were approved, 294 applications were delayed and 11 were denied. Both the delays and denials in processing applications can be life-threatening to child patients who are waiting for urgent medical treatment. Four children, all under the age of 3, died while waiting for the appropriate permits to travel outside of Gaza in 2010.

129. Forced displacement continues to affect the lives of hundreds of Palestinian families. More than 431 Palestinian structures were demolished in 2010 in the West Bank (including Area C and East Jerusalem), including 137 residential structures, leaving homeless at least 594 people, 299 of them children.

### **Developments in Somalia**

130. There has been growing evidence regarding the widespread and systematic recruitment of children in central and southern Somalia, with child recruitment patterns known to be significantly more aggressive on the anti-government elements' side, especially within Al-Shabaab, including the newly merged Hizbul Islam. Partners on the ground consistently reported on the extensive forced recruitment of children by Al-Shabaab, especially in the schools. According to military sources, an estimated 2,000 children were abducted by Al-Shabaab in 2010 for military training in different camps in southern Somalia. An increasingly large number of these children are reportedly used by the insurgent groups to fight against the Government and troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in Mogadishu, and, as a result, many of these children are killed, injured or captured by the armed forces or other armed groups. Further, while the recruitment of girls has been rare and is generally regarded as socially unacceptable, there are documented accounts of girls working for armed groups, particularly for cooking and cleaning. Girls are also brought in to transport detonators, provide logistics support and collect intelligence. Girls are also reported to be increasingly recruited for marriage to fighters. In October, Al-Shabaab summarily executed two teenage girls in Beled Weyne whom they accused of spying for the Transitional Federal Government.

131. Despite its official policy not to recruit children into its national security forces, it is reported that children continue to be associated with the Transitional Federal Government and its allied militia, including Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, with

40 cases documented in 2010. Ensuring that no children are de facto recruited or used remains a challenge, particularly when applied to the integration of allied militia into the Transitional Federal Government armed forces. While some vetting procedures are reportedly being implemented by the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu to ensure that children are not recruited, gaps remain and to date stringent vetting procedures to assess age are being applied only to those recruits who are being trained outside Somalia. Recruits being trained by the Transitional Federal Government inside Somalia and those being integrated into the Government forces from allied militia groups are not subject to the same stringent vetting standards and procedures. The United Nations remains highly concerned with the lack of progress in the area. The Transitional Federal Government has not yet signed the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

132. There were reported cases of children captured by the Government/AMISOM forces on the front line, as well as children who defected, many of whom were recruited from areas other than Mogadishu to fight for the armed insurgent groups. Upon defecting or self-demobilizing, these children find themselves alone in Mogadishu without any family or clan support and exposed to retaliation and re-recruitment. Family tracing and reunification are difficult in the current circumstances and may expose the children and their families to even higher protection threats if they come from areas under the control of insurgent groups. The United Nations recently initiated discussions with AMISOM to address this problem, including through the development of standard operating procedures to ensure that these cases are handled in line with relevant international standards. The Transitional Federal Government also expressed the need for urgent measures and programmes to be established to address the issue of child defectors.

133. There are increasing concerns about the detention of children in the central prison of Mogadishu. For example, between July and October, seven boys were reportedly being detained under different charges, including association with Al-Shabaab. In addition, in Lower Shabelle and Marka, two boys were detained by Al-Shabaab for refusing to join its forces.

134. A total of 222 children were reportedly killed and 592 wounded or maimed in 2010 as a result of being caught in crossfire or mortar shelling during fighting between Transitional Federal Government forces, supported by AMISOM, and armed insurgents, primarily Al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, in and around Mogadishu. The number of child casualties is, however, estimated to be much higher according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. In 2010, out of more than 6,000 patients (compared to 5,000 in 2009 and 2,800 in 2008) admitted to Keysaney and Medina Hospitals, the two main referral hospitals in Mogadishu, approximately 40 per cent were women and children. Of particular concern was the recent increase in the number of civilians, among them many children, being killed or injured owing to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

135. The number of documented cases of sexual violence against children substantially increased in 2010 (462 cases), compared to 2009 (128 cases) in south-central Somalia, Somaliland and Puntland, the majority of which occurred in Somaliland and Puntland IDP settlements. In south-central Somalia, these violations are committed mainly by members of clan-based militia. The continued fighting has rendered women and children more vulnerable to sexual violence because of displacement, destitution, the breakdown of the rule of law and the emergence of

freelance militias, working under informal local authorities, mostly associated with Al-Shabaab. Most at risk are women and girls living on the streets and in open and unprotected IDP settlements such as those in Bossaso, Galkayo and Hargeisa and along the Afgooye corridor. Further, allegations that Al-Shabaab combatants were systematically forcing girls into early marriages were received in October. Two cases perpetrated by the Transitional Federal Government were also documented.

136. Increasingly, schools, educational establishments, teachers and students are being targeted by Al-Shabaab and other militia groups for recruitment and use in the conflict. In June, Al-Shabaab reportedly ordered teachers and school managers in Lower Shabelle to release more than 300 students to be trained, failing which they would be punished. In south-central Somalia, approximately 52 schools suspended operations and activities in May alone owing to growing demands from the militia groups. In addition, several schools were closed, damaged and destroyed, as well as students killed and injured, owing to clashes between armed insurgents and the Transitional Federal Government forces in Mogadishu.

137. As a result of the intensification of the conflict throughout 2010, the humanitarian and security situations have deteriorated further, with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimating that access for aid organizations in southern Somalia was at its lowest point since 2006. The operational environment for the United Nations is extremely restricted as Mogadishu remains inaccessible, except around the airport and the areas controlled by the Transitional Federal Government supported by AMISOM, while access to many southern and central parts of the country remains restricted for United Nations national staff. In 2010, seven international NGOs and one United Nations agency were expelled from south-central Somalia regions. An additional 12 international NGOs in the Lower Juba region suspended their activities in August following a raid by Al-Shabaab into their compounds, affecting approximately 130,000 people requiring humanitarian assistance, particularly children. Local Somali NGOs have been able to continue their work so far without major interruption, although under increasingly difficult conditions.

138. In my annual report on children and armed conflict issued in 2010 (A/64/742-S/2010/181), I raised the concerns about the alleged recruitment of young Kenyan Somali men and boys from North-eastern Province in Kenya, as well as Somali refugees from Dadaab refugee camp, in Kenya, to fight alongside the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia. This concern was raised with the Government of Kenya at the highest levels by the United Nations and other diplomatic missions. As a result, the Government, through its Joint Departmental Committee on Administration and National Security and the Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations, carried out a fact-finding mission to Garissa, Dadaab and Voi, in Kenya, in November 2009. United Nations sources confirmed that a vetting exercise was undertaken and anyone part of the recruitment drive who could not prove being over the age of 18 were removed and returned to their families. The report of the fact-finding mission was presented to the Kenya Parliament on 6 October 2010. It highlighted that young men and boys were susceptible to joining these groups owing to the high levels of poverty and unemployment in the north-eastern region. In addition, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs met with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict during her mission to Kenya and Somalia in November 2010, and reiterated the commitment of the Government that necessary protections and safeguards would be implemented at the border and in and

around refugee camps, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to prevent the recurrence of such activities. The immediate action and vigilance by the Government of Kenya in investigating these allegations of underage recruitment are welcomed.

139. Children associated with piracy continued to be held in prisons in Puntland. During the year, 10 children convicted were released following the overturning of their sentences by the Bossaso Appeals Court. As of December, three children were in remand.

### **Developments in the Sudan**

140. The number of documented cases of child recruitment and use in 2010 decreased compared to 2009; however, the collection of accurate data continued to be seriously hampered by insecurity and fear of reprisals, lack of access to non-government controlled areas, and movement restrictions imposed by the Government. In addition, difficulty in recording new splinter groups, unclear lines of command, extremely mobile groups, renewed clashes between Government forces and armed groups, especially in the last quarter of 2010, also contributed to underreporting. Notwithstanding these challenges, 113 children were confirmed to have been recruited by the following armed forces and groups: Armed Movement of Liberals and Reform (splinter group of JEM and SLA/Abdul Wahid), Border Intelligence Forces, Chadian armed opposition groups, community policing forces, police forces, Popular Defence Forces, SLA/Abu Gasim, SLA/Historical Leadership (splinter group of SLA/Abdul Wahid), SLA/Abdul Wahid, Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed groups. In addition, credible allegations of recruitment and use of children involving more than 150 children by several armed groups in northern and southern Darfur, including SLA/Minni Minawi, SLA/Abdul Wahid, SLA/Historical Leadership, JEM, Central Reserve Police, Border Intelligence Forces, and Chadian armed opposition groups were received by the United Nations. Verification of these cases is ongoing.

141. Within the three States of Darfur, allegations of abduction of children have substantially declined with fewer cases documented in 2010. However, there were continuous allegations of cross-border forced recruitment of children by the Chadian opposition armed groups, JEM and unidentified armed men crossing into Chad and Darfur. UNAMID also documented cases of abductions in non-border regions of Darfur, including that of a girl in Northern Darfur and three boys in Southern Darfur.

142. Ongoing association of children within the ranks of SPLA Division 4 in Duar (Unity State), Division 3 in Wunyik (Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State), Division 5 in Mapel (Western Bahr el-Ghazal State), Division 7 in Upper Nile State, Division 2 in Eastern and Central Equatoria States and Division 8 in Jonglei State were noted in 2010. Further, 42 cases of active child recruitment by SPLA was also confirmed. It has been difficult to determine the exact numbers of children associated with SPLA, given that the children are subject to the constant movement of SPLA troops throughout southern Sudan. Further, in the Transitional Areas, 220 children associated with SPLA in Blue Nile State were verified and registered for demobilization in July, while 8 boys were confirmed to have been recruited by SPLA in Jaw (South Kordofan State) in November. More children are presumed to be present in the ranks of SLA in South Kordofan, although lack of access and

restrictions imposed by the local authorities make it difficult to confirm or verify such allegations. Separately, 25 boys were recruited by the Joint Integrated Units (SPLA and Sudanese Armed Forces) in Wau (Western Bahr el-Ghazal State).

143. Inter-tribal conflicts in Jonglei State and the Equatorias continued to account for the deaths, injuries and abduction of children in 2010; a total of 10 children, including 4 girls, were killed, 2 were injured and 138, including 38 girls, were abducted. During a series of clashes between Murle and Lou-Nuer, the total number of children abducted from both communities reportedly reached as many as 140. In some areas, it was reported that parents took their children into the mountains in an effort to protect them from abduction. Many children remain in the hands of abductors. There has been minimal progress in securing the release of these children, which has been increasingly linked to the outcome of political negotiations between the groups.

144. In Darfur, six children were killed and one was injured as a result of gunshots, grenades or bombs during the year. The violations were attributed to men in uniform or unidentified assailants. The exact number of child casualties from government aerial attacks, during ground fighting between armed groups or during ethnic clashes, could not be determined owing to restrictions and limited access to affected areas. The increase in the number of deaths (8 cases) and injuries (19 cases) of children as a result of unexploded ordnance in 2010 was also of concern.

145. There were verified reports of children being physically abused and ill treated in relation to forced civilian disarmament exercises carried out by SPLA in as many as 10 cattle camps in Southern Sudan. The civilian disarmament exercise is part of the policy of the Government of Southern Sudan for creating an enabling environment for peaceful coexistence of the communities in Southern Sudan. In one incident, approximately 250 children, between the ages of 10 and 17, were separated from the adults, intimidated and beaten in attempts to extract information on the location of their community's arms cache.

146. In 2010, 22 cases of sexual violence against children attributed to members of the military, police personnel, factions of armed groups and militia men in Darfur were documented. As expressed in my report last year (A/64/742-S/2010/181), in most cases, victims and witnesses provide little information on the identity of the alleged perpetrators and the uniforms alone do not always substantiate the alleged perpetrator's affiliation. Monitoring and reporting of this violation remains a challenge as victims, their families and communities are often reluctant to report cases owing to fear of retribution or stigmatization. The Government of the Sudan has asserted that the situation has improved and that it has taken measures to address the concerns as part of due process of law. The Government is encouraged to continue its efforts in this regard and ensure that armed groups also take preventive action against sexual violence.

147. In Southern Sudan, a substantial increase in reported sexual violence and rape cases against girls by SPLA was noted during the year. In two particularly disturbing incidents, 10 girls were raped and sexually assaulted by SPLA soldiers during armed clashes between SPLA and communities in Palal and Tonj (Warrap State) in February; and 23 girls were raped in the Upper Nile State in June and July. Monitoring cases of sexual violence in South Kordofan, Abyei and Blue Nile States remained a challenge as the majority of violations are often not reported to law enforcement or judicial authorities. However, according to the Commissioner of

El Buram locality in South Kordofan State, the local communities are complaining increasingly about sexual violence and the harassment of women and young girls by Sudanese Armed Forces soldiers; the United Nations has not been able to verify this information.

148. The tense security situation and renewed clashes at the end of 2010, attacks against United Nations personnel and assets, and government-imposed restrictions continued to have an impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance for children. Many areas across Darfur remained difficult or impossible to access for humanitarian actors during 2010. Fighting in early 2010 between armed groups and Government forces in Jebel Marra contributed to the displacement of about 100,000 civilians, including children, and led to the suspension of humanitarian activities in February. Although partial access was granted in August and September 2010 for the delivery of essential health and nutrition items, this did not lead to the full restoration of humanitarian assistance in this area. Activities of the polio campaign and the accelerated immunization campaigns for children, for example, were seriously hampered by the lack of access.

149. In Southern Sudan, humanitarian actors have had largely unrestricted access throughout the reporting period, with the exception of a few isolated incidents. However, access in Western Equatoria State is reduced owing to the prevailing insecurity related to repeated attacks by LRA. With regard to the Transitional Areas, access to the northern part of former western Kordofan State has been difficult owing to restrictions by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the National Intelligence and Security Services claiming that it is outside the ceasefire zone, and therefore outside of the mandate of UNMIS. These restrictions have hampered monitoring activities of suspected recruitment and use of children in this area.

150. In September 2010, the Nyala Special Court tried 11 suspects allegedly being affiliated with JEM and accused of attacking a convoy of the Government of the Sudan in Sanyi Afundu, Southern Darfur. Five of the defendants declared their ages to be between 15 and 17. However, the Court recognized the childhood age of only one (age 16), following the opinion of Sudanese medical authorities, and sentenced him to “reform measures for juvenile delinquents” under article 69 of Child Act 2010. The same medical authorities opposed the age declarations of the remaining four and certified their ages to be between 18 and 21. Subsequently, the judge sentenced all four to death by hanging, together with five other adult defendants. The Government of the Sudan has reaffirmed that all necessary legal remedies will be offered to the accused. The United Nations has appealed to the Government of the Sudan to stay the execution of the death sentence, review the cases and take all necessary measures to protect alleged child soldiers from capital punishment in accordance with national and applicable international law. JEM should halt its practice of recruiting and using children and of placing them at risk.

## **B. Information on grave violations against children in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Colombia**

151. The complex humanitarian situation in Colombia is a consequence of a protracted conflict and is aggravated by structural poverty, inequality and the links

between armed groups and illegal activities, including drug production and trafficking, extortion and abduction. Although significant progress has been made by the Government of Colombia in weakening the armed groups, particularly militarily, serious challenges around issues of security and human rights protection remain. In 2010, clashes intensified in departments such as Arauca, Cauca, Córdoba, Meta, Nariño and Norte de Santander, especially affecting children. Persons of African descent and indigenous communities have been particularly vulnerable. Another major consequence of the conflict is the continued displacement of the population; according to official Government information, as at September 2010 there were 61,047 new internally displaced persons, of which 30,488 were children (15,644 boys and 14,844 girls). Non-governmental sources estimate that the number of IDPs is much larger.

152. In July 2010, the Colombian National Economic and Social Policy Council published a document designed to coordinate Government strategies aimed at preventing the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. Government programmes and activities such as the “Protection of Children and Adolescents Demobilized from Armed Groups Operating outside the Law”, the Mine Action Programme and the Inter-agency Recruitment Prevention Commission continued under the new Government. Further, the Government initiated a process to actively locate children who informally left armed groups and offer them the necessary protection and the same benefits as offered to those demobilized under the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975). Further, a victims law, which, inter alia, provides for the protection of children and adolescents, is under consideration by Parliament. Although progress has been made by the Government of Colombia, combating impunity for these serious violations remains a challenge of paramount importance.

153. Widespread and systematic recruitment and use of children by armed groups in Colombia continued during the reporting period. Although the actual scale and scope of this violation remains unknown, in 2010, the country task force on monitoring and reporting received information on child recruitment from 19 of the 32 departments in Colombia. In addition, the early warning system established by the Ombudsman, which monitors and flags imminent risks of violations of human rights against civilian populations, including children, identified 43 risk situations in 19 departments, including risks related to child recruitment.

154. FARC-EP and ELN continued to recruit and use children, including for direct participation in hostilities against Government forces. In February, FARC-EP convened a community meeting in Antioquia to obtain a headcount of children in a rural area of the department. It also announced that children above the age of 8 would be recruited. In one characteristic use of children, a child was used by FARC-EP to carry out an attack against a police station using explosives. The explosives were attached to the child and activated as he approached the police station, killing him instantly.

155. Further, according to the Ombudsman office, during 2010, the armed groups Águilas Negras, Ejército revolucionario popular anticomunista de Colombia, Los Rastrojos, Los Paisas and Los Urabeños continued recruiting and using children. The Ombudsman office also detected situations where children were used for intelligence purposes and sexual exploitation in Córdoba and Chocó. These groups, which emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, do not possess a homogenous motivation, structure and modus



operandi. While many are dedicated to common criminal activities, others operate in a manner similar to that of the former paramilitary organizations. Some of the groups have a military structure and chain of command and are capable of exercising territorial control and sustaining military-type operations. Some of these groups have demonstrated their capacity to mutate and, in some instances, to operate jointly. The Government considers all these groups to be criminal gangs.

156. The national armed forces continued to use children for intelligence purposes, in violation of the Code on Children and Adolescents (Law No. 1098) and directives by the Ministry of National Defence. In some instances, children who were separated from armed groups were questioned by members of the security forces to gather intelligence on the armed group they belonged to. Some of those children were held for extended periods in the custody of military forces, longer than permitted by law, instead of being handed over to child protection actors. Between May and June, in Valle del Cauca, members of the Marines sought information about the guerrillas by involving children in the region. In August, in Chocó, national army personnel allegedly questioned four children between the ages of 13 and 16 who had demobilized from ELN to obtain military intelligence. The national armed forces continued to use children in civil-military activities. For instance, in September, children in an indigenous reserve in Valle del Cauca participated in civil-military activities and interacted with the soldiers of the Psychological Operations Task Force. Such activities, when undertaken in conflict-affected areas, may put children at risk and expose them to retaliation by members of armed groups.

157. Children were victims of indiscriminate attacks carried out by armed groups, or as a result of being caught in the crossfire between illegal armed groups or between armed groups and national security forces in 2010. The deaths of children in combat were also reported. Further, according to official sources, 2 girls and 16 boys were injured by landmines between January and November 2010. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified that 11 children were killed or injured during the same period in Arauca and Antioquia departments alone.

158. During the year, there were massacres and killings, including of children by armed groups considered by the Government to be criminal gangs. Between January and November, 10 massacres were reported in Córdoba. Among the victims, nine were children between the ages of 13 and 17. These cases were attributed to members of Los Rastrojos and other groups. Los Rastrojos is also responsible for killing two boys and a girl in April 2010 in Córdoba department, and for killing a five-member family in Cauca department, including two children aged 2 and 8, in the same month. Such violence has resulted in the forced displacement of populations, including women and children.

159. Cases of extrajudicial executions involving children persisted in 2010 despite the Government's zero tolerance policy for human rights violations and measures introduced by the Ministry of Defence. As for cases of enforced disappearances of children during armed conflict, it has not been possible to determine the total number to date, as official figures on missing persons are not disaggregated by age of the victims.

160. Of particular concern is the commission by the armed groups of grave forms of sexual violence against recruited girls. This phenomenon remains vastly underreported and unnoticed. Girls who are recruited or associated with armed

groups are required to have sexual relations with adults at an early age and are forced to abort if they become pregnant. They are also forced to use methods of contraception that are often inadequate and harmful to their health. Separately, according to the Inter-institutional Committee for Justice and Peace, 677 cases of gender-based violence by former members of Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, including against children, were documented between 2006 and December 2010 within the framework of the Justice and Peace Law. However, no progress has been made in following up investigations and convictions.

161. Reports have also been received concerning cases of rape and other sexual violence cases against children involving members of the armed forces. All the victims were girls, including as young as 2 years old. However, difficulties persisted in obtaining information on sexual violence against children, as many victims failed to report abuses owing to fear of reprisals by perpetrators or of re-victimization. A lack of adequate institutional response, lack of confidence in the administration of justice and lack of information on care and complaint procedures also contributed to the paucity of information on cases.

162. Serious concerns continued over the occupation of schools by the national security forces in the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Cordoba, and Norte de Santander. The presence of national security forces in or near schools increased the risks of schools being attacked by armed groups, placing the lives of children and teachers in danger.

163. The armed groups have also been reported to occupy schools. Schools were damaged as a result of hostilities and anti-personnel mines and explosive devices planted by FARC. In addition, schools and students were targeted by armed groups for recruitment and use in the conflict.

164. According to the country task force on monitoring and reporting, restrictions on humanitarian access owing to actions of parties to the conflict had seriously jeopardized the delivery of humanitarian assistance, affecting children in particular. The movement of populations in several areas was severely restricted owing to armed confrontations between armed groups and the national armed forces and the establishment of their checkpoints, thus limiting their access to essential food items, health care, education and other basic services. Access of humanitarian actors to those populations was also severely hampered. Areas particularly affected included the departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Caquetá, Guaviare, Huila, Meta Córdoba, Nariño and Norte de Santander.

### **Developments in India**

165. Reports of recruitment and use of children by the Maoist armed groups, also known as the Naxalites, especially in some districts in Chhattisgarh State, were received by the United Nations. While noting the absence of reliable data to determine the number of children affected, the Indian National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, in its policy document of March 2010, pointed to the recruitment and use of children by the Naxalites and Salwa Judum. It also reported that children were being killed and maimed as a direct result of violence. The National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights also highlighted that schools had been targeted and destroyed by Naxalites. Separately, the occupation of schools by security forces was also reported in my last annual report (A/64/742-S/2010/181). On 18 November 2010, the Supreme Court expressed strong

displeasure over the continued occupation of school buildings in Chhattisgarh by security forces. On 18 January 2011, the Supreme Court ordered the Chhattisgarh government to vacate security forces from all educational institutions within four months.

166. The Government of India strongly condemns the acts of the Naxalites. The Government, together with concerned state government authorities, has undertaken specific actions, including awareness-raising programmes through the media, establishing new schools under its programme for universal elementary education (*sarva shiksha abhiyan*) in all villages and ashram schools, and strengthening its integrated child development programme and pre-school education centres in all areas. In November, the Government of India launched a pilot programme (the *Bal Bandhu* scheme) to protect the rights of children in Naxal-affected areas, to be implemented by the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights in 10 districts of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. The programme has protection, health, nutrition, sanitation, education and safety components. The Government also began efforts to bring development services to affected areas, such as the integrated action plan for 60 Naxal-affected districts. The plan aimed to effect governance reforms and devolve power to grass-root institutions in selected districts over the coming three years.

#### **Developments in Pakistan**

167. In 2010, Pakistan continued to experience attacks by armed groups influenced by and/or associated with Taliban or Al-Qaida, including Tehrik-i-Taliban, on Government institutions and civilians, which escalated and expanded beyond Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to several major urban centres. Sectarian violence also continued as attacks by armed groups, including the Taliban and Lashkar i Jhangvi, were launched mainly against Shiite processions and mosques. Children have been used by these armed groups to carry out suicide attacks. In one such incident on 25 January 2011, reported by the Government, a teenage suicide bomber carried out an attack near a Shiite procession in Lahore, killing himself and 9 others, and injuring a further 50 people, including several children. In another incident on 10 February 2011, a boy in a school uniform blew himself up at a Pakistani army recruitment centre in the north-western town of Mardan, killing himself and 20 cadets. The Taliban claimed responsibility for those attacks. Further, according to reliable sources, an increasing number of children were allegedly abducted by armed groups throughout the country in 2010.

168. Children also suffered the effects of cross-border recruitment related to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. Although there is no systematic monitoring of cases by the United Nations in Pakistan, the country task force on monitoring and reporting in Afghanistan has documented and verified cases of Afghan children recruited and trained in Pakistan by armed groups, including the Taliban. The Malakand-based Sabaoon Academy continued to provide rehabilitation and reintegration support to 150 children who were recruited by the Taliban and other non-State armed groups in Swat Valley and taken into custody by the Pakistan armed forces.

169. Children were victims of indiscriminate attacks in 2010, including suicide bombings, although there were no official figures on the number of children killed

or injured. In two separate incidents reported by the media, children were among the casualties in bomb attacks on a Shiite mosque in November 2010; and on a Shiite procession in Quetta, Balochistan, in September 2010. Lashkar i Jhangvi reportedly claimed responsibility for the latter incident.

170. Reports of drone attacks continued to be reported in FATA in 2010, but no data is available on the number of children killed or injured in those attacks. In general, the number of civilians killed is highly contested. The United Nations does not have access to these sites to undertake any independent verification.

171. Civilian casualties as a result of landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices became a serious concern in Pakistan during 2010. Of the 268 reported incidents, 31 children were injured by these devices. The majority of the reported incidents occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or FATA, with the remainder occurring in Balochistan.

172. During the year, schools continued to be a target for bomb attacks by armed groups, including the Taliban, who are opposed to secular education and girls' education. In Malakand, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, 273 schools were destroyed and 367 were damaged by bomb attacks, according to the provincial Minister for Education. An additional 70 schools were destroyed or damaged in other affected provinces. In one particular attack in February 2010, an improvised explosive device targeted at a truck carrying Pakistani soldiers travelling to the inauguration of Koto Girls High School in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa detonated near the school, destroying it, which resulted in the deaths of three schoolgirls and the injury of 63 others. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan reportedly claimed responsibility.

173. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Ordinance, which is aimed at addressing legal provisions to protect children from abuse, exploitation, recruitment and other types of violations of their rights, was approved by the Provincial Assembly in 2010. The Government of Pakistan has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

### **Developments in the Philippines**

174. There was an increase in the recorded number of cases of child recruitment and use by armed groups in 2010 (24 children), compared to 2009 (6 children). Of the seven recorded incidents attributed to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the country task force on monitoring and reporting was able to verify four incidents involving eight children carrying automatic weapons and performing military functions in MILF areas of Central Mindanao. Testimony from a 15-year-old child soldier in Maguindanao province confirmed that children, including girls, are being trained by MILF. The task force also continues to receive credible reports of children associated with the New People's Army (NPA) surrendering to the police and Armed Forces of the Philippines. The presence of children among the ranks of Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in Sulu and Basilan was also reported by former captives of ASG, although these allegations could not be verified owing to security constraints. The task force verified two cases of children recruited by an armed group called the Black Fighters in North Cotabato. After participating in a series of attacks, including extrajudicial killings, the boys surrendered to police and gave detailed accounts of the group's activities. Several members of the Black Fighters are ex-NPA combatants. The group operates in North Cotabato Province, sometimes reinforcing Government security forces in their operations.

175. Reports indicate that at the local levels, members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines continued to use children for military purposes. A common pattern observed involved children being used in counter-insurgency operations, and often in pursuit of NPA rebels in remote areas of the country. The counter-insurgency strategy, “Oplan Bantay Laya” (Operation Freedom Watch), permits and encourages soldiers to engage with civilians, including children, for military purposes, using them as informants, guides and porters. Three cases involving boys, aged 13, 15 and 16 years old, were verified in 2010. Similarly, the country task force on monitoring and reporting recorded numerous allegations of recruitment and use of children by paramilitary groups, particularly the Citizens’ Armed Forces Geographical Unit, who reportedly pressure and coerce children to join their ranks. The Units are locally recruited from their community and their military operations are confined to the municipality where they are formed. They are under the command structure of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, but are loosely supervised.

176. The Armed Forces of the Philippines continued to detain children. Children in detention reported being physically abused, interrogated under extreme duress, subject to ill treatment and subjected to acts tantamount to torture to extract information on insurgents. Four incidents involving four girls and one boy were verified and involved the 11th, 34th, 25th, 54th infantry Battalions of the Philippine army (IBPA). Such incidents also led to the displacement of families for fear of being targeted as alleged members of NPA.

177. While there was a decline in the number of armed encounters between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and MILF in 2010, fighting with other non-State armed actors remained relatively unchanged. An increase in the number of casualties of children in 2010 was documented: 38 children, including 8 girls, were reportedly killed and 40, including 16 girls, reportedly maimed; in 2009, 12 children were killed and 40 injured. Of those, verified incidents implicated NPA, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and private militias of local politicians. The perpetrators were not identified in 13 incidents of killing and 10 incidents of maiming.

178. There has been an upward trend in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals and their personnel in 2010. This may be partially attributed to the use of schools as polling stations during the May and October elections. Forty-one incidents were recorded, compared to 10 in 2009. Of those, 14 were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 4 to NPA, 1 to MILF, 2 to ASG, 6 to private militias of local politicians, and 14 to unidentified perpetrators. Schools have been targets of improvised explosive device attacks and burning. In addition, teachers are increasingly targeted; 11 teachers were reportedly killed during the reporting period.

179. There has also been a rising trend of the occupation of schools by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Citizens’ Armed Forces Geographical Unit in 2010, in contravention of national legislation prohibiting such practice. In remote communities across the country, the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Unit have been using functioning public school buildings as barracks and command centres, including for storing weapons and ammunition. In some situations, the soldiers were observed approaching children, questioning them and allowing them to handle weapons.

### **Developments in the southern border provinces of Thailand**

180. Reports of child casualties owing to the unrest and violence in the southern border provinces remained a concern in 2010, although exact figures are not available. According to information received, many instances of death and injury of children are due to explosive devices in public spaces or indiscriminate shootings by unidentified armed perpetrators. This covers the far south provinces (Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat) and a part of Songkhla Province.

181. There has been a decline in the number of reported attacks against schools in 2010 (5 attacks), compared to the previous two years. Similarly, a decline in the number of attacks on students and teachers was recorded in 2010 (12 teachers and education personnel killed and 6 injured and 2 students killed and 5 injured). According to the Royal Thai Government, this was owing mainly to security measures implemented by the Government, including the provision of special escorts for children and teachers to and from schools, and to local community cooperation. These efforts aim at enhancing local solidarity and information sharing among heads of schools, religious teachers, government officials and students, as well as raising public awareness of the legal consequences of committing such crimes against students and teachers.

182. The United Nations has received information that points to the alleged involvement of children in activities of non-State armed groups and village defence volunteers (Chor Ror Bor). However, the United Nations country team in Thailand has informed my Special Representative that it is not in a position to monitor, report or verify these allegations, based on its activities in the area. The Royal Thai Government issued, in November 2009, a clear directive to the Governors of the southern border provinces prohibiting the recruitment of children under the age of 18, and stated that no children were associated with the village defence volunteers.

183. The Royal Thai Government has stated that allegations reported in my previous reports of children detained in police and army interviewing centres for their suspected association with armed groups had been addressed. According to the Government, child suspects are detained in these centres through a court order, and interviews are conducted in accordance with international standards. The Government also stated that there had been no cases of child detention in those centres since 2009, though the United Nations in Thailand is not in a position to verify this, despite visits to these centres. On 28 December 2010, the Cabinet lifted the state of emergency in the Mae Lan District of Pattani Province as a result of a systematic review of the Emergency Decree and improvement in the security in the area.

### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

184. Child recruitment has come to an end in Sri Lanka, with the last case reported in October 2009. This is owing both to the defeat and disbanding of LTTE, responsible for most of the child recruitment cases reported in Sri Lanka, and the commitments of the Government of Sri Lanka and TMVP to release children recruited previously by TMVP. Nevertheless, the whereabouts of some children recruited by armed groups remain unknown, including some who are now adults. With regard to LTTE, as at the end of December 2010, the number of persons unaccounted for was 1,373, including 15 who are still children. With regard to TMVP, the total number of pending cases is 13 boys, including 5 who were under

the age of 18 years at the time of the signature of the TMVP action plan. On 30 August 2010, upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Child Protection Authority and its police section, an investigation was initiated to establish the whereabouts of the five boys who remain associated with TMVP (former elements of Karuna faction, under the command of Iniya Barrathi). The National Child Protection Authority investigation, completed on 14 January 2011, could not ascertain the whereabouts of these missing persons. This is the case despite the fact that, according to the report of the Special Envoy of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on his mission to Sri Lanka in February 2008, the abductions by the then Karuna faction took place exclusively in government-controlled areas. The report pointed to the fact that these children spent time in one of several camps of the then Karuna faction near the town of Welikanda (Polonnaruwa district), located in a government-controlled area. The Authority concluded with a recommendation to further investigate on the basis of information provided by families of the missing boys, as well as by a former LTTE member who was reportedly responsible for child abduction and recruitment in the past. The report of the National Child Protection Authority also recommended death certificates be issued for these persons, which, in accordance with Sri Lankan law, can be done once a person has been missing for over seven years. However, these 13 boys were abducted and last seen between 2006 and 2009, which is at most five years ago. It is hoped that Parliamentary Bill No. 52, which allows registration of death after one year owing to terrorist or subversive activities, would not prevent further investigations into these cases. In addition, the National Child Protection Authority investigation did not make any reference to Iniya Barrathi or his involvement in the recruitment or abduction of the missing persons. At the time of writing, no prosecution against persons allegedly responsible for child recruitment has been initiated, and repeated appeals to open a case against Iniya Barrathi for child recruitment by the United Nations country team and the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict have not been actioned.

185. In 2010, 28 incidents related to mine and explosive remnants of war were recorded, killing 5 children and injuring 16, including 5 girls (compared to 12 child casualties in 2009). Nevertheless, the casualty rate remains relatively low, especially in the light of the high level of contamination in returnee areas. The presence of approximately 585 suspicious items were reported by communities, which were subsequently removed by demining agencies during the reporting period.

186. There were allegations of sexual violence across the four districts in the north (Killinochchi, Mullativu, Vavuniya and Mannar) among the displaced communities. Women and girls have reported lack of safety owing to the presence of members of the Sri Lankan Army or local officials, some of whom have been reported to have returned to the communities at night wearing civilian clothes and requesting sexual favours. However, protection monitoring and participatory assessments suggest that incidents of sexual violence remain underreported for fear of retribution by perpetrators.

187. The situation of schools that were occupied and used by the Sri Lanka security forces improved in 2010, although a number of schools remain affected. The schools are used for a variety of purposes, such as barracks for the Sri Lanka security forces, as transit sites for displaced persons who have left the IDP camps but cannot yet return to their places of origin (mostly owing to the presence of mines and explosive remnants of war), or to detain adult “separates” (persons identified by the Sri

Lanka security forces as formerly associated with LTTE but not formally charged). Sustained advocacy was undertaken with the relevant local and national military and civilian authorities to resolve this issue, and the Government has made repeated commitments to resolve the situation.

188. Access for humanitarian partners is progressively improving, although difficulties continued to be experienced on several occasions. In particular, the strict implementation of Ministry of Defence orders requiring clearances to access conflict-affected areas across the Northern Province for all United Nations agencies, international organizations and international and national NGOs that was implemented in June 2010 delayed implementation of some projects in the region. Following engagement, including with the Presidential Task Force for Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province, the United Nations is now in possession of clearance for six months at a time, and NGOs have obtained permissions for varying durations. However, this process has resulted in delays and disruption in the implementation of some activities at a critical time of the return process of displaced persons, and has had a direct impact on child protection projects. The approval of most child protection projects, including support to communities to prevent, identify and respond to vulnerabilities and issues affecting children, continues to be problematic. On a positive note, following discussions on the Government-led Joint Plan for Assistance for the Northern Province for 2011, child protection activities were included as a priority.

189. The Government established a family tracing and reunification unit for unaccompanied and separated children in Vavuniya (Northern Province) on 22 December 2009. As at the end of December 2010, 662 requests for tracing missing children (including 293 girls) had been filed by parents and families, 21 of which have been reunified and 32 are in the process of reunification. The verification of an additional number of cases is in progress. In 2010, the unit also developed a plan to undertake tracing activities in hospitals, children homes and police posts across Sri Lanka.

#### **Developments in Uganda/regional impact of the Lord's Resistance Army on children**

190. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting continued its onsite visits of Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) facilities to verify the implementation of its recruitment policies and ensure compliance in ending child recruitment and use, in line with the action plan regarding children associated with armed forces signed between the Government of Uganda and the United Nations in August 2007. There were no cases of recruitment and use of children by UPDF or the local defence units in 2010.

191. LRA continued to commit violations against children outside Uganda, in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Despite repeated calls by the international community to LRA to unconditionally release children in its ranks, no progress has been made to date towards such release.

192. In the south-east, particularly in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures and parts of Haute-Kotto prefecture of the Central African Republic, 138 Central African children were abducted by LRA. In 2010, 12 children, including 4 girls (one of them with a baby born in captivity), who escaped from LRA were repatriated to the



Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda and reunified with their families with the assistance of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Multiple attacks by LRA on the civilian population during the reporting period, which resulted in the deaths and injury of children, were documented.

193. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 49 children were reportedly abducted, recruited and used by LRA in 2010. An additional 233 cases of child abduction by LRA that occurred prior to 2010 were documented as a result of gaining access to zones not previously accessible in Orientale Province. Further, there was an increase in the number of children who escaped from LRA in 2010 (282 children: 146 boys and 136 girls, among which one was from Central Africa and two were from the Sudan), compared to 2008 and 2009, which was partly a result of heightened military operations against LRA during that period. Also, in 2010 only 47 children who were separated from LRA claimed to have been used as combatants, while 244 reported that they were used for forced labour, as opposed to 2009, when the majority of children abducted were reportedly used as combatants. In addition, 96 children reported that they had been victims of sexual exploitation.

194. In Western Equatoria State of Southern Sudan, 27 children, including 21 girls, were abducted by LRA in 2010. Two Sudanese children who returned from LRA captivity had babies. In addition, incidents of LRA attacks resulted in the confirmed killing of two children and the wounding of one child. Nine girls were raped or sexually abused during captivity. A total of 24 children, including 2 Congolese boys, were rescued by SPLA and UPDF during military operations in 2010.

195. Several child protection concerns that pertain to UPDF military offensives against LRA in neighbouring countries (see A/64/742-S/2010/181), in particular with regard to the repatriation of Ugandan children and women rescued or escaped from LRA to Uganda were raised by the United Nations with the Government of Uganda. These concerns were reiterated by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict during her meeting with the Uganda Chief of Defence Forces, General Aronda Nyakayirima, during her visit to Uganda in May 2010. As a result, it was agreed that the United Nations would draft standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children and vulnerable women separated from LRA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and the Central African Republic. The draft standard operating procedures were shared with UPDF in September, but the document had not been endorsed at the time of writing the present report. In 2010, the majority (77 per cent) of children and young mothers formerly associated with LRA were repatriated to Uganda through the Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence or through UPDF child protection units, instead of being handed over immediately to appropriate civilian child protection actors. In addition, according to testimonies given by two children, some children stayed for more than two months with UPDF/Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence before being handed over to child protection agencies.

196. In Southern Sudan, repatriation and reintegration activities to support children abducted by LRA are being implemented by the Ministries of Social Development in each State. The support includes the repatriation of children back to their home communities in neighbouring States and border countries, interim care, trauma counselling, family tracing and reunification with families. However, the scope of such activities and the capacity of the United Nations to support the Ministries remains limited owing to funding shortages. There is an urgent need for increased

institutional and human resource capacity to provide these children with psychosocial rehabilitation programmes.

### **Developments in Yemen**

197. The signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Yemen and the Al-Houthi armed group in February 2010 resulted in the de-escalation of the conflict in Yemen, with only sporadic fighting between the parties during the reporting period. Despite the ceasefire and ongoing peace negotiations, 20 per cent of Al-Houthi and 15 per cent of the tribal militia affiliated with the Government, Al-Jaysh Al-Sha'bi, are children. A United Nations partner observed that 75 children have engaged in tribal conflicts in Al-Jawf Governorate and 123 children in Sa'ada Governorate. In the northern governorates, 90 caregivers reported that at least one of their children had participated in the armed conflict. Children have been observed undertaking security functions for both the pro-Government militia and Al-Houthi. It has been reported that boys are mostly used by Al-Houthi armed groups and pro-Government militia in combat and logistical roles and girls in support roles (including food preparation, gathering military intelligence and carrying detonators) and are trained on how to use weapons. Children reportedly joined Al-Houthi and pro-Government militia for ideological, political and/or economic reasons, and allegations of recruitment by forced marriage of girls to members of Al-Houthi and pro-Government militias were received. Fifty-five children reported that they were approached by Al-Houthi to join the armed group. In 2010, the media reported that two child recruits of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, including an Iraqi and a German national, were tried by the Special Criminal Court on charges for planning attacks in Yemen. No further information is available on the recruitment and use of children by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

198. The Government has detained children in prisons for their association with Al-Houthi during the six cycles of conflict. During the reporting period, the Government released 34 children from detention, of whom 31 were released as part of the ongoing peace negotiations. At the time of writing, the United Nations did not have access to these children, and therefore has not been able to verify the total number of children detained or released. In addition, there is lack of clarity on the basis of detention of the children.

199. A total of 42 reports of children killed and 55 reports of children injured were received, allegedly a direct result of the fighting between Al-Houthi and pro-Government militia. Additionally, 34 children were killed and 24 sustained serious injuries from explosive remnants of war throughout Yemen in 2010.

200. Credible sources reported that at the end of 2010, some 43 per cent of schools in Sa'ada Governorate were partially or completely destroyed owing to mortar shelling and crossfire during clashes between parties to the conflict. In two separate incidents, unexploded ordnance were sighted in schools in Malaheed in Sa'ada Governorate, and three bombs were found in a girls' school in Aden Governorate.

201. Over 80 per cent of the health-care facilities was either damaged or lost in Sa'ada Governorate as a result of the conflict, which has continued to seriously affect the provision of health care to the community, including to children. In this governorate alone, approximately 35 per cent of health-care structures were partially or completely destroyed owing to mortar shelling and crossfire during clashes between parties to the conflict, and most of the health workforce has migrated

outside the governorate. On 28 November, AQAP kidnapped the Director of Al-Salam Hospital in Sa'ada, which resulted in the closure of the hospital for two days. The hospital had been admitting around 3,000 patients a day.

202. Access by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to conflict-affected populations in the Sa'ada and Al-Jawf Governorates was problematic during the reporting period, with the Government frequently denying permission for access to humanitarian missions, and, when granted, Government guards refusing passage to United Nations staff and aid convoys at checkpoints on multiple occasions. Tribal groups have also stopped humanitarian missions at checkpoints. Tribal groups and Al-Houthi have looted food and educational supplies en route to these areas and from warehouses. The denial of humanitarian access, combined with extremely high levels of poverty and a lack of health and nutrition services, has had significant consequences for the well-being of children in conflict-affected governorates in Yemen, with a total of 11,931 children found in western districts of Sa'ada Governorate to be suffering from global acute malnutrition.

## **V. Information on progress made in follow-up to specific requests by the Security Council**

### **A. Action plan templates and guidance**

203. The Office of my Special Representative, in close consultation with partners, including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF, developed guidance on resolution 1882 (2009) and subsequent action plans, as requested by the Security Council. These action plans will be implemented in the field in the coming months in situations of concern where parties have been listed in my last report on children and armed conflict (A/64/742-S/2010/181) for the killing and maiming of children and/or for sexual violence against children. A similar process is currently in place to ensure updated guidance on the recruitment and use of children that would take into consideration best practices since the adoption of resolution 1539 (2004).

### **B. Update on Security Council resolutions 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009) and 1960 (2010)**

204. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is currently consulting closely with my Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict and other partners on ways to coordinate their work on monitoring and reporting on sexual violence and the listing and de-listing of parties. As requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1960 (2010), such arrangements will retain the integrity of the children and armed conflict monitoring and reporting mechanism. Field partners have also expressed the need to retain the separate focus of each mandate. Discussions are ongoing on increased collaboration at Headquarters and field levels to enhance prevention and response activities on sexual violence. This includes the possibility of working towards a common system of information gathering on the area where the two mandates overlap.

### **C. Communication with sanctions Committees**

205. The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the first time invited my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to brief the Committee in May 2010. As a result, several individuals were included on the Committee's list of individuals and entities against whom targeted measures will be imposed on the basis of verified information regarding, inter alia, their recruitment and use of children. Further, on 2 December, the Security Council imposed sanctions on Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo Colonel Innocent Zimurinda for grave violations against children, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, sexual violations and denial of humanitarian access.

206. It will be important to build on the precedent set in the context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Possibilities should also be explored for a similar focus on grave child rights violations by other thematic committees. It is also important to consider ways by which sanctions may be imposed in contexts where there are no existing Security Council sanctions Committees.

### **D. United Nations regional strategy on the protection of children affected by LRA**

207. Following the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group concerning the situation in Uganda of June 2010 and the request of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to strengthen cross-border reporting on the effects of LRA on children, a joint meeting of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNICEF and the Office of my Special Representative took place in January 2011 to finalize modalities for such reporting and identify reporting focal points throughout the region. From its office in Uganda, UNICEF, on behalf of the country task force on monitoring and reporting, will coordinate joint reporting from country task forces in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. All relevant departments and agencies, including military advisers and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration specialists will contribute to the monitoring and reporting arrangements.

### **E. Security Council Working Group visit to Nepal**

208. The Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict, led by the Mexican Chair, visited Nepal from 21 to 26 November 2010, at the invitation of the Government of Nepal. The purpose of the visit was to follow up on the action plan of December 2009 signed by the UCPN-M, the Government of Nepal and the United Nations to separate and reintegrate minors associated with the UCPN-M; assess remaining challenges and issues for monitoring and reporting under resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), with special attention to the Terai region; and interact and obtain first-hand information on the situation of children affected by the conflict in Nepal. The Working Group was able to meet with senior Government officials, Maoist leadership and the United Nations, its partners and children themselves.

209. A number of commitments were made to the Working Group Chair and delegation by the Government of Nepal and UCPN-M. The Prime Minister of Nepal indicated his appreciation for the working methods of the Working Group and identified the plan of action as a key step in the fulfilment of the Nepal peace process. The Nepal army committed itself to increasing the training of its personnel on the protection of children in line with United Nations peacekeeping policy. UCPN-M Chair Dahal agreed to significantly strengthen coordination with the United Nations monitoring team in order to address the remaining challenges in fulfilling the action plan. On behalf of the Government, the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction also committed to approve and implement the National Plan of Action for Reintegration of Children Affected by Conflict. The delegation was also briefed on the concerns of key partners, specifically on the protection of children in the Terai region and the longer-term rehabilitation needs of the thousands of children associated with armed groups or otherwise affected by the conflict.

#### **F. Provision of administrative and substantive support to the Security Council Working Group**

210. In response to the call of the Security Council in its resolution 1882 (2009), and presidential statements (S/PRST/2010/10, S/PRST/2009/9 and S/PRST/2008/28), a working arrangement is now in place within the Secretariat to provide additional administrative and substantive support for the Council's Working Group on children and armed conflict. This arrangement was established within existing resources, and I hope it will facilitate the work of this subsidiary organ in meeting the expectations of the Council.

### **VI. Attacks on schools and hospitals**

211. As evidenced in this and previous reports, attacks against schools are a significant concern and a growing trend. The infrastructure of schools have been physically destroyed by armed actors, and students and education personnel have been attacked, threatened or intimidated. In some situations, girls and girls' schools have been specifically targeted. The use of schools by armed elements has, in certain circumstances, compromised the civilian nature of schools and put students at risk.

212. Hospitals have also borne the brunt of conflicts around the world, with physical attacks or threats of attacks on personnel or infrastructure leading to the disruption of the delivery of health services and/or the closure of hospitals. Looting of medical equipment by parties to conflict has also been documented. Access to medical facilities has also been an issue in a number of conflicts, with children and other vulnerable populations being denied access through restriction of access or intimidation by parties to conflict.

### **VII. Recommendations**

213. I am concerned by the increasing trend of attacks against schools and hospitals, and I encourage the Security Council to further ensure that such facilities remain protected, including by calling on all parties to conflict to respect and take

all possible measures to protect these crucial institutions and their personnel (and, in the case of schools, their students) and to ensure the functioning of schools and hospitals. Special attention should be paid to the protection of girls' access to schools and hospitals, given the increasing targeting of such facilities in some countries.

214. While acknowledging that equal weight should be given to all grave violations against children, and taking into account the ever-increasing need to protect schools and hospitals, as noted in the present and previous reports, it is recommended that the Security Council consider expanding the gateway to the annexes of my report to include parties that attack schools and/or hospitals.

215. I welcome the signing of action plans by SLA-Free Will and SLA/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim) in the Sudan and the Afghan National Security Forces, as well as the progress made by parties in releasing children, and in addressing impunity for perpetrators, through investigations and prosecution. I strongly urge parties who have been listed in my previous reports for recruitment and/or use of children, killing and/or maiming of children and/or sexual violence against children who have not concluded action plans to do so without delay, in conjunction with United Nations country task forces.

216. I encourage concerned Member States to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure broad and effective protection for children, including for purposes of concluding action plans in accordance Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). Such contact will not prejudice the political or legal status of those non-State actors.

217. The Security Council is encouraged to continue considering the application of targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children who are listed in my annual reports. These measures include designating child protection criteria in the renewal or establishment of mandates of relevant sanctions Committees; requesting specific child protection expertise in its expert groups; and including systematic information on violations against children in its reports, recommendations and referral of recommendations of its Working Group on children and armed conflict to relevant sanctions Committees; and, when appropriate, seeking the expert advice of my Special Representative.

218. I urge the Security Council to ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as Special Political Missions and peacebuilding missions. The Security Council should furthermore ensure that the mandate is appropriately resourced.

219. I further call on the Security Council to strongly encourage troop- and police-contributing countries to include child protection in their predeployment training.

220. Reports of child casualties in the course of military operations continue to be of concern, and I remind all parties to conflict and mandated international forces of their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law. I strongly urge them to ensure that they continuously review tactical directives to ensure that children are not harmed.

221. The detention of children on grounds of association with armed groups, including threats of violence against or ill treatment of children for intelligence-

gathering purposes, is a growing trend, and I would invite the interested authorities to work with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to devise appropriate measures to better protect these children.

222. Sexual violence against children in conflict remains a growing concern. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict will continue to work closely with my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and other parts of the United Nations system and its partners to ensure the swift implementation of the monitoring and reporting arrangements under Security Council resolutions 1882 (2009) and 1960 (2010), and to engage with the broad spectrum of partners working on child protection and sexual violence to ensure adequate protection for girls and boys.

223. I urge the donor community to address, as a matter of priority, the funding gaps for the implementation of action plans and sustainable long-term reintegration needs. I further encourage the donor community to ensure adequate resourcing for the implementation of monitoring, reporting and response in monitoring and reporting mechanism-implementing countries.

224. I welcome the universal ratification campaign of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to encourage Member States that have not done so to sign and ratify or accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 years of age into armed forces or armed groups and their use in hostilities, taking measures to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and submitting timely reports under the Optional Protocol to the Committee.

## **VIII. Lists in annexes to the report<sup>6</sup>**

225. The present report contains two annexes.<sup>7</sup> Annex I contains a list of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II contains a list of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other grave violations and abuses committed against children.

226. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In that regard, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

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<sup>6</sup> Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), the present report is guided by criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence; reference to a situation of concern is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

<sup>7</sup> The parties are listed in alphabetical order in the annexes.

## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Afghan National Police<sup>a</sup>
2. Haqqani network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia<sup>a</sup>
5. Latif Mansur Network<sup>a</sup>
6. Taliban forces<sup>a,b</sup>
7. Tora Bora Front<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et de la démocratie (APRD)<sup>a</sup>
2. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP)<sup>a</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques populaires de Centrafrique (FDPC)<sup>a</sup>
4. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>
5. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ)<sup>a</sup>
6. Self-defence militias supported by the Government of the Central African Republic<sup>a</sup>
7. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Chad**

1. Armée nationale tchadienne, including newly integrated elements<sup>a</sup>
2. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), including recently integrated elements from various armed groups, including Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda as well as elements currently led by Bosco Ntaganda<sup>a,c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.



2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front Populaire pour la Justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC)<sup>a,c</sup>
4. Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI)<sup>a,c</sup>
5. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,c</sup>
6. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Iraq**

1. Al-Qaida in Iraq, including its armed youth wing, "Birds of Paradise"<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Islamic State of Iraq<sup>b</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA):<sup>a</sup> this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar
4. Karen National Union-Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army (KA):<sup>a</sup> this party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar
6. Shan State Army-South (SSA-S)<sup>a</sup>
7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a</sup>
8. United Wa State Army (UWSA)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Nepal**

Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab, including newly merged Hizbul Islam<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Transitional Federal Government (TFG)<sup>a,b</sup>

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

##### **Parties in southern Sudan**

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in Darfur**

1. Chadian armed opposition groups<sup>a</sup>
2. Police forces, including the Central Reserve Police and Border Intelligence Forces<sup>a</sup>
3. Popular Defence Forces<sup>a</sup>
4. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>
5. Sudanese Armed Forces<sup>a</sup>
6. Parties signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (Peace Wing)<sup>a</sup>
  - (b) Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy<sup>a</sup>
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim)<sup>a</sup>
  - (d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will<sup>a</sup>
  - (e) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>
  - (f) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Peace Wing<sup>a</sup>
7. Parties not signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement:
  - (a) Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>
  - (b) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
  - (c) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Historical Leadership<sup>a</sup>
  - (d) Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity<sup>a</sup>

## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim children and/or commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)<sup>a</sup>
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army (NPA)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Sri Lanka**

Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP) (Iniya Barrathi faction)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Uganda**

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

#### **Parties in Yemen**

Al-Houthi rebels<sup>a</sup>

Pro-Government tribal militia<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.



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## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2011, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1998 (2011), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of its resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003), 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011), as well as its presidential statements on children and armed conflict.

2. The present report provides information on grave violations committed against children, in particular the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, the abduction of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to conflict in contravention of applicable international law (see sect. II). The report also describes progress made by parties to conflict on dialogue and action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children and the killing and maiming of children, as well as on the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (see sect. III). The report furthermore includes updates on the implementation of specific requests by the Security Council in follow-up of resolution 1998 (2011) (see sect. IV). The report concludes by outlining a series of recommendations (see sect. V). The present report covers 23 country situations, of which 16 are on the agenda of the Security Council and 7 are not on the agenda or related to other country situations. Two new country situations are added to the report (Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic), while two others have been removed (Haiti and Burundi).

3. By paragraph 3 of its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council requests that the present report include in the annexes those parties to conflict that engage in recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals, or in recurrent attacks or threats of attack against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, in addition to parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, and the killing or maiming of children in contravention of international law.



4. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams, as well as with concerned Member States and non-governmental organizations. The Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict also works closely at Headquarters with all relevant United Nations departments and agencies as well as special representatives.

5. References to reports, cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information received is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

6. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying the situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to and affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.<sup>1</sup>

## **II. Information on grave violations committed against children in armed conflict and response**

### **A. Information on grave violations committed against children in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **Afghanistan**

7. In 2011, 316 cases of underage recruitment were reported in Afghanistan, of which the majority was attributed to armed groups notably the Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network, as well as the Haqqani network and the Hezb-e-Islami. Children were recruited and used by armed groups to conduct suicide attacks and plant improvised explosive devices, as well as for transporting goods. In 2011, 11 children, including one 8-year-old girl, were killed while conducting suicide attacks. Some children unknowingly carried explosive packages. At least 20 reports of cross-border recruitment of Afghan children to Pakistan by armed groups, including the Taliban, were received. The boys were reportedly taken to Pakistan for training, and returned to Afghanistan to conduct military operations.

8. Although there has been notable progress on implementation of the Action Plan, the use of children by units of the Afghan National Police and the Afghan

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions; article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. Pictet (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).

National Army at checkpoints, including as messengers and tea boys, in contravention of Afghan law, remains to be fully addressed. Children were also recruited, mostly in the eastern and southern regions, into the Afghan Local Police, including through intimidation.

9. Verification of all reports of recruitment and use of children remained a serious challenge owing to the ongoing conflict and security constraints.

10. In 2011, 204 incidents of detention of children (all boys, including one 10-year-old) for alleged support to armed groups were documented. In several instances, children were initially detained by the International Military Forces, transferred to the National Directorate for Security, and subsequently to the juvenile rehabilitation centres. While the exact number of children held in International Military Forces detention facilities is unknown, concerns remain about the duration of detention and the handover to national authorities, particularly those held at the Parwan detention facility.

11. Through direct interviews with underage detainees, the United Nations documented incidents of ill-treatment during detention, including beatings, electrical shocks and threats of sexual violence. For example, the United Nations received one verified report of a 16-year-old boy, arrested and detained by the International Military Forces for alleged association with the Taliban, and transferred to a National Directorate for Security detention facility in Kandahar province, where he was raped in January 2011. There were no reports of abuse of children in detention by the International Military Forces.

12. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting documented that a total number of 1,325 children were killed or injured during the reporting period. Thirty per cent of child casualties were caused by improvised explosive devices placed by armed groups, killing 123 children and injuring 262. These incidents also include the use of suicide attacks. On 2 December 2011, for instance, a suicide attack in Mohammad Agha district, Logar province, resulted in the injuring of at least 28 children. In another attack, on 6 December 2011, the Lashkar i Jhangvi-Al-Alami, a Pakistan-based armed group, killed at least 10 children and injured at least 12 in an attack on a religious ceremony in Kabul. Children also continued to be victims of rocket, artillery and mortar attacks. The majority of incidents were attributed to the Taliban forces, including Tora Bora Front, Jamat Sanat al-Dawa Salafia, the Latif Mansur network, the Haqqani network and Hezb-i-Islami, killing 43 children and injuring 159. A total of 129 children were killed or injured in crossfire between the Afghan National Army and armed groups.

13. The number of child casualties attributed to airstrikes conducted by pro-Government forces, including the Afghan National Security Forces and the International Military Forces, doubled compared with the last reporting period, with 110 children killed and 68 injured in 2011.

14. Furthermore, 431 child casualties were caused by mines and explosive remnants of war from previous decades of conflict. The eastern region was the most affected and the majority of casualties were boys between the ages of 8 and 15 years.

15. Reports of sexual violence against girls and boys by armed elements continued to be received in 2011. Four incidents involving Afghan National Police elements were reported, including two verified cases. In one case of an attempted rape of a 9-year-old girl, the Afghan National Police officer was sentenced to six years'

imprisonment by the regional military prosecutor. Of 76 interviewed boys detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges, 10 reported sexual violence or threats of sexual violence upon their arrest. Reports also continued to be received of sexual abuse of boys by elements of armed groups.

16. During the reporting period, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting documented 185 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals in the central, northern, south-eastern and eastern regions, including improvised explosive device and suicide attacks (51), burning of schools (35), intimidation of educational personnel (34), forced closures of schools (32), killing of educational personnel (25), abduction of educational personnel (7) and looting (1). Of these reported incidents, the majority was attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, opposed to girls' education. It should be noted that in 2011 the Taliban reportedly issued a directive forbidding attacks on schools and teachers. Although this could not be confirmed by the United Nations, accounts suggested that Taliban members at the provincial level publicly denounced attacks against schools. In addition, 31 incidents of military use of schools were documented during the reporting period, of which 20 cases were attributed to armed groups and 11 cases to pro-Government forces.

17. The United Nations also received reports of 58 incidents of attacks against health facilities and personnel. Incidents attributed to unidentified armed groups included killings, abduction, suicide attacks, intimidation and the use of an ambulance in a suicide attack.

18. During the reporting period, 31 incidents of abduction of children by armed groups were documented. All cases involved boys and were motivated by recruitment, kidnap-for-ransom, retaliation and intimidation for suspected association with pro-Government forces. Five of these incidents indicated a link to armed groups located in Pakistan, and involved the movement of children across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

### **Central African Republic**

19. The recruitment and use of children by the armed groups the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR) continued to be reported, especially in the north of the country. Children were seen fighting in the ranks of CPJP and UFDR during armed clashes in September and October 2011 in Vakaga and Haute-Kotto provinces. Children were also reportedly seen in the ranks of the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) in Birao (Vakaga prefecture), and in the ranks of the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) in Kabo (Nana-Gribizi prefecture). According to information received, a small number of children continued to be present in the ranks of the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie (APRD). The Chadian Front patriotique pour le redressement (FPR) also recruited children in 2011. Of the 1,700 FPR combatants reportedly active in 2011, 15 per cent were estimated to be children, including children from neighbouring countries.

20. During the reporting period, attacks on towns and villages, as well as armed clashes by CPJP, UFDR and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) predominantly in the north-east and south-east of the country, resulted in the killing of civilians,

including children. Of a total of 88 children killed in 2011 (63 boys and 25 girls), 63 were killed in armed confrontations between CPJP and UFDR.

21. Incidents of rape and other grave sexual violence, although underreported, continued to be of concern in 2011. For example, on 21 February, CPJP rebels attacked two villages in Haute-Kotto province and raped a 13-year-old girl.

22. Attacks on schools and the use of schools by armed groups continued to have a negative impact on the education system in the Central African Republic. During the reporting period, 12 schools were used, attacked or destroyed during confrontations between CPJP and UFDR, as well as during FPR attacks, affecting a total of 1,500 children. In the town of Bria (Haute-Kotto prefecture), teachers were directly targeted and assaulted by different armed groups because the schools were located in areas controlled by rival armed groups.

23. Humanitarian access continued to be limited in the north and south-east of the country, especially in Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou, Nana-Gribizi and Vakaga prefectures, owing to the activities of local (CPJP and UFDR) and foreign (FPR) armed groups. It is estimated that during the reporting period, some 40,000 children in affected areas were deprived of humanitarian assistance owing to widespread insecurity in these provinces. Humanitarian access was complicated by lack of clarity in the chain of command, in particular with FDPC in Kabo (Ouham prefecture).

## **Chad**

24. A general improvement in the security situation in the country in 2011, as well as the demobilization and reintegration of the Armée nationale tchadienne during the second half of 2011, contributed to a significant decrease in the number of reported cases of child recruitment in Chad. The presence of children was not registered during the restructuring operations of the Armée nationale tchadienne, which were monitored by the regional delegation of the Ministry of Social Action and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Moussoro. Although the Armée nationale tchadienne has stopped recruiting children as a matter of policy, concerns exist that a small number of children may still be associated with it. Five Sudanese refugee minors are still alleged to be serving in the Armée nationale tchadienne in different locations. The Government denies any possibility of participation of refugee children in the Armée nationale tchadienne.

25. The presence of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in refugee camps in eastern Chad has significantly decreased, and no new cases of child recruitment by JEM were reported in 2011. Potential attempts of re-recruitment of Sudanese refugee children by armed forces or armed groups cannot, however, be excluded and requires monitoring by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting. Children also allegedly remain associated with the Front démocratique populaire (FDP), whose forces are deployed in the border area between Chad, the Central African Republic and the Sudan.

26. During 2011, and since the creation of the joint Chad/Sudan monitoring force, there has been a significant decrease in security incidents. The Government of Chad has assumed full responsibility for the protection of humanitarian workers and finalized a joint United Nations-Government protection of civilians strategy. The Détachement intégré de sécurité (DIS) has expanded its operational area from the



east of the country to provide coverage in the southern and south-eastern part. Nevertheless, United Nations system agencies and partners were obliged to use armed escorts for their movements in eastern and southern Chad.

### **Côte d'Ivoire**

27. The post-election crisis in early 2011 was directly associated with a rise in the commission of grave violations against children. The end of hostilities led to a subsequent decrease in the number of violations registered. However, some violations against children continued to be committed after the end of fighting, particularly in the west.

28. Cases of child recruitment and use were documented during the reporting period, and peaked during the post-election crisis. During the run up to the 2010 election, a worrying trend of involvement of children in campaigning activities and political demonstrations had been observed, which exposed them to violence and culminated in public statements and recruitment drives targeted at youth. Subsequently, between January and May 2011, many youths joined various armed groups, including the Jeunes patriotes and the Commando Invisible.

29. Thirty-seven cases of recruitment and use were verified by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, although the total is believed to be higher. Children and youth participated in self-defence groups instituted by supporters of both sides. Children were seen manning checkpoints in collaboration with the Jeunes patriotes and elements of the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) in the period covering January to April 2011. The majority of children associated with armed groups during the crisis have been released, although their formal reintegration remains a challenge in the absence of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme during the reporting period. Since the end of hostilities in May 2011, no new cases of recruitment and use of children were reported.

30. The killing and maiming of children in crossfire and shelling peaked during the period between January and May 2011, mainly in Abidjan and in the west. A total of 42 cases of children killed and 66 of children maimed by armed elements were registered by the United Nations in 2011, although the number of actual cases is likely to be higher. In Abidjan, some cases were attributed to elements of the Forces de défense et de sécurité (FDS). Cases of maiming of children by explosive remnants of war have also been reported.

31. The prevalence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children continued to be of great concern. A total of 271 cases of sexual violence were registered by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, affecting 265 girls and 6 boys. Of these cases, 24 per cent were perpetrated by armed groups. For example, on 28 March 2011, a 16-year-old girl was gang-raped at gunpoint in her home by three FRCI elements in the Carrefour neighbourhood of Duekoue. The situation was particularly serious in the west where armed groups continued to enjoy freedom of movement and impunity. Victims are generally reluctant to file a complaint for fear of stigmatization and/or retaliation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For information on parties in Côte d'Ivoire listed as responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence during the reporting period, see the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2012/33).

32. During the reporting period, a total of 477 schools were reported as being damaged, looted and/or used by armed groups, depriving an estimated 67,500 children of education. Of these cases, 23 schools were used, 3 of them as storage for weapons and 4 as collective graves. In addition, seven medical facilities were attacked. These incidents were mostly attributed to FRCI, especially in the west of the country. In addition, one case of military use of schools in the Yopougon neighbourhood of Abidjan by Liberian mercenaries and pro-Gbagbo elements, including the Jeunes patriotes, was reported.

33. In August, the Government ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Government has also drafted a national strategy for the fight against gender-based violence. The document is still pending approval by the Ministry of Family, Women and Children.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

34. Child protection actors documented 272 cases of recruitment and use of children (259 boys and 13 girls) during the reporting period. Of these, 266 cases reportedly occurred in North and South Kivu, four in Orientale Province and two in Maniema. The Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) was allegedly responsible for the largest number, followed by Mai-Mai groups and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). Other alleged perpetrators include the Ugandan armed group the Allied Democratic Forces/National Liberation Army of Uganda (ADF/NALU) and the Forces républicaines fédéralistes (FRF). Other cases of child recruitment were attributed to new local defence groups and non-integrated units of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP). Most children were used as escorts, cooks and/or porters. A majority of the children were between the ages of 11 and 17 years at the time of recruitment; 12 children were under age 10.

35. Ten cases of killing and 14 cases of maiming of children were documented in 2011. Most were allegedly perpetrated by FARDC (six cases of killing and nine cases of maiming). Three cases of maiming were attributed to the Police nationale congolaise, one case of killing to a Mai-Mai group, and the remaining cases were attributed to unidentified armed elements.

36. Sexual violence against children was committed by all parties and continued to be a serious concern in 2011. The majority of documented cases were perpetrated by Government security forces. A total of 108 cases of rape (including 3 cases against boys) were documented. Of these, 86 cases occurred in North and South Kivu and 22 in Orientale Province. Sixty-seven cases were attributed to FARDC, 17 to various Mai-Mai groups, 10 to the Police nationale congolaise, 4 to FDLR and 2 to the Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC). Twelve cases of rape against children allegedly occurred during mass rape incidents in Mutongo/Walikale, North Kivu, between 8 and 10 and 22 and 23 June 2011. The perpetrators were allegedly affiliated to the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS). Most of the child victims were between the ages of 8 and 17 years; five victims were under the age of 6.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For information on parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo listed as responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence during the reporting period, see the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2012/33).

37. The number of attacks against schools and health centres increased in 2011, with 53 incidents against schools and health centres taking place in the Kivus and Orientale Province, compared with 23 incidents in 2010. FDLR was responsible for 21 cases of destruction and looting of schools and health centres in 2011. Mai-Mai groups were responsible for six cases and ADF/NALU for one case. FARDC was responsible for several incidents, mainly involving looting, and in two cases the use of schools.

38. Humanitarian access continued to be hampered in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo throughout 2011. For instance, five humanitarian workers were killed during an attack allegedly carried out by Mai-Mai elements in South Kivu in October. Cases of kidnappings of humanitarian workers were also reported. Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu and Bukavu, and Uvira territory in South Kivu, were the most affected. The security vacuum that followed the temporary redeployment of FARDC in the context of the regimentation process was exploited by armed groups, including FDLR and various Mai-Mai groups, to re-establish their position in vacated areas, preventing humanitarian access.

39. Three years after the adoption of the Child Protection Law in January 2009 and the criminalization of child recruitment, no perpetrators of recruitment and use of children were prosecuted and convicted, despite the fact that many of them — including at the senior level — were clearly identified. Perpetrators such as Bosco Ntaganda, Innocent Zimurinda and Baudoin Ngaruye, remain in the FARDC command structure, and some, such as Biyoyo Josue, have received promotions. Others who have been tried and sentenced remain at large. For example, Mai-Mai chief Kyungu Mutanga, alias Gedeon, sentenced to death in March 2009 for crimes against humanity and for recruitment and use of children, escaped from prison in September 2011 and resumed activities in North Katanga. Despite advocacy efforts, no action was taken by the FARDC “Amani Leo” hierarchy in South Kivu to investigate the looting of 10 schools by FARDC elements between August and September 2011.

40. A positive development was the arrest and prosecution of FARDC and Police nationale congolaise suspects who allegedly perpetrated acts of sexual violence against children: 44 FARDC and Police nationale congolaise elements allegedly involved in 77 cases of rape perpetrated in 2011 were arrested, and 18 were tried. Two were acquitted owing to a lack of evidence and 16 were imprisoned and obliged to pay financial compensation to the victims.

## **Iraq**

41. In the reporting period, armed groups, including Al-Qaida in Iraq and Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), continued to carry out violent attacks targeting security forces, Government buildings and civilians. The most affected governorates were Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala, Anbar and Salahaddin. From January to December, a total of 341 incidents affecting children were reported, of which 117 were verified by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting.

42. Throughout 2011, armed groups such as Al-Qaida in Iraq and ISI, continued to recruit, train and use children to take part in hostilities. The exact number of children recruited and used by armed groups remains difficult to ascertain owing to the security context. However, incidents were documented in Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Wassit. Children were used to spy and scout,

transport military supplies and equipment, videotape attacks for propaganda purposes, plant improvised explosive devices and actively engage in attacks against security forces and civilians. Children were also reportedly seen manning checkpoints of the Awakening Councils, mainly in Diyala, Babil, Salahaddin and Anbar. It should be noted that the Al-Qaida in Iraq's youth wing "Birds of Paradise", listed in my previous report for recruitment and use of children, was no longer active in the current reporting period.

43. During the reporting period, 294 children, including an unknown number of girls, were indicted or convicted of terrorism-related charges under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (2005). The last three months of 2011 saw a spike in the percentage of children charged with alleged association with armed groups with terrorism-related offences held in pretrial detention facilities.

44. At least 146 children were reportedly killed and 265 injured as a result of the continued violence in 2011. The majority of these incidents took place in the governorates of Baghdad, Ninewa, Kirkuk and Salahaddin. Verification of incidents remained limited owing to the security risk associated with independent monitoring.

45. The killing and maiming of children was attributable mainly to indiscriminate attacks, including suicide attacks, as well as targeted executions and crossfire incidents. In the reporting period, there was also an emerging practice of complex attacks in Iraq. In 2011, 20 of these attacks (14 between October and December 2011 alone) killed at least 20 children and injured 33 others.

46. Armed groups, including Al-Qaida in Iraq and ISI, caused the large majority of casualties. ISI, for example, claimed responsibility for the bombing on 25 July 2011 near a restaurant in Kirkuk that killed and injured 14 people, including five girls and four boys. Al-Qaida in Iraq claimed responsibility for a series of coordinated attacks in Baghdad on 22 December 2011, including a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that targeted a Government building in Rufasa district that claimed the lives of 7 children and injured another 28.

47. The reporting period saw a significant increase in the number of children abducted, with 27 cases of abduction of boys and 10 cases of abduction of girls documented. Although the motives of most incidents could not be ascertained, a strong nexus between the cases of abduction of children and the funding of non-State armed group activities in Iraq was suspected. For instance, in Kirkuk, an 11-year-old boy was abducted near his house in June 2011 by perpetrators claiming to be members of ISI. The boy was later released after the payment of a ransom.

48. Access to school and health services was also impacted by improvised explosive devices planted in or in the vicinity of schools and medical facilities, indiscriminate firing and targeted attacks against education and health personnel. Fifty-four incidents affecting schools and 40 incidents affecting hospitals were reported in 2011, which in both cases represents an increase compared with 2010. Twenty-seven education personnel and 17 medical workers were killed or injured in different incidents that included direct shooting and improvised explosive devices, mostly in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar. Other incidents related to the abduction of medical staff and attacks against health facilities or civilian ambulances. Armed groups, including Al-Qaida in Iraq and ISI, were responsible in all reported cases.

49. In 2011, sustained efforts were made by the United Nations to encourage the Government of Iraq to put in place a mechanism to address the issues affecting children in the context of the armed conflict. Following a meeting held in January between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the co-chairs of the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, the Ministry of Human Rights committed to establishing an interministerial committee composed of representatives of the Ministries of the Interior, Defence, Education and Labour and Social Affairs and, on 19 October 2011, the Ministry requested the Council of Ministers to approve the establishment of that committee. As at 31 December 2011, no progress was noted.

### **Lebanon**

50. The situation in Lebanon has been included in my previous annual reports. Despite the general calm along the Blue Line since the cessation of hostilities in 2006, occasional incidents of violence affected children, including the killing and maiming of children in sporadic incidents of violence. On 15 May 2011, Palestinian demonstrators moved towards the Blue Line in southern Lebanon, prompting an armed response by the Israeli security forces in the area of Maroun al-Ras. This resulted in seven civilian casualties, including two boys, aged 16 and 17 years, and the injuring of 111 persons, including four boys and two girls as young as 6 years old.

51. In relation to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon witnessed an influx of over 6,200 Syrian refugees, half of whom were children, between April and December 2011. Increased military manoeuvres on the Syrian side of the border and the planting of landmines along the Lebanese border have made entry into Lebanon through unofficial crossing points increasingly risky and contributed to unease among displaced populations and host communities. Two Lebanese boys, aged 14 and 16 years, were wounded by gunfire originating from the Syrian side in the northern area of Wadi Khaled. One Lebanese child aged 13 years, was also maimed by a landmine planted along the Lebanese border on the Syrian side.

52. In the Ain El Helweh camp, Sidon district, at least two separate violent clashes between political factions occurred in 2011 killing one child and causing serious injuries to two other children. These incidents also led to a disruption of schooling.

### **Libya**

53. Since the conflict began in mid-February 2011, the United Nations has received numerous reports of grave violations against children in Libya throughout the reporting period. Owing to fighting, the lack of access to affected populations, especially in Sirte and Misrata, and the absence of systematic monitoring and reporting, grave violations against children, including child casualties, were not systematically documented. As a result, even though a total of 129 cases of killing and 247 cases of maiming of children were recorded, mostly in Misrata, Tawargha, Bani Walid and Tripoli, 53 incidents of killing of children (16 girls and 37 boys) and 96 incidents of maiming (18 girls and 78 boys) were verified, mostly in Benghazi, Tripoli, Misrata, Brega, Tawargha, Ajdabiya and Nafusa. The main causes of death and injury were shelling by former Government forces (in particular in Misrata) and crossfire between former Government forces and opposition groups. For example, between mid-February and mid-August 2011, Brega Hospital admitted 24 children, 15 of whom had been shot and 9 injured by explosions. According to medical

personnel in Misrata, Benghazi and Zlitan, in addition to shelling, the association of boys with armed groups was also reported as a cause of killing and maiming. Explosive remnants of war contamination also led to a significant number of child casualties. The most affected areas were Ajdabiya, Nalut, Zinten, Sirte and Bani Walid, especially as displaced populations returned to their homes.

54. Child casualties were also reported in the context of military operations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Libya. The Commission of Inquiry on Libya stated that NATO “conducted a highly precise campaign with a demonstrable determination to avoid civilian casualties” (A/HRC/19/68, para. 812). However, it documented at least 10 deaths of children in the course of NATO operations in Majer, Tripoli, Zlitan and Sirte. For example, the Commission found that at least seven children were killed in an airstrike in Majer on 8 August 2011. In addition, the United Nations gathered information on 11 cases of deaths (three boys and eight girls) and a further 11 cases of injuries (four boys and seven girls) related to NATO operations in Brega.

55. The presence of children in armed forces and armed groups was broadly reported in the context of the conflict in Libya, including by the Commission of Inquiry, but the constraints for monitoring and reporting mentioned above prevented the United Nations from verifying all reported incidents. The Commission found strong evidence that, during the fighting, former Government forces recruited and used children. The Commission was also very concerned about the reports of children who had formed part of the opposition forces/brigades associated with the National Transitional Council, also known as the “thumar”, in the Nafusa Mountains. Seventeen cases of recruitment of boys were verified in 2011, which represents only a portion of the actual scope as estimated by witness accounts. Reports indicated that children associated with former Government forces undertook military training and were engaged in fighting alongside adult combatants.

56. Verified information was also received on the presence of children in opposition forces and brigades associated with the National Transitional Council during the conflict. Children were spotted undertaking military training, carrying weapons, wearing uniforms and performing various tasks in support of combat operations. At the end of 2011, children were seen manning checkpoints and providing security, which remains a concern. On 20 May 2011, the National Transitional Council reportedly issued directives to all front-line troops not to recruit children. The United Nations has not been able to confirm this claim at the time of writing. The current Government of Libya is working with the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to address the issue of children remaining associated with some brigades.

57. Concerns remain over the detention of children for alleged association with armed forces of the former regime. The Commission of Inquiry documented four cases of boys who were detained by brigades, together with adults, for association with former Government forces. In addition, five separate cases of abduction and detention of boys, aged 15 to 17 years, were documented by the United Nations. The boys, from the Tawargha community, were taken from internally displaced persons camps by opposition forces/brigades to military bases or security facilities for interrogation. Detention lasted from one day (four cases) to five days (one case). All boys reported being victims of ill-treatment and acts tantamount to torture during their detention.

58. Twenty-seven attacks on schools and four attacks on hospitals were documented in 2011, in particular in Zlitan, Ajdabiya, Misrata, Nalut, Zinten and Sirte. For reasons mentioned above, this number reflects only a portion of all incidents that took place. A majority of these cases were attributed to former Government forces and opposition forces and brigades. One case was attributed to NATO. These attacks included shootings at schools and hospitals, shelling, airstrikes, improvised explosive devices, looting of medical supplies and the use of facilities by the military. This resulted in partial or total destruction of health and education facilities and in disrupted provision of services. During an airstrike, NATO hit the Institute of Health in Tigi, in August 2011, on the basis of intelligence assessment that it was a missile and ammunition storage site for the former Government forces.

59. At the end of 2011, the continued presence of armed brigades and sporadic clashes between these brigades posed a challenge to the Libyan authorities in their efforts to contain the overall security situation. In this context, children remained vulnerable to association with these brigades, displacement and exposure to explosive remnants of war and the widespread presence of small arms and light weapons.

**Lord's Resistance Army and the Central African region (the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda)**

60. Grave violations against children by LRA in the Central African region remained a major concern in 2011. The armed group continued to operate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. While no violations have been reported in Uganda since 2006, Uganda continued military operations against LRA in the region.

61. In the Central African Republic, 101 children (63 boys and 38 girls) were reportedly abducted by LRA in 2011, mostly in Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou and Haute-Kotto prefectures. Out of these, 43 cases were verified by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting. All but one of the abducted girls were released. A Congolese girl who had escaped from LRA in December 2010 was repatriated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and reunified with her family in January 2011; five boys and four girls were reunified with their families in the Central African Republic. Twenty-four LRA attacks against civilians were documented in 2011, resulting in the killing and injuring of children in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou. In 2011, over 22,523 civilians were displaced by attacks or fear of attacks by LRA. Access to humanitarian assistance continued to be restricted in LRA-affected areas during the reporting period.

62. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 211 LRA attacks were documented in 2011. In the Uélé districts of Orientale Province, 124 children (59 girls and 65 boys) were abducted by LRA and escaped a few days to months after their abduction. Thirty-nine children reported that they had been used as combatants, while 51 children reported that they had been used for forced labour. Nine of the 59 girls were abducted for a longer period and reported that they had been used as forced wives. A total of 180 children escaped from LRA in 2011. Six cases of killing and nine cases of maiming of children were attributed to LRA in 2011. Humanitarian assistance continued to be hampered by LRA activity, in particular in Faradje and Dungu in Orientale Province. In total, eight foreign children, five from

the Sudan and three from Uganda, were repatriated in 2011, and 18 Congolese children were repatriated from neighbouring countries to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

63. In South Sudan, LRA carried out eight attacks against civilians, directly affecting children. In Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal States, 13 children were reportedly abducted by LRA in 2011. Six cases of killing of children were confirmed, four of whom died while in captivity. Eighteen girls, between 12 and 17 years of age, separated from LRA by the Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) and the "home guards", reported that they had been sexually abused while abducted. One health centre in Western Equatoria State was looted by LRA.

64. In 2011, nine Ugandan mothers (aged 20 to 21) and their children (12 girls and eight boys, all below the age of 6) formerly associated with LRA were received at a reception centre in Gulu, Uganda. The young mothers and children were subsequently reunited with their families.

65. In May 2011, UPDF established standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children and women separated from LRA in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and the Central African Republic. The procedures stipulate that child protection actors shall be alerted immediately to the presence of children in LRA custody, and in any case no later than 48 hours, and that all children separated from LRA in UPDF custody, regardless of their nationality, must be handed over to child protection actors in the shortest time possible, in any case no later than within seven days. UPDF, in cooperation with the United Nations, has trained 450 troops on the implementation of the standard operating procedures. To ensure full implementation of the standard operating procedures, all troops participating in counter-LRA operations should undergo comprehensive predeployment training on the procedures. The UPDF is encouraged to enforce full compliance within its ranks, to ensure that all children, including Ugandan nationals, are handed over to child protection actors and within the time frame set out in the standard operating procedures.

66. The weak presence of the Government security forces in LRA-affected areas continued to have an impact on insecurity and impunity and contributed to the establishment of unregulated community-based self-defence groups, such as the "home guards" in South Sudan, and "milices d'auto-défence" in the Central African Republic. Where Government security forces were present, concerns were raised over human rights violations and lack of discipline. For example, a 14-year-old boy who escaped in May 2011 was held hostage for three months by a soldier of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) who demanded payment for services given to the boy following his release. In the Central African Republic, the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) reportedly used children for various purposes, including checkpoint duty.

### **Myanmar**

67. The number of complaints of underage recruitment, including children under 15 years of age, continued to rise, from 194 in 2010 to 243 in 2011, reflecting an increased awareness of the age of recruitment by the Tatmadaw, and the existence of reliable vetting mechanisms, including the International Labour Organization forced labour complaints mechanism and community-based structures for complaints about



underage recruitment. The Committee for the Prevention of Recruitment of Underage Children in Myanmar received more complaints than in previous years as a result of its extensive public awareness campaign. The vast majority of complaints in 2011 reflected recruitment in Yangon, Ayeyarwaddy and Mandalay regions.

68. Children continued to be recruited by the Tatmadaw. The majority of underage recruits interviewed after release stated that their recruiter had not asked their age, or had falsified age documentation for presentation at the recruitment centre. Reports continued to indicate that, in addition to children who were formally recruited into the Tatmadaw, children were also used by the Tatmadaw for forced labour, including as porters. In Kachin State, there were verified reports in late 2011 of children being used by the Tatmadaw alongside adults as porters on the front line.

69. Reports of recruitment and use of children by non-State actors in Myanmar also continued to be received. In 2010, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) split into two factions, with the majority joining the Tatmadaw as a border guard force, and the remainder allying itself with the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA). In 2011, with respect to both the DKBA border guard force and the separatist DKBA troops, reports were received of forced recruitment of children, unless payment in lieu of recruitment was received. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting was able to verify this practice in Kayin State, Ta Nay Cha and Thandaunggyi townships, in April and August 2011. Reports of increased recruitment by the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) were also received in the second half of 2011, as tensions mounted in Kachin and northern Shan State. The country task force also received allegations of children joining KIA purportedly to avoid being used by the Tatmadaw as porters on the front line. The country task force also confirmed one report of a 15-year-old boy recruited by the Kachin Defense Army (KDA) in northern Shan State.

70. As conflict escalated in Shan State in 2011, reports of Shan State Army South (SSA-S) perpetrating underage recruitment increased. Children are also reportedly present in the ranks of the KNU/KNLA, Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council, Karen Peace Front (KPF), Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA), and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). However, the country task force was unable to verify information about these armed groups owing to travel restrictions imposed on it by the Government.

71. The country task force verified that 43 children had been killed or maimed as a result of conflict-related violence in 22 separate incidents. During the reporting period, children continued to be victims of landmines, explosive remnants of war, mortar and rocket-propelled grenade attacks, and of crossfire between non-State armed groups and the Tatmadaw.

72. There were a number of verified cases of children killed in retaliatory actions by members of the Tatmadaw in villages where non-State armed groups were based, or in villages considered aligned to non-State armed groups. For example, in October 2011 the country task force verified an incident where, after having sustained a severe beating, a one-year-old child in a village in Hsipaw township in northern Shan State died by drowning, when soldiers of the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) threw the child and his parents into a pit filled with water.

73. Of the 22 verified incidents, a total of 9 occurred in Kachin State as a result of fighting between the Tatmadaw and KIA, during which 22 children were killed or

maimed. In June 2011, for instance, a 16-year-old girl from Bamaw township was shot and killed in crossfire between the Tatmadaw and KIA. In another example, in August 2011, a 3-year-old boy was shot and killed in the crossfire while fleeing his village in Bamaw Township with his grandmother.

74. In 2011, both the Tatmadaw and non-State armed groups, such as KNU/KNLA, KNPP/KA, DKBA, UWSA, KIA and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) continued to use anti-personnel mines in order to restrict the movement of people, hinder the movement of troops, or to mark areas of operations.

75. The United Nations received a number of reports of attacks on schools or hospitals by the Tatmadaw and other non-State armed groups during the reporting period. The country task force verified that, during the fighting in May 2011 in Kayin State, the Tatmadaw and DKBA/KNLA allied forces had partially destroyed a hospital in Kawkareik.

76. During the reporting period, there were also a number of documented reports in Kachin and Kayin States of schools being closed for long periods and schools being damaged by shelling and mortar fire. In August 2011, the country task force verified one case of a school in Kawng Lwin village in Mansi Township being damaged by artillery fire in exchanges between the Tatmadaw and KIA. In July 2011, the country task force documented the incident of a school in Mone Hkawng village in Mansi Township, Kachin State, being damaged by a Tatmadaw mortar attack.

77. Access to vulnerable groups in many areas of the country, including children, remained limited for United Nations system agencies in Myanmar. The Government continued to restrict access to various parts of the country, citing security concerns as the main reason for limiting the presence and travel of international as well as national personnel of relief agencies. Access was particularly limited in ceasefire and non-ceasefire areas, including mixed administration areas. However, some progress was made when, in December 2011, a United Nations mission visited inaccessible areas along the Myanmar-China border where displacement was recorded.

## **Nepal**

78. The situation in Nepal was included in my previous annual reports. While conflict-related violations against children have significantly decreased in the reporting period, children continue to be at risk. The presence of armed groups operating with political and often criminal motives, primarily in the Terai districts (southern belt of Nepal) and the Eastern Hills, gave rise to general insecurity in those areas.

79. During the reporting period, 4 children were killed and 11 children sustained injuries caused by explosive remnants of war in different parts of the country. Out of the total number of cases documented, approximately half of the cases were related to explosive remnants of war planted before the peace process, while the remaining cases were the result of new contamination.

80. The United Nations Monitoring Team continued to monitor and follow up on the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) compliance with the Action Plan for the discharge of the disqualified Maoist army personnel (including

verified minors) and related tasks, signed on 16 December 2009 between the Government of Nepal, the United Nations and UCPN-M.

81. Information collected and verified by the Monitoring Team indicates that at least one out of the seven Maoist army cantonment sites has ceased to distribute payments to the verified minors through the Maoist army commanders. In addition, three out of five Maoist army cantonment sites that previously provided shared accommodation to verified minors have now either dismantled them or are no longer using them to maintain a link between the verified minors and the Maoist army commanders. There were no verified cases of returns of verified minors to the cantonments.

### **Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel**

82. In 2011, Palestinian and Israeli children continued to suffer from the prevailing situation of conflict. Twenty Palestinian children (19 boys and one girl) were killed and 448 (393 boys and 55 girls) were injured in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and five Israeli children (four boys and one girl) were killed and two boys were injured in Israel in incidents related to the conflict, marking a significant increase compared with the previous year.

83. Among the 20 Palestinian children killed, 13 boys were killed by Israeli security forces, two boys and one girl by Palestinian armed groups, including the Izz al-Din Al Qassam Brigade and the Popular Resistance Committee in Gaza, two boys by explosive remnants of war and two boys by Israeli settlers. Out of the 448 Palestinian children who were injured, 89 were under the age of 12 years. A total of 384 children were injured by the Israeli security forces, 41 by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, 15 by unknown perpetrators owing to the detonation of improvised explosive devices and 8 by unidentified Palestinian armed groups. Sixty-nine per cent of the injuries occurred in the West Bank (including 20 per cent in East Jerusalem), and 31 per cent occurred in Gaza (including 15 per cent in the so-called buffer zone).

84. In the West Bank, there were serious concerns regarding incidents in which Palestinian children were killed or injured by Israeli settlers. In 2011, two boys were killed as a result of shooting attacks perpetrated by settlers, and another 35 boys and 6 girls were injured in incidents involving Israeli settlers, such as throwing stones at vehicles and attacks against Palestinian houses or farm land.

85. In 2011, 8 Palestinian children were shot and killed and 65 boys and 2 girls were injured by the Israeli security forces in the so-called buffer zone in Gaza that was established for security concerns. Thirty-four children were injured while collecting gravel and scrap metal, fishing, at home or playing in the so-called buffer zone. Thirty-four boys were also injured on 15 May 2011 during a demonstration at Erez crossing by live ammunition and tear gas fired by the Israeli security forces to dispel demonstrators near the border fence. All subsequent claims of excessive use of force during this incident are being investigated by the Israeli security forces.

86. Eight Palestinian children were injured as a result of rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza that fell short and landed inside Gaza, or by explosives that detonated while preparing for an attack or being stored in populated areas.

87. In 2011, five Israeli children, four boys and one girl, were killed and two boys were injured in conflict-related incidents. A 1-year-old boy was killed in a car accident near Hebron caused by Palestinian stone-throwing. On 11 March, two boys and a three-month-old girl were killed in an attack on an Israeli family living in the Itamar settlement near Nablus, perpetrated by two Palestinian young people. In southern Israel near the border with Gaza, a 16-year-old boy was killed when a rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group hit a school bus on 17 April. Another two Israeli boys, aged 1 and 9 years, were injured when a rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group from the Gaza Strip hit the town of Ashkelon on 20 August.

88. One case of child recruitment by Izz al-Din Al Qassam Brigade was reported, when a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was killed on 11 August by the detonation of the explosives he was carrying while performing surveillance tasks in Rafah, southern Gaza.

89. Five separate cases of use of children by the Israeli security forces for military intelligence purposes were reported in 2011 in Meggido prison and Salem and Mescobiyya interrogation centres. These cases involved Palestinian boys aged 15 to 17 years who were arrested and offered money, entry to Israel and a car or a mobile telephone in exchange for intelligence on activities in their villages.

90. At the end of December 2011, 135 Palestinian children, 134 boys and 1 girl, aged 12 to 17 years, were detained in Israeli prisons for alleged security violations. This represents a steady decrease compared with 2010. It should be noted that on 18 December 2011, 55 children were released as part of the second stage of the prisoner swap for Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit. In 2011, two cases of administrative detention were reported. In the first case, the boy was released in February 2011, after 11 months in administrative detention. Another child was arrested and placed in administrative detention in December 2011. In 2011, 59 children from the West Bank were reportedly transferred to prisons inside Israel in contravention of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

91. In relation to the 135 cases of detention mentioned above, 116 cases were documented through affidavits. Sixty-two children were below the age of 16, including two 10 years of age and one 9 years of age. All of the 116 boys reported being subjected to cruel and degrading treatment by the Israeli security forces and Israeli police while in detention. Ninety-two per cent of the children interviewed reported the use of hand-ties in violation of Israeli security forces orders, 70 per cent reported having been blindfolded, 61 per cent reported having been beaten, 7 per cent reported solitary confinement, 21 per cent reported denial of access to toilets and 18 per cent reported denial of access to food and water.

92. In a positive development, on 27 September 2011, the Israeli Military Commander in the West Bank issued Order 1676 which raised the age of majority in the West Bank from 16 to 18 years. This amendment increases the level of protection given to children in the context of juvenile military courts in the West Bank by introducing new provisions that relate to the adequate and professional care of child detainees, the separation of child detainees from adults, notification of parents, access of parents to trials, appointment of a lawyer and so forth.

93. A significant number of attacks on schools and education facilities continued to be reported both in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territory in 2011. These attacks resulted in damage to schools or interruption of education, and in

some cases, in direct injury of children. Thirty-six cases were reported in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, compared with 20 cases reported in 2010. Four attacks were reported against Israeli schools, compared with one case in 2010.

94. Twenty-three cases of attacks on schools or military use of schools were reported in the West Bank, including 15 by the Israeli security forces and 8 by Israeli settlers. In five instances related to search operations in villages or to demonstrations, the Israeli security forces fired tear gas at Palestinian schools, resulting in students suffering from tear-gas inhalation. In several instances, direct attacks on schools or military use of schools were reported. In seven cases, Israeli soldiers entered school premises. In April 2011, the Israeli security forces converted a school into a military outpost for a few hours in Nablus. In another incident, the killing of five members of an Israeli family in a settlement near Nablus led to a curfew imposed by the Israeli security forces on the adjacent village of Awarta. During a period of five days, the military conducted search operations and used one school as a detention and interrogation centre. In addition, eight attacks were perpetrated by Israeli settlers, including by physically assaulting Palestinian children on their way to school, attacking schools by throwing rocks and empty bottles, or vandalizing schools. One incident involved Israeli settlers setting fire to a school prayer room in Huwwara (Nablus). In addition to these attacks, 10 schools located in Area C of the West Bank received demolition or stop-work orders issued by the Israeli authorities.

95. Fourteen incidents of attacks on schools were reported in Gaza. Eleven schools were damaged as a result of shooting or heavy firing near the schools, or by Israeli air strikes targeting Palestinian armed groups or suspected weapons and ammunition storage located in the vicinity of schools. Palestinian armed groups were responsible for damage caused to two schools in Gaza, when rockets allegedly fired at southern Israel fell short. In addition, an unidentified Palestinian armed group attacked a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East summer games facility in Beit Lahiya.

96. Missiles or rockets fired from Gaza damaged four school facilities in Israel, including a day-care centre in the area of Eshkol in March 2011, a day-care centre and a high school in Beer Sheba in August 2011 and a school in Ashdod in October 2011.

### **Somalia**

97. In 2011, the United Nations documented 948 cases of recruitment of children, mostly by Al-Shabaab. There were also documented cases of recruitment and use by the Transitional Federal Government and allied militia. Separately, the Transitional Federal Government forces inadvertently recruited 86 children, who were identified and repatriated from Bihanga military training camp in Uganda in April and August 2011. While 11 of these children joined a United Nations-supported reintegration programme, a number of them were reportedly released without undertaking a formal release process, and others reportedly remain in the custody of Transitional Federal Government forces.

98. In June 2011, mass recruitment by Al-Shabaab in Kismayo, Lower Juba region, was reported by a victim of child recruitment, who indicated that the recruitment took place in Kismayo town and that over 80 children remained in the training camp from which he had escaped. Reports were also received of girls

recruited and forcibly married to Al-Shabaab combatants. Children were typically recruited by Al-Shabaab from schools and madrasas, particularly in internally displaced person settlements in Somalia and refugee camps in neighbouring Kenya. Forced recruitment increased in 2011 as a result of the escalation of military operations in Somalia.

99. In 2011, 127 cases of abduction were reported. Most abductions and detentions were carried out by Al-Shabaab in South Central zone.

100. In 2011, 7,799 child casualties of conflict were registered in the three main hospitals in Mogadishu. The main cause of death among children below the age of 5 were burns, chest injuries and internal haemorrhage caused by blasts, shrapnel and bullets. In addition, the United Nations verified the killing of at least 189 children and the injury of 362 as a result of conflict. For example, in October, in Mogadishu, Banadir region, Al-Shabaab conducted a suicide attack against the Ministry of Education using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. Hundreds of children waiting outside to apply for scholarships were affected; at least 15 children were killed and 18 were seriously wounded.

101. A total of 252 cases of rape and sexual violence were reported in 2011. Continued fighting has rendered children more vulnerable to rape and sexual violence, particularly in open and unprotected internally displaced person settlements and especially in Mogadishu. The Transitional Federal Government and allied militia were the main alleged perpetrators in Mogadishu and border areas. In August and September 2011, the United Nations noted a trend emerging where multiple perpetrators raped the same victims in a group setting. Cases of sexual slavery were also reported, with Al-Shabaab fighters reported to have taken girls as young as 9 years old for marriage. Sexual violence in Al-Shabaab-controlled areas was underreported, given the significant fear of reprisals.

102. In 2011, Al-Shabaab and militia groups continued to target schools. In May 2011, a teacher was killed by Al-Shabaab in the Hiiran region for opposing the recruitment of children. In August 2011, Al-Shabaab used a school in Elwak district, Gedo region, for military purposes, disrupting the education of over 500 children. Since February 2011, the school has been used intermittently. In December 2011, Al-Shabaab militia attacked and used a secondary school in Merka district, Lower Shabelle region, as an operations centre. Schools in Mogadishu have been reportedly closed or used by Transitional Federal Government forces.

103. The ongoing conflict continued to restrict humanitarian access and hamper the delivery of assistance, especially in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab. This was further complicated by military interventions in the fourth quarter of 2011. Humanitarian actors have experienced increasing difficulty in accessing South Central zone, particularly following the access ban against 16 humanitarian organizations issued by Al-Shabaab in November 2011. It is estimated that the access ban affected over 3.5 million people — half of them children. The ban affects regions that were critically affected by the famine of 2011.

### **South Sudan**

104. The United Nations verified 352 cases of recruitment or use of children in 2011. Of these, 253 were associated with SPLA, while 99 were associated with armed groups loyal to commanders David YauYau, Peter Gatdet and the late Gatluak

Gai. In addition, 272 boys were released to the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission from various armed groups.

105. In 2011, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting verified the killing of 104 children and the maiming of 78. In addition, 306 reports of killing and maiming were received. Thirty-three children were reportedly killed and 36 injured during five separate clashes between SPLA and armed groups (South Sudan Democratic Movement, South Sudan Liberation Army, an armed group led by Joseph Oloney, and an armed group led by Gabriel Tang). Air strikes by the Sudanese Armed Forces in Unity State resulted in the death of three children and injury of two.

106. In 2011, the country task force also verified the use of 21 schools by SPLA, resulting in the disruption of schooling for approximately 10,935 children. An additional 10 schools were damaged as a result of fighting among different armed groups. In addition, four primary schools in the counties of Uror and Bor were damaged during tribal fighting in Jonglei State, in August and October respectively. The SPLA Deputy Chief of Staff issued an order in December to all SPLA commanders to immediately vacate all schools used by their forces. Two schools were vacated after the issuance of the order.

107. A total of 602 children were reportedly abducted during 2011, of which 356 cases were verified by the United Nations. Most of the abductions took place in the context of tribal conflict in Jonglei State.

108. In 2011, 34 incidents of restriction of humanitarian access were reported, during which personnel of humanitarian organizations were harassed, robbed or blocked at military checkpoints: 8 incidents of looting or diversion of aid were reported; 10 humanitarian premises were raided for equipment and supplies, delaying the humanitarian response in certain areas; and 16 reports were received of humanitarian staff being exposed to violence, out of which two incidents were fatal. Hostilities in the border areas between South Sudan and the Sudan, mined roads in Unity State and tribal conflict in Jonglei continue to limit access to areas where violations are reported and hinder humanitarian assistance to affected populations.

## **Sudan**

### *Darfur*

109. In 2011, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting documented 45 cases of recruitment and use of children, representing a significant decrease from the 115 recorded in 2010. Of the 45 cases, 7 were perpetrated by the Sudanese police forces; 5 by the Border Intelligence Forces; 5 by Central Reserve Police; 14 by pro-Government militias; 5 by the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid; 3 by the Popular Defense Forces (PDF); 1 by the Sudanese Armed Forces; 1 by SLA/Minni Minawi; 1 by JEM; and 3 by unidentified armed groups. The majority of recorded incidents of recruitment and use of children took place in Government-controlled areas. Collection of information in areas that were not fully under the control of Government forces, such as parts of Jebel Mara and the border areas with South and North Kordofan, remained a challenge owing to restrictions and denial of access by both Government and armed groups.

110. The country task force verified 54 cases of maiming and 17 cases of killing of children. The 17 cases of killing included 7 attributed to crossfire, 5 attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces air strikes and 5 to explosive remnants of war. Of the 54 cases of maiming, 23 children were shot, and 31 were injured by explosive remnants of war.

111. In 2011, the country task force verified 59 cases of rape of girls aged 6 to 17 years, an increase compared with the 22 cases recorded in 2010. Some of these cases were reported to the police or to the Sudanese Armed Forces. The alleged perpetrators included members of the Sudanese Armed Forces, unidentified armed men, armed nomads, pro-Government militia, Sudanese police forces, PDF and the Central Reserve Police. Limited access in areas controlled by armed groups and fear of being stigmatized affected the documentation of sexual violence cases.

112. One incident of looting of a school was reported, allegedly by the Sudanese Armed Forces in North Darfur in January 2011. The looting of a hospital in South Darfur by unknown armed elements was also reported.

113. Throughout 2011, humanitarian access continued to be seriously hampered in some areas of Darfur owing to fighting between Government forces and armed groups, as well as security restrictions imposed by the Government. Restrictions and denial of access delayed or prevented the delivery of essential drugs and vaccination for children in Darfur in April 2011.

*Three areas (Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan)*

114. Cases of recruitment and use of children significantly increased in Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan in 2011, with 52 verified cases compared with 8 in 2010. In South Kordofan and Abyei, 41 cases of recruitment of boys aged between 14 and 17 years were verified. Perpetrators included SPLA (12); the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) (5); the Sudanese Armed Forces (2); PDF (5); and unidentified armed groups (17). In Blue Nile, 11 cases of recruitment of boys between 14 and 17 years were verified and attributed to SPLA (10) and the SPLM-N (1). The country task force received a number of credible allegations of abductions of children by SPLM-N with the aim of forcefully recruiting them.

115. From April to June 2011, the number of cases of killing and maiming increased with the resumption of conflict. At least 29 children were reportedly killed and 34 maimed in South Kordofan and Abyei during the reporting period. Of these, two children were killed and three were injured in incidents involving explosive remnants of war. The remaining children were killed or injured as a result of crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces, PDF and SPLM-N, or as a result of shelling and aerial bombings by the Sudanese Armed Forces. In addition, one 7-year-old boy was killed and two children aged 14 and 16 years were injured by Sudanese Armed Forces aerial bombing in Blue Nile. Lack of access impeded the verification of these incidents.

116. Monitoring cases of sexual violence against children in South Kordofan, Abyei and Blue Nile continued to be a challenge. One incident of rape of a 14-year-old girl by four PDF elements in South Kordofan was verified. The country task force received allegations of about 20 additional cases of rape targeting Nuba girls and women by unidentified armed elements, including one incident leading to the death of a girl.



117. The military use of schools and hospitals in El Buram localities, in South Kordofan, by the Sudanese Armed Forces before June 2011 continued. In addition, the functioning of at least 12 schools in South Kordofan was disrupted since fighting began in June 2011. As at December 2011, the education of an estimated 137,900 schoolchildren had been disrupted owing to schools being damaged or used by armed forces, inhabited by internally displaced persons or contaminated with explosive remnants of war. In Blue Nile, it is estimated that 35,335 children were prevented from attending school owing to the disruption of the functioning of 156 schools as a result of fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces and SPLM-N in Bau, Geissan and Kurmuk localities.

118. Humanitarian access deteriorated in South Kordofan, Abyei and Blue Nile in 2011 owing to insecurity and Government-enforced restrictions of movement and new administrative measures. Although limited humanitarian access was granted in some areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, this was restricted to Government-controlled areas. In addition, no international humanitarian staff has been allowed into South Kordofan and Blue Nile since early October 2011. Meanwhile, Abyei remained accessible for humanitarian actors only through South Sudan.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

119. The United Nations has received reports of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 and throughout the reporting period, continuing into 2012. In response to the need for United Nations verified information, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict sent a technical mission to the region to conduct interviews with victims and witnesses in refugee camps, villages and hospitals in the region in March 2012. In almost all recorded cases, children were among the victims of military operations by Government forces, including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia, in their ongoing conflict with the opposition, including the Free Syrian Army (FSA). Children as young as 9 years of age were victims of killing and maiming, arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, and use as human shields. Schools have been regularly raided and used as military bases and detention centres. Information obtained by the technical mission is in line with the findings of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

120. Interviews with former members of the Syrian Armed Forces and the intelligence forces indicated that civilians, including children, were targeted by Government forces if they were residing in villages where members of FSA or other armed opposition groups were believed to be present or where deserters were hiding, or if they were seen fleeing the country seeking refuge. In one instance, a former member of the Syrian Armed Forces stated that, during protests in Tall Kalakh in December 2011, he was given an order by his commander to shoot without distinction, although the soldiers were aware that there were women and children among the protesters. During the armed break-up of the demonstrations, the witness saw three girls between approximately 10 and 13 years of age who had been killed by the Syrian Armed Forces. In another similar incident in Aleppo in the fourth quarter of 2011, a former member of the intelligence forces witnessed the killing of five children in a secondary school during demonstrations.

121. The grave violations continued into 2012 and although this is beyond the reporting period, the gravity of the incidents requires their inclusion in the report. Witness accounts described a particularly grave incident in the village of Ayn l'Arouz in the Jabal Azzawiyah in Idlib province. On 9 March 2012, Syrian Armed Forces, together with the intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia, surrounded the village for an attack that lasted over a period of four days. Government forces entered the village on the first day and killed 11 civilians, including three boys aged between 15 and 17 years. Thirty-four persons, including two boys aged 14 and 16 years, and one 9-year-old girl, were arrested for interrogation about the suspected presence of deserters. Eventually, the village was reportedly left burned and 4 out of the 34 detainees were shot and burned, including the two boys aged 14 and 16 years.

122. There is no evidence of Government forces formally conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 18 years. However, the Syrian Armed Forces and its associated Shabbiha militia used children as young as 8 years on at least three separate occasions within the reporting period. In the incident mentioned above in the village of Ayn l'Arouz in March 2012, a witness stated that several dozen children, boys and girls ranging between the ages of 8 and 13 years, were forcibly taken from their homes. These children were subsequently reportedly used by soldiers and militia members as human shields, placing them in front of the windows of buses carrying military personnel into the raid on the village.

123. The United Nations collected dozens of accounts of eyewitnesses of both children as young as 14 years of age who were tortured while in detention, as well as former members of the Syrian Armed Forces who themselves were forced to torture or witness torture. The Shabbiha militia was also involved in the detention and torture of children, especially during military operations and often in makeshift detention cells in schools. Most child victims of torture described being beaten, blindfolded, subjected to stress positions, whipped with heavy electrical cables, scarred by cigarette burns and, in one recorded case, subjected to electrical shock to the genitals. At least one witness said that he had seen a young boy of approximately 15 years of age succumb to his repeated beatings. Children were detained and tortured because their siblings or parents were assumed to be members of the opposition or FSA, or they themselves were suspected of being associated with FSA. On one occasion, in May 2011, a 15-year-old boy was taken into custody by intelligence forces in the municipal building in Jisr Ash-Shughur and repeatedly beaten with heavy electrical cables during interrogation. The boy stated that there were at least 20 other children his age or younger held in detention.

124. The United Nations has received some credible allegations of the recruitment and use of children by armed opposition, including FSA and other armed groups, although FSA has a stated policy of not recruiting any child under 17 years of age. Various sources reported on young children association with FSA carrying guns and wearing camouflage uniforms. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reminded all parties of their obligations under human rights and international humanitarian law.

125. The United Nations recorded multiple accounts of the use of schools by Government forces, including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia as military staging grounds, temporary bases, detention centres, sniper posts and centres for torture and the interrogation of adults and children. Several witnesses stated that the intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia had

gun emplacements installed on the roofs of schools while students were attending. Accounts also indicated that, on a number of occasions, children were killed or injured by Government forces during military operations on school grounds, and schools were looted and burned as retribution by Government forces in response to student protests.

126. Reports also pointed out that, during the reporting period, hospitals were struck by heavy artillery by Government forces. Aside from the conduct of military operations that prevent civilians from accessing hospitals, reports also indicated that injured persons, including children and their families, were afraid to seek medical treatment out of fear of reprisals by the Government for suspected association with the opposition. Similarly, reports were also received of medical workers being intimidated and threatened by Government forces for having provided or being suspected of providing medical assistance to members of the opposition.

## **B. Information on grave violations against children in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations**

### **Colombia**

127. The armed conflict continued to pose considerable challenges for the protection of children in 2011. Children of African descent and of indigenous communities were disproportionately affected.

128. Widespread and systematic recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups in Colombia continued in 2011. Although the actual scale and scope remains unknown, 300 cases of recruitment and use were reported in 29 of the 32 departments in the country. The early warning system of the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman, which monitors and flags imminent risks of human rights violations against civilians, identified 50 risk situations in 16 departments (104 municipalities) in 2011, including 20 cases of risk related to child recruitment.

129. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) continued to recruit and use children. For example, in May in Antioquia, in two separate events, 15 children were recruited by FARC-EP and 13 children were recruited by ELN. In May and June 2011, in Meta, five children were recruited by FARC-EP. The non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) also continued to recruit and use children. In February 2011, for example, in Antioquia, at least 13 children were recruited by several of these groups, including Los Paisas, Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños. In a 2011 report, the Office of the Ombudsman noted a strengthening of these non-State armed groups, following a process of reconfiguration, expansion and consolidation in various regions of the country.

130. In 2011, reports were received regarding the use of children for intelligence purposes by the Colombian National Army. On several occasions, children separated from non-State armed groups remained in military premises for periods exceeding 36 hours, in violation of the Code on Children and Adolescents and directives by the Ministry of National Defence. For example, in August 2011, in Putumayo, a 15-year-old boy who escaped from FARC-EP and surrendered to the Colombian National Army, was held in military premises for 72 hours. The Colombian National

Army also continued to use children in civil-military activities. Such activities, when undertaken in conflict-affected areas, put children at risk and expose them to retaliation by members of non-State armed groups.

131. Children continued to be victims of attacks, including indiscriminate attacks carried out by armed groups, or as a result of crossfire among non-State armed groups or between non-State armed groups and security forces. In January and February 2011, in various attacks by FARC-EP and other non-State armed groups targeting community leaders and local authorities, three boys and one girl, relatives of these leaders, were killed. In June 2011, in Nariño, an 11-year-old boy was killed and three boys injured in a FARC-EP attack on the police. As at December 2011, at least 32 children had been injured and 7 children were killed by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war.

132. While underreported, girls continued to be victims of sexual violence attributed to members of non-State armed groups. Girls associated with non-State armed groups were often required to have sexual relations with adults at an early age and forced to abort if they became pregnant. In September 2011, a 16-year-old girl separated from FARC-EP reported having undergone five forced abortions during the four years she was associated with the group, in Antioquia. In December 2011, in Nariño, a pregnant 17-year-old girl and a 12-year-old indigenous girl were raped during a massacre by members of Los Rastrojos. In November 2011, in Putumayo, a 12-year-old indigenous girl was raped, tortured and murdered by members of an unidentified non-State armed group. In March 2011, in Nariño, a 17-year-old girl was raped, forced to clean a public place naked, tortured and forced to eat excrement, and subsequently killed in front of the community, allegedly by members of Los Rastrojos. Reports have also been received of cases of sexual violence against children involving members of the security forces.

133. Attacks against schools by non-State armed groups continued to be reported. Schools were damaged as a result of hostilities as well as by anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. In addition, teachers and students were targeted by non-State armed groups, for preventing recruitment and for recruitment and use, respectively. In May 2011, in Arauca and Norte de Santander, 15 teachers were threatened by FARC-EP, ELN and other non-State armed groups. In August 2011 in Córdoba, 44 teachers were threatened. At least 18 of these resorted to displacement for protection. These threats left 1,160 children without schooling.

134. The military use of schools by the Colombian National Army was reported in several departments, including Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Córdoba, Huila, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca. In August 2011, in Cauca, members of the Colombian National Army used a school for seven days, resulting in the suspension of classes.

135. Humanitarian access was restricted owing to the armed conflict, particularly affecting children and indigenous peoples. The departments of Antioquia, Arauca, Cauca, Caquetá, Chocó, Guaviare, Huila, Meta, Córdoba, Nariño and Norte de Santander were particularly affected. Some communities did not receive humanitarian assistance and basic services as a result of armed confrontations, the establishment of illegal armed checkpoints and massive mine laying.

136. Information on the abduction of children was limited during the reporting period. In May 2011, a 14-year-old indigenous girl, the sister of a community leader,

was abducted and tortured for four days, allegedly by members of Los Rastrojos, in Nariño. Also in Nariño, in July and August 2011, the abduction of two girls, aged 13 and 16 years, was attributed to FARC-EP, reportedly as a reprisal for maintaining relationships with members of the National police.

## **India**

137. In 2011, reports were received of recruitment and use of children by Maoist armed groups, also known as Naxalites, particularly in Chhattisgarh State and some districts in adjoining states. In December 2011, the Ministry of State for Women and Child Development stated in Parliament that Maoist armed groups were recruiting and indoctrinating children, and had constituted children's squads and associations (*Bal Dastas*, *Bal Sangham* and *Bal Manch*) as part of mass mobilization. This is supported by a 2010 National Commission for Protection of Child Rights report, which indicated that children were being recruited by Maoist armed groups through, inter alia, intimidation and abduction, and were used in support roles, including as lookouts, messengers, porters and cooks. The report also pointed to the recruitment of children by the militia Salwa Judum. In its judgement of 5 July 2011, the Supreme Court of India ordered the State of Chhattisgarh to take all appropriate measures to prevent the operation of any group, including but not limited to Salwa Judum, that in any manner sought to take the law into its own hands, act unconstitutionally or violate human rights.

138. In 2011, incidents of attacks on schools by Maoist armed groups continued to be reported. Home Ministry statistics indicated that between 2006 and November 2011, Maoist armed groups destroyed 258 school buildings, mostly in Chhattisgarh, Jharkand and Bihar States, of which 21 schools were destroyed between January and November 2011. Government statistics indicate that the number of attacks on school buildings has declined progressively since 2009. The Supreme Court has, on at least two occasions, ordered security forces to vacate schools in Chhattisgarh State, most recently in its order of 18 November 2011. In January 2011, the Government of Chhattisgarh conceded that security forces were using 31 schools. The use of schools by the security forces continued to be reported in various states in 2011.

139. The Government of India has strongly condemned the acts of Naxalites. Based on recommendations from relevant stakeholders, including the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, the Government of India has undertaken a multifaceted approach to address the protection of children in areas of civil unrest, involving focused development efforts, capacity-building and improvement in local governance, in coordination with the concerned state government authorities. While some recommendations of the National Commission remain to be implemented, in 2010 the Government of India launched a pilot scheme, *Bal Bandhu*, in 10 districts of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra to address children's needs comprehensively, focusing on protection, education, health, nutrition, sanitation and safety aspects, including through local community participation. As at 2011, the project had been initiated in nine districts. In September 2011, the Prime Minister announced the launch of the Integrated Action Plan for 60 Naxal-affected districts, with the purpose of implementing public infrastructure projects and improving services.

## **Pakistan**

140. In 2011, Pakistan continued to experience attacks by armed groups using terror tactics and influenced by and/or associated with the Taliban or Al-Qaida, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Attacks have targeted Government sites, schools and civilians, including children, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and urban centres.

141. In 2011, 11 incidents were reported of children being used by armed groups to carry out suicide attacks, involving 10 boys, some as young as 13, and one 9-year-old girl. In one such incident, on 3 April 2011, one boy was killed and another was arrested in a double suicide attack on a Sufi shrine in Dera Ghazi Khan, southern Punjab, which killed 50 people and injured 120. A 14-year-old survivor reported having been trained for two months in Taliban camps in North Waziristan. In another incident on 19 August 2011, a boy was used in a suicide attack during Friday prayers at a mosque in the Ghundai area of Khyber Agency, killing 48 people and injuring more than 100.

142. In 2011, children continued to be victims of indiscriminate attacks, including by improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings. Reports indicate that a total of 57 children were killed during the reporting period from landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (38), bomb blasts (11), shelling (4) and targeted attacks (4). In one case, on 5 June 2011, a bomb blast in a bazaar outside Peshawar killed seven people, including an 11-year-old girl, and injured four other children, for which TTP claimed responsibility. In another case, on 13 September 2011, TTP allegedly attacked a school bus in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, killing four children.

143. Child casualties as a result of landmines and other explosive devices remained a serious concern in 2011. The majority of the casualties were reported in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, including the killing of 30 children (25 boys and 5 girls) and injuring of 49 children (29 boys and 20 girls).

144. Throughout the year, schools continued to be directly targeted by armed groups in bomb and improvised explosive device attacks, resulting in 152 incidents of partial or complete destruction of school facilities in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. According to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas Department of Education, a total number of 73 schools were damaged in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, with the remainder occurring in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. In a double attack on 20 December 2011 in Charsadda District, a Government primary school for girls and a primary school for boys were blown up. In neighbouring Mohmand Agency, TTP claimed responsibility for the attack, reportedly to avenge military operations in the region and in opposition to secular and girls' education.

145. With regard to the abduction of children, it was reported that on 31 August 2011 at least 27 boys from Bajaur Agency were abducted along the border with Afghanistan by armed militants of TTP. Seventeen children under the age of 10 were released by TTP and two other boys managed to escape, leaving at least eight children with TTP. The remaining children are believed to be in the neighbouring Kunar Province in Afghanistan.

146. On 10 January 2012, the Governor of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa launched a child protection policy in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, implementing a plan

for protective services and child protection units in all Federally Administered Tribal Areas Agencies. The Malakand-based Sabaoon rehabilitation and reintegration programme for children taken into custody by the Pakistan security forces for alleged association with armed groups received 29 new cases in 2011, bringing the total number of children in the Sabaoon Centre to 170; 102 of these children have been reintegrated into their families, including two girls.

### **Philippines**

147. An increase was noted in the recorded number of cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups in 2011 (54 children) compared with 2010 (24 children). The country task forces on monitoring and reporting documented 26 incidents, involving 33 boys and 21 girls. Of that number, the country task force verified two incidents, involving two boys and four girls aged between 14 and 17, attributed to the New People's Army (NPA). The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) was implicated in two verified incidents, involving seven boys, who were armed and performing military functions. Although the United Nations currently has no access to the areas under control of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Movement (BIFM), a breakaway faction of MILF led by commander "Kato", the country task force received reports that the armed group had children within its ranks. Four incidents, involving six boys aged between 13 and 17 years, were attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). Reports indicate that ASG used children as combatants against Armed Forces of the Philippines targets, but these cases could not be verified owing to security concerns.

148. A number of incidents of association of children and/or false labelling of children as NPA combatants were attributed to AFP and the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units, its associated paramilitary groups. The country task force verified six cases, involving at least 12 boys and 7 girls aged between 10 and 17. There were also allegations that as part of the implementation of the new Internal Peace and Security Plan (*Bayanihan*) children were used for military intelligence by AFP and its associated Units. There have also been reports of four cases of detention by AFP and the Units, involving two boys aged 13 and 17, and two girls aged 6 and 14, as part of counterinsurgency operations.

149. During the reporting period, children continued to be victims of bomb explosions, shootings, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive device attacks. Although fewer encounters took place between Government security forces and MILF, fighting with other armed groups, including NPA, ASG and private militia remained relatively unchanged compared with the previous reporting period. In 2011, 44 incidents of killing and maiming of children were recorded, signifying an increase in the number of child casualties. Twenty-six children, including 16 boys and 10 girls, were reportedly killed, and 41 children, including 21 boys and 20 girls, were reportedly maimed. Of those incidents, nine implicated AFP and the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units, five implicated MILF, three implicated ASG and one implicated NPA. Twenty-seven incidents were attributed to private militia and unknown perpetrators. It is important to note that violations allegedly committed by armed groups, in particular ASG and NPA, are more difficult to verify, as few primary sources are willing to come forward, and the United Nations has restricted access to the concerned areas for security reasons.

150. There was a significant increase in incidents affecting schools and hospitals in 2011. During the reporting period, a total number of 52 cases were recorded. Twenty-seven cases, of which 16 were verified, were attributed to AFP and its associated Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units, including one incident of military use of a health centre, one incident of a school being burned during an airstrike operation, and 14 incidents of military use of schools in the course of counterinsurgency operations.

151. The remainder of the recorded incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals were attributed to MILF (6), NPA (4), ASG (3) and unknown perpetrators (12). During the clashes between MILF and the breakaway faction BIFM in August 2011, the country task force verified that two schools were used and another partially destroyed during the fighting. An increase was also observed of improvised explosive devices being planted by NPA and other unknown perpetrators near and on school grounds, targeting AFP detachments.

152. Throughout the reporting period, 13 incidents of abduction of children have been recorded, involving at least 12 boys and 8 girls aged between 4 and 17. A pattern of kidnap-for-ransom activity to finance armed groups was observed in the conflict-affected regions of Mindanao. ASG was identified as perpetrator in three incidents of abduction of children, involving three boys, and MILF was identified in one incident, involving a 7-year-old girl. Nine more incidents, involving at least seven boys and five girls following similar modus operandi were recorded, but the perpetrators remain unknown.

### **Sri Lanka**

153. During the reporting period, the security situation in the country stabilized, gradually moving towards an early recovery. However, assistance for the most vulnerable families in the north remained a challenge. There continued to be a heavy military presence, and the civil administration is in need of further strengthening. The Government stated that this would be a priority. The implementation of these commitments as well as the recommendations of the Lessons Learned and Reconciliation Commission, including on children, will positively contribute towards post-conflict efforts.

154. No new cases of recruitment of children by armed groups have been reported since October 2009. However, the whereabouts of 1,373 children of a total of 6,905 who had been recruited by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) remains unknown, and the location of five boys previously recruited by the Tamil Makkal Viduthalai Pulikal (TMVP), three of which have been traced to the forces of Inya Bharathi, is also unknown. The Government of Sri Lanka has been actively following up on these allegations. The National Child Protection Authority has undertaken an independent investigation and made recommendations to the Government of Sri Lanka which are being pursued by the Criminal Investigation Division of the police. To date, no prosecution has been initiated.

155. Since 2008, three rehabilitation centres have been in operation, providing education, care, psychosocial support and reunification assistance to children associated with LTTE, TMVP and Inya Bharathi. To date, 594 children aged between 12 and 18 years, including 364 boys and 230 girls, have completed the rehabilitation programme and have been reunited with their families. However, recent community awareness programmes have revealed that a number of children



formerly associated with armed groups have not accessed reintegration programmes, including a trend of underreporting of girls. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting is engaging with the Government on the need to identify the possible reintegration needs of these individuals.

156. In December of 2009, the Vavuniya Government Agent and the Probation and Child Care Commissioner (Northern Province) jointly established the Family Tracing and Reunification Unit for unaccompanied and separated children, with UNICEF support. At the time of writing, 736 tracing applications had been registered concerning children, the majority of whom were recruited by LTTE. To date, 139 children have been matched and referred to the Unit for tracing and verification, of which 42 have been reunited with their family members.

157. The Government of Sri Lanka has made headway in the evacuation of school premises in the reporting period, vacating four out of five schools recorded in my previous report. However, one school in Poonahri, Kilinochchi District, remains in use by the Sri Lankan Army. The Government has indicated that the school will be vacated by May 2012. I remain concerned that 14 additional schools in Mullaitivu, Kilinochchi and Jaffna districts continue to be used by Sri Lankan security forces, although these areas are not opened for civilian return.

#### **Southern border provinces of Thailand**

158. Although no exact figures are available, children continued to be victims of attacks by armed groups against Government officials, security forces and civilians in the four southern border provinces of Thailand: Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla. On 3 February 2011, for example, armed assailants reportedly opened fire on a group of civilians in Panare district, Pattani Province, killing five people and injuring four others, including a 12-year-old boy. In another incident, on 16 September 2011, three bombs exploded at 30-minute intervals in different public places in Sungai Kolok district, Narathiwat province, reportedly killing five civilians, including a 3-year-old girl, and injuring another 115 people. On 1 February 2011, members of a family in Rueso district, Yala Province, including a 15-year-old girl and a 7-year-old boy, were reportedly executed by armed assailants.

159. During the reporting period, armed groups reportedly continued to carry out targeted attacks against schools, teachers and students, purportedly because they were perceived as a symbol of Government authority. The practice of having Government soldiers present on some school grounds in the southern border provinces to provide protection is also worrisome. On 28 September 2011, various sources reported that 18 members of a uniformed armed group attacked Ban Lamoh school in Rueso district, Narathiwat Province. The gunmen reportedly opened fire on soldiers waiting to escort teachers home, killing one 7-year-old child in the crossfire. In another incident, on 19 July 2011, three students were allegedly injured when a motorcycle bomb exploded in front of a school in Bannang Sata district, Yala Province.

160. Armed groups were also allegedly responsible for the killing of at least 31 Government teachers and educational personnel in the southern border provinces during 2011. All reported incidents follow a similar modus operandi characterized by a combination of hit-and-run attacks and the use of improvised explosive devices. On 15 January 2011, a teacher at Decha Pattayanukul in Muang district, Pattani Province, was reportedly killed in a drive-by shooting. In another case, on

25 July 2011, five teachers were reportedly injured in a bomb attack at the entrance of Ban Lamud School in Muang district, Yala Province.

161. Reports continue to indicate that children in the southern border provinces were targeted for recruitment by armed groups, and that these children were used in a variety of roles, including for intelligence gathering, diversion tactics and arson attacks. The United Nations has also received allegations of association of children with the Chor Ror Bor (village defence volunteers). These reports indicated that children were engaged by the Chor Ror Bor to patrol villages, man checkpoints and identify police suspects.

162. The Government of Thailand has taken positive action to protect children in the southern border provinces. The Government made increasing efforts to prevent the involvement of children with armed groups under the guidance of the Plan for the Development of the Five Southern Border Provinces Special Areas (2009-2012), as well as the Educational Development Plan in the Southern Border Provinces (2010-2012). It should also be noted that, on 19 April 2011, the Government amended its 2008 regulation on the Chor Ror Bor to explicitly prohibit the recruitment of children below 18 years of age. In addition, the United Nations has been informed that the Government is in the process of setting up a Subcommittee on the Protection and Development of Children and Youth to oversee and respond to the situation of children in the southern border provinces.

163. The United Nations country team in Thailand has informed my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict that it is not in a position to monitor, report or verify the aforementioned allegations of violations against children in the southern border provinces. It is therefore critical that the United Nations country team be granted such access to the southern border provinces that is necessary to independently verify and report on alleged violations against children in the region, as requested. I strongly encourage the Government of Thailand to strengthen cooperation with the country team to enable such access.

## **Yemen**

164. The United Nations and its partners documented the association of children to the Yemeni armed forces and various armed groups. Members of the Yemeni armed forces indicated that children were in the ranks of the Republican Guard, and in Sana'a and Taiz, were seen armed at military checkpoints of the Yemeni armed forces. In the districts of Khanfar and Zinjibar in Abyan Governorate, the recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni armed forces and pro-Government tribal militia to fight against Ansar Al-Shari'a/Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was observed, with many families enlisting their children for financial reasons.

165. The recruitment and use of children by the breakaway First Armoured Division (FAD), led by defected General Ali Mohsen, was also documented during 2011. Children associated with FAD were seen carrying out security duties in Sana'a. Elements in FAD indicated to the United Nations that many children were associated with the armed group. They also described how FAD encouraged voluntary enlistment among demonstrators in Change Square in Sana'a.

166. In Sa'da, recruitment drives by the Al-Houthi armed group included the targeting of children. New recruits, including children, were seen manning Al-Houthi checkpoints in Sa'da city and fighting armed tribal groups in neighbouring Al-Jawf Governorate. In the districts of Khanfar and Zinjibar in Abyan Governorate, children were observed being recruited in mosques by the Ansar Al-Shari'a/AQAP. One 15-year-old boy reportedly joined Ansar Al-Shari'a/AQAP and was later killed during fighting in 2011.

167. A total of 159 children (138 boys and 21 girls) were reportedly killed in 2011, compared with 76 cases in 2010. The number of children maimed increased fourfold to 363 (312 boys and 51 girls), from 79 in 2010. Another 322 child demonstrators (319 boys and 3 girls) reportedly suffered tear-gas suffocation. Most cases of killing and maiming occurred in Sana'a (47 killed and 141 maimed), Taiz (27 killed and 112 maimed) and Aden (19 killed and 21 maimed). Killing and maiming resulted from, inter alia, children being fired upon alongside adult demonstrators; proximity to clashes between Government forces and opposition groups (including FAD and armed tribal groups such as the Al-Ahmar group); or indiscriminate shelling by Government forces or armed groups. While the verification of perpetrators has been challenging, some 76 per cent of the reported cases received by the United Nations were attributed to Government forces (the Republican Guard and Central Security Forces) and pro-Government militias in Sana'a, Taiz and Aden. In Abyan Governorate, 31 children were killed and 28 maimed as a result of the fighting in late May between Government forces and Ansar Al-Shari'a/AQAP. Fourteen children were reported killed and 29 children maimed in Al-Houthi controlled areas of Sa'da Governorate, mainly in the village of Damaj, home to a (Sunni) Salafist religious group, which was under siege by the (Shiite) Al-Houthis in late 2011, before an agreement was reached by the parties. Twenty-eight children were killed and nine maimed by mines or explosive remnants of war during the reporting period, including 18 children who were killed and 4 injured in an explosion at an ammunitions factory in Abyan Governorate, in March 2011.

168. A surge in attacks on schools was recorded, including 211 attacks on schools affecting a total of 150 schools, including in Sana'a (130), Taiz (72), Abyan (7), Hajja (1) and Sa'da (1). Incidents against schools included looting; military use of schools by armed forces (Republican Guard and Central Security Forces) and armed groups (FAD and the Al-Ahmar group); shelling; aerial bombardment; arson; and intimidation. In Sana'a, at least 77 schools were attacked, the majority of which was reported to have been carried out by armed groups such as FAD and the Al-Ahmar group. The operations of Al-Houthi in Hajjah decreased school attendance. Forty-five schools were closed as a result of armed conflict and violence. In total, the schooling of some 200,000 children was disrupted in 2011.

169. In total, 23 attacks on hospitals and medical personnel were reported, including nine health-care facilities in Sana'a and the killing of two medical staff in Change Square, while they were reportedly assisting injured demonstrators. In Abyan, the Al-Razi Hospital was bombed, resulting in the maiming of two children. Three hospitals in Abyan were allegedly used by pro-Government tribal militia. In Taiz, four hospitals were reportedly attacked, including Al-Thawrah Hospital, which was used by the Republican Guards in October 2011 as a base for military operations while patients were being treated. It was subsequently attacked on 3 December 2011, allegedly by armed groups. In Sa'da, the only primary health

centre in the As Safra district of Damaj was shelled by Al-Houthi during the first half of November of 2011; damage forced the closure of the centre.

170. In total, 46 incidents of denial of humanitarian access for children were reported. In addition to Al-Jawf Governorate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access in Abyan Governorate was impeded by fighting between Government forces and the Ansar Al-Shari'a/AQAP. A siege by Al-Houthi on the village of Damaj, Sa'da Governorate, from October to December 2011, disrupted the provision of basic services, affecting 12,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, Al-Houthi placed conditions on humanitarian assistance in their area of control; some humanitarian agencies completely withdrew from Sa'da Governorate as a result. Sixty-seven security incidents affecting humanitarian actors were reported, perpetrated predominantly by tribal armed groups and Al-Houthi.

### **III. Information on progress made by parties to conflict on dialogue, action plans and the release of children**

#### **Afghanistan**

171. On 30 January 2011, an action plan for the prevention of underage recruitment by the Afghan National Security Forces, including annexes on sexual violence and killing and maiming in contravention of international humanitarian law, was signed by the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations, and witnessed by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. A working group composed of Ministry representatives was established to report on the implementation of the Action Plan. A first compliance report was submitted to the United Nations at the beginning of 2012.

172. Positive initiatives were taken by individual ministries in moving towards the prevention of recruitment and use of children, and progress was noted in the course of 2011. For example, the Ministry of the Interior trained more than 150 staff of the Afghan National Police on age-assessment procedures and launched a nationwide awareness-raising campaign for the prevention of underage recruitment. The Ministry of the Interior also initiated investigations into 19 cases of alleged underage recruitment into the Afghan National Security Forces. In the western region, the Afghan National Police established child centres in four provincial recruitment centres, which began systematically documenting and rejecting attempts by children to enlist. Also in compliance with the Action Plan, the Ministries of the Interior and Defence have provided the United Nations with unimpeded access to Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army recruitment and training centres, and the Ministry of Justice to detainees in juvenile rehabilitation centres across the country. Also, in line with the addendum to the Action Plan, both the Ministry of the Interior and the Minister of Defence issued directives to prevent the recruitment and sexual abuse of children in the ranks of the Afghan National Security Forces, specifically stating sanctions for the perpetrators. Finally, the Government of Afghanistan mapped all the programmes and legislation that identified gaps and enhanced implementation of the Action Plan. This effort is welcome as a step towards full compliance with the Action Plan.

173. However, the lack of regular follow-up with the United Nations on the development of a comprehensive interministerial strategy has delayed the full implementation of the Action Plan, despite constructive engagement and initiatives taken by individual ministries.

174. Limited access to certain areas and the fragmentation of armed groups impeded dialogue on the recruitment and use of children. However, dialogue with elders in communities has proven partially successful, in particular for the reopening of schools and the safe access for humanitarian assistance. It should also be noted that the highest religious council, the *Ulema Shura*, issued a fatwa in March 2011, which condemns child recruitment, attacks against education and killing and maiming in contravention of international humanitarian law.

### **Central African Republic**

175. On 19 October 2011, APRD, which had released approximately 1,300 children between 2009 and 2010, signed an action plan with the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of children. On 20 November, another action plan on the recruitment and use of children was signed by CPJP, and witnessed by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Furthermore, on 20 November, the leader of UFDR, in dialogue with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and my Special Representative in the Central African Republic, reiterated his commitment to release children remaining in UFDR ranks, and undertook to allow United Nations verification of the presence of children. In 2007, UFDR had signed an action plan to end recruitment and use of children with the United Nations.

176. Since the signing of the action plans, two implementation committees were created with CPJP and UFDR, respectively, to oversee the release of children. Attempts to contact APRD leadership and put in place an implementation committee failed following the arrest of the APRD leader. Further, owing to security constraints, the United Nations was not able to verify the absence of children in the ranks of APRD.

177. In April 2011, the Government of the Central African Republic established an Interministerial National Council on Child Protection to support the development and validation of new legislation, policies and strategies on child protection, as well the reinforcement of data collection and profiling of different vulnerabilities to which children are exposed in the country. In 2011, the National Assembly ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government has also drafted a child protection law, which was being finalized in 2011.

178. During the reporting period, an estimated 400 children were separated from self-defence groups in the Ouham-Pende prefecture.

### **Chad**

179. On 14 June 2011, an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by the Armée nationale tchadienne was signed in N'djamena between the Government of Chad and the United Nations, and witnessed by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. In the action plan, the Government committed to preventing underage recruitment in the Armée nationale tchadienne and associated

forces by, inter alia, allowing United Nations verification of the presence of children in their ranks, and criminalizing the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict under domestic law.

180. In August 2011, a committee of experts composed of the Government, the United Nations and civil society developed a road map to guide the implementation of the action plan, as well as terms of reference for focal points in the Ministries of Social Action and National Defence. The implementation of the action plan remains limited, despite advocacy by the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, representatives of the international community in Chad and my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. In February 2012, the Ministries of Social Action and National Defence nominated focal points in their respective Ministries to ensure, in cooperation with the United Nations, the supervision and monitoring of the implementation process.

181. During 2011, a total of 165 children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, all boys, were supported in two transitional care centres in N'djamena. Of the 55 children separated from armed groups in 2011, 50 children between the ages of 14 and 17 years (including 13 girls) were separated from the Chadian armed group Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad, 4 children were separated by the Armée nationale tchadienne from CPJP, an armed group based in the Central African Republic, and one child was separated from the Chadian armed group Union des forces républicaines. The latter boy had been captured in 2010 but was held for over 10 months in the prison of N'djamena before being handed over to child protection actors.

### **Colombia**

182. The Government voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on the condition that any dialogue between my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations country team or the country task forces on monitoring and reporting and illegal armed groups is possible only with the prior and explicit consent of the Government of Colombia. There was no contact or dialogue between the United Nations system and non-State armed groups during the period covered by the report on the preparation and implementation of action plans to address grave violations against children, delaying progress in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005).

183. During the reporting period, the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare provided protection to 282 children (76 girls and 206 boys) separated from non-State armed groups. Of these, 207 were separated from FARC-EP, 44 from ELN and 24 from non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations, considered as criminal gangs by the Government. In 2011, the Institute also provided protection to three children who had separated from AUC, the Ejército Popular de Liberación and the former Ejército Revolucionario Guevarista. Children separated from other non-State armed groups formed after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations were not systematically referred to the Institute; some were referred to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution. All children, as victims, should be accorded the same benefits and protection, regardless of the group that recruited or used them.

184. The Inter-Sectoral Commission for the prevention of recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups, composed of 17 governmental entities, continued

activities aimed at the prevention of child recruitment, including supporting the development of regional action plans on prevention and awareness-raising. The Commission also addressed the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Coordination mechanisms for the prevention of recruitment at the departmental and municipal level were also established. The impact of the work of the Commission would be reinforced by the strengthening of its coordination and leadership role, ensuring financial sustainability and by increasing its institutional capacity.

185. Other child protection activities conducted by the Government of Colombia include prevention measures adopted under the national development plan, “Prosperity for all”, endorsed by local authorities in six departments to date; the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare protection and reintegration programme; and the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman early warning system, operationalized with help of the Inter-Institutional Early Warning Committee.

186. As at 31 August, 1,448 cases of child recruitment had been registered, out of a total of 26,026 crimes confessed in the framework of the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975). In December, the first conviction under this legal framework was handed down for the recruitment between 1997 and 2002 of 309 children in Antioquia and Chocó, by former AUC commander “El Aleman”.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

187. Despite entering its seventh year on my list of parties that commit grave violations against children, the Government and FARDC made little progress towards the development and implementation of an action plan to halt the recruitment and use of children. Nevertheless, the Ministries of Defence and of Justice and Human Rights created a joint inter-ministerial committee/working group to discuss an action plan to end recruitment and use of children by FARDC in line with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

188. While some progress was made in separating children from FARDC through the security sector reform process, concerns remain over the ineffectiveness of the mechanisms to verify the ages of incoming recruits, further compounded by low levels of birth registration.

189. In 2011, 1,244 children (1,226 boys and 18 girls) were separated from armed forces and groups, in North Kivu (69 per cent), South Kivu (23 per cent) and Orientale Province (7.6 per cent). Forty-two of the children were foreigners (40 Rwandans and 2 Ugandans). Three factors explain the higher number of documented releases in North Kivu: FARDC operations against armed group operations in the province; the comparatively high presence of protection actors; and the difficulty of accessing many locations in South Kivu and Orientale Province. In July 2011, General Kirikicho Mirimba, commander of the Mai-Mai Kirikicho armed group operating in South Kivu, made a written commitment to separate children from the ranks of his armed group.

190. Most of the children separated during 2011 had been recruited and used by FDLR, various Mai-Mai groups and FARDC. The majority escaped and approached bases or partners of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for assistance; others were identified through MONUSCO screenings during FARDC “regimentation”, biometric registration and training events. Most of the 1,244 children released had

been recruited before 2011 and had been associated with armed forces and armed groups between one and three years, corresponding to the 2008-2011 period of increased hostilities between armed groups and FARDC, as well as clashes between armed groups such as CNDP and the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO). It is unclear whether the small number of girls separated in 2011 reflects the extent of girls' association with armed forces or armed groups. Child protection actors commonly identify girls long after they have separated from an armed force or armed group.

### **Myanmar**

191. Beginning in October 2010, the co-chairs of the country task forces on monitoring and reporting participated in seven meetings to negotiate an action plan with the Tatmadaw, including the integrated border guard forces. Discussions on the action plan were also held between my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Myanmar delegation in New York during September to November 2011 and are ongoing. There has been much progress in the negotiation process, and the country task force reported that it is optimistic that an action plan will be signed in 2012. However, the country task force and my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict also reported that a number of issues remain outstanding before this can be done. This includes access of the country task force to affected children, in particular to military facilities and prisons, and permission to have additional international staff for monitoring purposes.

192. There was no dialogue with non-State actors during the reporting period, despite the fact that the issue has been pursued throughout the reporting period by the co-chairs of the country task force at the highest level. Access to vulnerable groups in many areas of the country, including children, continued to be challenging for United Nations system agencies and other international humanitarian actors. However, there was some progress by the end of the reporting period, as the Government, in principle, has agreed to provide the country task force with a written assurance that once an action plan is signed with the Tatmadaw, it would facilitate access to non-State armed groups. The terms of that access are yet to be agreed. The country task force has advocated with the Government to include the protection of children in armed conflict as an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to negotiate the transformation of ceasefire groups to border guard forces or to resolve the conflict with KIA, KNU/KNLA, KNPP/KA and SSA-S.

193. The country task force verified the release of 109 underage recruits, all boys, from the Tatmadaw in 2011. Of these, 61 were released under the ILO forced labour complaints mechanism. In 2011, the Government continued to regularly submit a list of discharged children.

194. In addition to those formally released, the country task force obtained information from the Government of an additional 417 potential new recruits rejected at the recruitment unit screening between January and the end of September 2011 for the reason of being under 18 years of age. However, despite increasing visits to Tatmadaw recruitment units and training schools, it remained difficult for the country task force to determine that these vetting measures were consistently applied. During informal discussions, Tatmadaw soldiers have highlighted the



conflicting pressure they are under, with instructions to find new recruits often taking precedence over the age restrictions on recruitment.

195. Furthermore, arrests of underage recruits as “deserters” continued in 2011. ILO documented a total of 22 children arrested and charged with desertion in 2011, of whom three were released and discharged from service.

196. New military instructions continued to be issued in 2011 on the prevention of underage recruitment. The Government shared documents indicating that, in 2011, 51 soldiers of the Tatmadaw were either warned, had their pay and allowances cut, received a serious reprimand or were demoted for recruitment and use of children. However, the country task force noted that, in most cases, the penalties meted out to those convicted of underage recruitment were not commensurate with the crimes committed.

### **Nepal**

197. A technical mission from the Office of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was undertaken in coordination with the United Nations Monitoring Team in Nepal, from 12 to 16 December 2011. The purpose of the mission was to advocate with the UCPN-M to fully comply with the action plan and to assist the Monitoring Team in this regard. The mission met with the UCPN-M Chair, Pushpa Kamal Dahal “Prachanda”, senior Maoist army leaders, members of the diplomatic community and members of the Government of Nepal. A matrix of UCPN-M compliance with the action plan was developed and shared with the relevant Maoist leaders to help UCPN-M address the remaining challenges towards full compliance.

198. Following the technical mission, a letter was sent by the UCPN-M Chair to the Maoist Army division commanders. The circular acknowledged some of the findings of the Monitoring Team and requested the division commanders to fully comply with the action plan. Subsequently, UCPN-M has taken steps to suspend payments, to cease providing housing and to encourage disqualified minors to register for the reintegration programme provided by the United Nations. In the light of the above, it has been determined that UCPN-M has come into full compliance.

### **Philippines**

199. During her visit to the Philippines in April 2011, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict met with the MILF leadership to discuss the implementation of the action plan between MILF and the United Nations, signed in August 2009. It was agreed with MILF that the registration of children across the 21 base commands would be completed within nine months, while more determined criteria on the degrees of association with the armed group would be applied to the identification of children. MILF reaffirmed its position that no child under the age of 18 would be recruited or used, yet acknowledged that children might become involved through the community fabric.

200. The extension of the United Nations-MILF action plan remains pending. While the MILF agreement in principle to continue with implementation of the action plan remains, the expiry of the action plan in July 2011 after two years of implementation has been followed by a significant period of inactivity. This period, from August 2011 to the present, coincided with the MILF withdrawal from the peace talks with

the Government of the Philippines, and an escalation in armed skirmishes between AFP, MILF and the breakaway BIFM. Direct communication between the United Nations and MILF resumed in December 2011, allowing for constructive dialogue on the challenges to the complete registration of children associated with MILF. This dialogue is expected to result in the signing of an addendum on the extension of the action plan within the first quarter of 2012.

201. The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the political front of NPA, agreed on 7 April 2011 to meet for talks on the possibility of an action plan with the United Nations to prevent and halt the recruitment and use of children. In January 2012, with the knowledge of the Government of the Philippines, a technical team from the United Nations met with members of the NDFP negotiating panel for an initial discussion. NDFP continues to deny that NPA has any children in its ranks, and claims to have a policy of no underage recruitment. NDFP requested more time for internal consultation and committed to continue a protection dialogue with the United Nations.

202. Owing to the security risks involved, the United Nations has not been able to engage with ASG to date.

203. During her field visit in April 2011, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was able to gain the commitment of the Department of National Defense and AFP to develop a strategic plan for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. This strategy aims to address concerns surrounding the association of children with AFP paramilitary units, including the Citizen Armed Force Geographical Units, by ensuring child protection training for AFP personnel, the establishment of vetting procedures at the local level, and the secondment of international specialized staff to the AFP Human Rights Office.

### **Somalia**

204. While the implementation of the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on children and armed conflict was delayed owing to a change of Government in 2011, the political commitment of the post-June 2011 Government to end grave violations against children by the Transitional Federal Government was encouraging. A number of important steps have been taken. In July, the Transitional Federal Government issued General Order No. 1, which underlined that the recruitment and use of children by members of Somali National Security Forces was a violation of national law and the Code of Conduct of the armed forces. In November, during a mission of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to Mogadishu, the Transitional Federal Government appointed military and civilian focal points to interact with the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, including on the development of an action plan to address recruitment and use of children by Transitional Federal Government forces. Procedures to ensure that children are screened during recruitment exercises and are separated on an ongoing basis from the Transitional Federal Government forces will be the cornerstone of the action plan that the Transitional Federal Government will develop with United Nations support. Engagement with Al-Shabaab on the protection of children was not possible during the course of the year.

### **South Sudan**

205. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting was formally established in September 2011, following the independence of South Sudan and the establishment of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Following consultations, a new action plan was signed by the Government of South Sudan on 13 March 2012 during the visit of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. SPLA has continuously granted access to military barracks or training centres for child protection actors to verify the presence of children. Following the August 2010 establishment of the SPLA Child Protection Unit at SPLA headquarters, such units have been established in seven other SPLA divisions.

206. SPLA offered the rebel militia groups in South Sudan amnesty if they surrendered and accepted integration into SPLA within a certain deadline. Three armed groups (allied to David YauYau, Peter Gatdet and the late Gatluak Gai) accepted that arrangement. The children associated with those three groups were released prior to integration.

207. Four military orders were issued during the reporting period by SPLA for the immediate release of all children and for halting all recruitment and use of children within SPLA. As a result, seven military barracks submitted the names of 392 boys who were released from SPLA.

208. As part of the programme for release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces or groups in South Sudan, a total of 352 children (351 boys and 1 girl) were registered by the South Sudan Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration Commission in 2011. Of these, 272 (all boys) were released through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in 2011. Some 255 children were reunited and received reintegration assistance. In addition, 210 children released in 2010 continued to receive assistance during 2011.

### **Sri Lanka**

209. In relation to the continued listing of the Inya Bharathi faction and in response to efforts by the Government of Sri Lanka to implement the recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, a United Nations Headquarters compliance mission visited Sri Lanka in January 2012. The mission found that the Government had undertaken serious efforts to locate the five children allegedly still associated with the Inya Bharathi faction. Upon the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nation Child Protection Authority undertook initial investigations, which were subsequently handed over to the Criminal Investigation Division of the Police for further investigation. In addition, on 7 January 2012, additional enquiries were undertaken by the Secretary of Justice in the presence of the Director General for the United Nations of the Ministry of External Affairs and local authorities directly with Inya Bharathi. Mr. Bharathi denied the charges. The mission was able to verify that the police had approached the families and witnesses in the cases and those investigations continue. There has been no obtained evidence suggesting that Mr. Bharathi possesses a chain of command over the aforementioned cases. The United Nations in Sri Lanka will continue to monitor and report on the case.

210. In view of the efforts of the Government to investigate the whereabouts of the remaining children allegedly still associated with the Inya Bharathi faction, and

their compliance with previous action plan commitments and the recommendations of the Working Group on children and armed conflict and the special envoys of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in Sri Lanka, I have delisted the Inya Bharathi faction from the annexes.

### **Sudan**

211. In 2011, progress was made in discussions between the United Nations and the Sudanese Armed Forces on the preparation of a time-bound action plan. Discussions began during the course of the year with SLA/Abdul Wahid to establish an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. In addition, SLA/Historical Leadership submitted a written commitment to the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of children in Darfur.

212. During the reporting period, 255 former child soldiers, including 94 young adults and 164 below 18 years of age, were registered in North and West Darfur by the North Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. They had been formerly associated to JEM/Peace Wing, SLA/Mustapha Terab and Liberals and Reform Movement (LRM). Separately, the SLA/Historical Leadership shared a list of 120 children associated with their group in South Darfur with the United Nations for registration with the Commission. In Blue Nile, 353 children, all of them boys between 13 and 17 years old, were released between 30 December 2010 and April 2011 from SPLA and registered by the Commission.

213. During the reporting period, there were encouraging signs of progress in the area of juvenile justice. In my previous report, concerns were raised over the death sentence imposed against four children who allegedly took part in a JEM attack on a convoy of the Government of the Sudan in Sanyi Afundu in 2010 (see A/65/820-S/2011/250, para. 150). On 20 June 2011, the Supreme Court of the Sudan handed down a ruling dismissing the death sentence imposed by the Court in Nyala, South Darfur, and ordered a retrial, citing failure to follow the established legal procedures necessary to guarantee a fair trial.

214. The country task force on monitoring and reporting registered progress by the Government to address rape cases with the opening of investigations by the police that resulted in the arrest of 16 alleged perpetrators, including Government officials. In addition, the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement signed the Agreement on the adoption of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, on 14 July. The Doha Document contains provisions that comprehensively address the causes of the conflict in Darfur and assist in addressing violations against children.

### **Yemen**

215. In May 2011, the Government of Yemen issued a statement expressing its commitment to end the recruitment and use of children. In follow up to the recommendations of the universal periodic review of Yemen by the Human Rights Council, a decree on the same matter was issued by the Government in November. In August 2011, in response to my 2010 report on children and armed conflict and the listing of two Yemeni parties, the Minister of Legal Affairs and the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood reaffirmed in writing their commitment to work with the United Nations on ending the use and recruitment of children. Defected General Ali Mohsen of FAD issued a decree in November 2011 for the

release of 100 children. However, verification of this by the United Nations was not possible in 2011. Following the signing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-brokered agreement in November, a military affairs, security and stability committee was formed with a mandate to rehabilitate combatants who do not meet conditions for service with the armed forces. The United Nations began working with the Committee to develop a concrete, time-bound action plan to end the use and recruitment of children in the armed forces of Yemen.

216. No progress was made in 2011 on the release of children from pro-Government militia. In November 2011, in response to the universal periodic review recommendations on Yemen, the Government entrusted the Minister of Legal Affairs to form a committee to conduct independent and transparent investigations into allegations of human rights violations committed during the civil unrest that started in February 2011. However, progress has been slow. It is expected that this recommendation will be implemented with the establishment of a new transitional Government following the signing of the GCC initiative. The Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood has, since the inception of the civil unrest, raised awareness and advocated against the use and exploitation of children, including through the media.

217. Dialogue with the Al-Houthi armed group on grave violations against children and the development of an action plan to end recruitment and use was not possible during the reporting period.

#### **IV. Follow-up to specific requests in Security Council resolution 1998 (2011)**

##### **Communications with sanctions committees**

218. Following a briefing by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict on the situation of conflict-affected children in Somalia, the Security Council Sanctions Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea expanded in July 2011 its sanctions designation criteria to include grave violations against children, including recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and forced displacement in Somalia. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict continued to work closely with the Group of Experts established to monitor the implementation of the sanctions regime for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

219. This brings to four the number of sanctions committees that now have designation criteria on grave violations against children (Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Sudan). Other sanctions regimes involving individuals or entities that commit grave violations against children — in particular those against Al-Qaida and the Taliban — are encouraged to include designation criteria for grave violations against children.

220. The expansion of the sanctions architecture on grave violations against children is a significant step. The threat of sanctions sends a powerful signal to parties that perpetrate grave violations, and has contributed to greater compliance with the Security Council agenda on children and armed conflict. Further efforts are necessary to ensure that sanctions are imposed against perpetrators. To this end, the

Working Group of the Security Council on children and armed conflict and my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict are encouraged to increase transmission of specific information on alleged perpetrators to existing sanctions committees.

### **Options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators**

221. Of grave concern is the unacceptably high, and growing, number of persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children listed in the annexes to my report. In the present report, 32 persistent perpetrators — that is, parties that have been listed for grave violations against children for five years or more — are listed, of which seven are Government security forces. While efforts by some persistent perpetrators to address the commission of grave violations are welcome, further decisive and immediate action is needed to halt these violations, and to ensure that persistent perpetrators are brought to account.

222. A number of actions could be considered. First, further linkages could be developed with the Security Council sanctions regimes. In addition to the expansion of designation criteria on grave violations against children to all relevant sanctions regimes, consideration could be given to ways by which sanctions may be imposed in contexts for which there is no existing sanctions committee, possibly beginning with relevant situations on the agenda of the Council. Secondly, high-level attention by the Council to the question of persistent perpetrators is warranted with a view to develop concrete measures, including specific consultations on persistent perpetrators. Thirdly, progressive and incremental measures could be taken by the Working Group on children and armed conflict, with the support of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, to develop close cooperation with national and international courts to address persistent perpetrators who have not taken concrete steps to halt grave violations.

### **Information on the criteria and procedures used for listing and delisting parties to conflict in the annexes to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, in line with Security Council resolution 1998 (2011)**

#### *Authority*

223. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to include in the annexes to his annual reports on children and armed conflict those parties to conflict that engage in recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals, and/or recurrent attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict, bearing in mind all other violations and abuses against children, and noted that paragraph 3 would apply to situations in accordance with the conditions set out in paragraph 16 of its resolution 1379 (2001).

224. In paragraph 22 (a) of its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to attach to his report a list of parties to armed conflict on the agenda of the Council or in other situations, in accordance with paragraph 19 (a) of its resolution 1882 (2009) and paragraph 3 of its resolution 1998 (2011).

225. Paragraph 22 (d) of its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council also requested the Secretary-General to include in his 2012 report on children and armed

conflict information on the criteria and procedures used for listing and delisting parties to armed conflict in the annexes to his periodic reports, bearing in mind the views expressed by all the members of the Working Group on children and armed conflict during informal briefings.

*Specific listing and delisting criteria*

226. The concepts of “school” and “hospital” include all educational and medical facilities, determined by the local context, including informal facilities of education and health care. An attack on a school or hospital that has retained its civilian character constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law. In addition, even in cases where attacks on schools and/or hospitals may not result in child casualties, they may affect children through the disruption of educational and/or medical services.

227. Under international humanitarian law, schools and hospitals are protected civilian objects and therefore benefit from the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions. For the purposes of listing, attacks on schools and/or hospitals include direct attacks against them as well as indiscriminate attacks, resulting in damage to or destruction of these facilities or which have the effect of impeding the ability of a school or hospital to function and/or placing children at risk, and acts of looting of these protected facilities. The country task forces on monitoring and reporting will continue to monitor and report on other concerns, including the military use of schools, although it does not constitute a trigger for listing.

228. Threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals include a declaration of intention or determination to inflict harm, whether physical or moral, related to the provision of education or medical assistance. For the purpose of listing, these threats need to be credible and the consequences plausible.

229. Protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals refer to schoolchildren, teachers, medical personnel and any civilians involved in education or medical assistance, unless and for such time that such persons are directly participating in hostilities. For listing purposes, these attacks against protected persons need to have a link with the act of teaching and/or the provision of health care.

230. The references to “recurrent” attacks on schools and/or hospitals and “recurrent” attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals suggest that such attacks or threats of attacks have been committed several times, which, as such, excludes single, isolated incidents or the random conduct of an individual acting alone.

231. Recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children in contravention of applicable international law, and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, will continue to be the basis for listing and delisting, in conformity with past practice and my 2010 report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), and in line with applicable international law.

232. A party listed on the basis of Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and/or 1998 (2011) will be delisted on conditions specified in paragraphs 178-180 of my 2010 report on children and armed conflict (ibid.).

### **Security Council Working Group visit to Afghanistan**

233. The Working Group of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, led by the German Chair, visited Afghanistan from 4 to 9 June 2012, at the invitation of the Government. The purpose of the visit was to follow up on the implementation of the action plan signed between the Government of Afghanistan and the United Nations, in January 2011, with the purpose of ending the recruitment and use of children, as well as sexual violence committed by the Afghan National Security Forces. During the visit, the Working Group was able to assess first-hand the impact of attacks on schools and hospitals on the lives of Afghan children in preparation of Security Council resolution 1998 (2011). In addition, the Working Group followed up on recommendations made in its conclusions of May 2011 (S/AC.51/2011/3). The Working Group met with senior Government officials, religious leaders, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), United Nations representatives, as well as civil society partners and children affected by the conflict.

234. The Security Council delegation was encouraged by the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to implement the action plan, including the Government's commitments to secure the full compliance of its forces. The Working Group also received assurances from the ISAF Commander with regard to support for the implementation of the action plan in its capacity-building activities with the Afghan National Security Forces and cooperation with the monitoring and reporting process, as well as commitments with regard to access to child detainees in Parwan detention facility.

### **First judgment at the International Criminal Court**

235. On 14 March 2012, the International Criminal Court (ICC) delivered its verdict in the case *Prosecutor vs. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo*. Mr. Lubanga was convicted for the war crime of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 into the Forces patriotiques pour la libération du Congo, and for making them participate actively in hostilities. This was the Court's first judgment on the issue of child recruitment and sets important international jurisprudence for future cases.

236. In 2008, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict filed an amicus curiae before the International Criminal Court arguing for a broad interpretation of the term "participate actively in hostilities" in article 8 (2) (b) (xxvi) of the Rome Statute to ensure justice and protection for all children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The Court in its judgment stated: "as regards the offence of using children under the age of 15 to participate actively in hostilities, the Chamber has concluded that this includes a wide range of activities, from those children on the front line (who participate directly) through the boys and girls who are involved in a myriad of roles that support the combatants [...] The decisive factor is whether the support provided by the child to the combatants exposed him or her to real danger as a potential target". The Court makes a distinction between "direct participation in hostilities", which determines combatant status under international humanitarian law and "actively participating in hostilities", which is the criteria used for the recruitment of children, holding that the latter is to be interpreted broadly. The Chamber accepted the approach adopted by the Pre-Trial Chamber and suggested by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict that "conscripting" and "enlistment" are both forms of "recruitment", in that they refer to the incorporation of



a boy or a girl under the age of 15 into an armed group, whether coercively (conscription) or voluntarily (enlistment). These interpretations allow for greater protection for all children associated with armed forces or armed groups.

## **V. Recommendations**

237. I welcome the signing of action plans by the Afghan National Security Forces in Afghanistan, the Armée nationale tchadienne in Chad, SPLA in South Sudan, and APRD and CPJP in the Central African Republic, as well as the progress made by parties in releasing children, and in addressing impunity for perpetrators through investigations and prosecutions. I strongly urge parties who have been listed in my annual reports for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children and/or attacks on schools and hospitals, and who have not concluded action plans to do so without delay, in conjunction with the respective country task forces on monitoring and reporting.

238. With an increase of action plans signed and under negotiation, I urge the donor community to address, as a matter of priority, the funding gaps for the implementation of action plans, including the monitoring of compliance with action plans, and sustainable, long-term reintegration needs of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups, including economic reintegration.

239. I encourage the Member States concerned to allow independent access to the United Nations for the purposes of monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, and facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups to ensure broad and effective protection for children, including for purposes of concluding action plans in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011), as well as undertaking specific commitments and measures to address all grave violations against children. Such contact will not prejudice the political or legal status of those non-State armed groups.

240. The Security Council is encouraged to put increasing pressure on those parties who are persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children and are listed in my annual reports, and to continue considering the application of targeted measures. These measures include the establishment of linkages with the Security Council sanction regimes; the development by the Council of other concrete measures, including specific consultations on persistent perpetrators; and the close cooperation with national and international courts to address persistent perpetrators who have not taken concrete steps to halt grave violations.

241. I urge the Security Council to ensure that specific provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations, as well as political and peacebuilding missions, including by means of the deployment of child protection advisers in accordance with the Child Protection Policy of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The need for child protection capacity in all situations mentioned in the present report, including in situations where there is no peacekeeping or political mission, should also be systematically addressed. Child protection concerns should be reflected in all United Nations planning instruments and processes, including budget provisions, technical assessment, review missions and reports to the Council.

242. Reports of child casualties in the course of military operations, including the use of explosive weapons, aerial bombardments and drones, continue to be of concern, and I remind all parties of their obligation under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction and proportionality and the duty to protect children and prevent violations, to take all necessary precautions to avoid civilian casualties. I strongly urge them to ensure that they continuously review tactical directives for the better protection of children during the conduct of military operations, and that military and police personnel are sensitized to the protection of children's rights under national and international laws.

243. I welcome the universal ratification campaign of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to encourage Member States that have not done so to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. As important mechanisms to strengthen national legal and policy frameworks for the protection of children, I call upon States parties to the Convention and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict to implement recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to submit timely reports under the Optional Protocol.

## **VI. Lists in the annexes to the report**

244. In the annexes to the present report, three new parties to conflict are listed for recruitment and use of children: SPLM-N, the Yemeni armed forces and the breakaway FAD. Two parties have been delisted after full implementation of the action plan: the UCPN-M and the Inya Bharathi faction. Three parties have been removed from the annexes as the armed groups no longer exist and no violations against children were reported during the reporting period: the Front nationaliste et intégrationnaliste (FNI), the Chadian armed opposition groups and the Movement of Popular Force for Rights and Democracy. One new party has been listed for killing and maiming of children: the Syrian Government forces. Five parties have been listed for attacks on schools and/or hospitals: the Taliban forces, FDLR, Al-Qaida in Iraq, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Syrian Government forces. It is important to note that for the present report parties can only be listed for incidents of attacks on schools and/or hospitals that took place after July 2011 in accordance with Security Council resolution 1998 (2011). Thirty-two parties to conflict have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

245. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In that regard, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations.

## 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, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children\***

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Afghan National Police, including Afghan Local Police.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
2. Haqqani network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d</sup>

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

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie (APRD).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
2. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
3. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)<sup>a</sup>
4. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>
5. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricain pour la justice (MLCJ)<sup>a</sup>
6. Self-defence militias supported by the Government of the Central African Republic<sup>a</sup>
7. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

### **Parties in Chad**

1. Armée nationale tchadienne, including newly integrated elements.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), including integrated elements from various armed groups, including the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP), formerly led by Laurent Nkunda as well as elements currently led by Bosco Ntaganda<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)<sup>a,c,d</sup>
3. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC)<sup>a,c</sup>
4. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,c</sup>
5. Mai-Mai groups in North and South Kivu, including the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

1. Al-Qaida in Iraq<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)<sup>b,d</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army (KNU/KNLA).<sup>a</sup> This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.
4. Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA).<sup>a</sup> This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.
5. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)<sup>a</sup>
6. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a</sup>
7. United Wa State Army (UWSA)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Transitional Federal Government<sup>a,b</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

### **Parties in the Sudan**

1. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>
2. Justice and Equality Movement/Peace Wing (JEM/Peace Wing)<sup>a</sup>
3. Popular Defense Forces (PDF)<sup>a</sup>
4. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>
5. Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF)<sup>a</sup>
6. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
7. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Free Will<sup>a</sup>
8. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Historical Leadership<sup>a</sup>
9. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>
10. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim)<sup>a</sup>
11. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Peace Wing<sup>a</sup>
12. Sudan Liberation Army (SLA)/Unity<sup>a</sup>
13. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)<sup>a</sup>
14. Sudan police forces, including the Border Intelligence Forces (BIF) and the Central Reserve Police (CRP)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Syrian Government forces, including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the Shabbiha militia<sup>b,d</sup>

## 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, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children\***

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)<sup>a</sup>
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
3. New People's Army (NPA)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Yemen**

1. Al-Houthi rebels<sup>a</sup>
2. Breakaway First Armoured Division (FAD)<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-Government tribal militia<sup>a</sup>
4. Yemeni armed forces<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.



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## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2012, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2068 (2012), by which the Council requested me to continue to submit annual reports on the implementation of its resolutions and presidential statements on children and armed conflict.

2. The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in particular with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, the country task forces on monitoring and reporting, peacekeeping and special political missions, United Nations country teams and non-governmental organizations. It also involved extensive consultations with relevant Member States and regional organizations.

3. In September 2012, Leila Zerrougui took office as my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. Building on the work of her predecessors, she will focus on furthering the implementation of the international legal framework and mechanisms in place for the protection of children affected by armed conflict, in particular by strengthening monitoring and reporting on all grave violations against children, increasing support for the implementation of action plans, enhancing cooperation with Member States and regional organizations to strengthen ownership of the agenda, ensuring rapid response in emerging situations to halt and prevent violations against children and developing strategies to put increased pressure on persistent perpetrators.

4. The present report begins by describing a number of emerging challenges regarding the impact of the evolving nature of armed conflict. It also explores some additional tools to enforce compliance by armed forces and armed groups with child rights obligations and provides an update on cooperation with regional organizations. The report then continues by providing information on grave

\* Reissued for technical reasons on 30 July 2013.



violations committed against children and progress made by parties on dialogue, action plans and other measures to halt and prevent such grave violations.<sup>1</sup> Mali is a new situation covered in this reporting period, while Nepal and Sri Lanka are no longer included following the delisting of all parties within their territories in 2012. The report concludes with a series of recommendations to the Security Council.

5. In line with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, the present report includes in its annexes those parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children in contravention of international law, recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals or recurrent attacks or threats of attack against protected personnel.<sup>2</sup>

6. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), in identifying situations that fall within the scope of her mandate, my Special Representative is guided by the criteria for determining the existence of an armed conflict found in international humanitarian law and international jurisprudence. In the performance of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, with a humanitarian emphasis, aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.<sup>3</sup>

7. References to cases and incidents in the present report refer to information that is gathered, vetted and verified for accuracy. In situations where the ability to obtain or independently verify information is hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such.

## **II. Evolving nature of armed conflict and emerging challenges for child protection**

8. In recent years, United Nations child protection actors have noted with concern that the evolving character and tactics of armed conflict are creating unprecedented threats to children. The absence of clear front lines and identifiable opponents, the increasing use of terror tactics by some armed groups and certain methods used by security forces have made children more vulnerable. Children are being used as suicide bombers and human shields, while schools continue to be attacked, affecting girls' education in particular, and to be used for military purposes. In addition, children are being held in security detention for alleged

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<sup>1</sup> The six grave violations are killing or maiming of children, recruitment or use of children as soldiers, sexual violence against children, attacks against schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access for children and abduction of children.

<sup>2</sup> For additional information on conflict-related sexual violence and the listing of parties as responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence during the reporting period, see my report on sexual violence in conflict (S/2013/149).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, common article 2 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions; article 1 of Additional Protocol II of 1977 thereto; International Committee of the Red Cross, J. Pictet (ed.), *Commentary on the Geneva Conventions of 1949* (1958); and *Prosecutor v. Duško Tadić*, Case No. IT-94, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia Appeals Chamber (2 October 1995).



association with armed groups. Furthermore, drone strikes have resulted in child casualties and have had a serious impact on the psychosocial health of children.

#### **Military use of schools**

9. In its resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council expressed deep concern over attacks and threats of attacks against schools and educational personnel, calling upon all parties to cease such violations. The Council also urged parties to refrain from actions that impeded children's access to education, specifically requesting me to continue to monitor and report on the military use of schools in my annual report on children and armed conflict. Schools should serve as a safe haven for children and provide them with protection. The use of schools for military purposes puts children at risk of attack and hampers children's right to education. During the period under review, the United Nations observed that schools were used as military barracks, weapons storage facilities, command centres, detention and interrogation sites and firing and observation positions. Such use of schools not only results in reduced enrolment and high drop out rates, especially among girls, but also may lead to schools being considered legitimate targets for attack.

#### **Detention of children by security forces**

10. Another continuing trend in 2012 is the growing practice of States to arrest and detain children with or without criminal charges, be it as a perceived threat to national security, for alleged membership in an armed group or for acts committed while participating in hostilities. Children captured in the course of military operations are often held in detention for long periods, in poor conditions and, in certain cases, without access to counsel or judicial review to assess the lawfulness of their detention. When deprived of their liberty, children are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations, including degrading and inhumane treatment and, in some instances, torture. This observed pattern of ill-treatment of children in detention includes physical violence, sexual assault and threats of rape, prolonged stress positions, the use of painful instruments of restraint, solitary confinement, forced nudity and deprivation of food, water and basic facilities. In some cases, children are detained without charge and held in detention without being brought before a judge or being granted access to a lawyer. In others, children have been prosecuted for acts allegedly committed during their involvement with an armed group. Most courts in charge of such cases do not fully apply international juvenile justice standards. Military courts in particular are not appropriate for hearing cases involving children, given that they do not fully recognize the special status of juveniles in conflict with the law.

#### **Impact on children of the use of drones in military operations**

11. Over the past years, the United Nations has received an increasingly worrisome number of reports of child casualties in the course of military operations using weaponized unmanned aerial vehicles, or armed drones. I therefore reiterate my call upon relevant States to take all measures necessary to ensure that attacks involving drones comply with the principles of precaution, distinction and proportionality and to conduct transparent, prompt and effective investigations when child casualties may have occurred. In addition, the mixed use of armed and surveillance drones has resulted in permanent fear in some communities, affecting the psychosocial well-being of children and hindering the ability of such

communities to protect their children. Reports further indicate that the use of drones has a wider impact on children, especially their access to education. For example, in some situations, both boys and girls have ceased attending school owing to the fear of drone strikes.

### **III. Enhancing compliance by armed forces and armed groups**

12. Following the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), an Arria-formula meeting with Security Council members, United Nations child protection actors and civil society partners was convened in July 2012 to discuss options for increasing pressure on persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. During the meeting, three main strategies for ensuring compliance by parties with their international obligations on child rights were put forward: increased political pressure by the Council through full use of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict “toolkit” (see S/2006/724); strengthening the sanctions regime by expanding the criteria of sanctions committees and establishing a thematic or ad hoc sanctions committee for violations against children; and closer cooperation between the Council and the International Criminal Court in relation to crimes committed against children. In February 2013, the Permanent Mission of Liechtenstein to the United Nations and Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, a non-governmental organization, organized a follow-up workshop that resulted in a series of recommendations for addressing the issue of persistent perpetrators, focusing on the need for enhanced Security Council action and the efficient use of targeted measures (see S/2013/158).

13. In a continuing effort to find innovative and effective tools to address the growing number of persistent perpetrators, three additional tools are suggested for further consideration: support for national accountability mechanisms; inclusion of child protection issues in peace processes; and linkage between the United Nations human rights due diligence and children and armed conflict frameworks.

#### **Accountability for violations against children**

14. During the reporting period, investigations, prosecutions and trials of adult perpetrators of grave violations against children remained rare. Ending impunity for grave violations against children is a crucial element in enforcing compliance by parties with child rights obligations. The verdicts passed in 2012 by international courts against the Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga and the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, in addition to the recent transfer of Bosco Ntaganda, represent significant progress and send a clear signal that child recruitment is a war crime and that perpetrators of violations against children will be held accountable. International justice complements national accountability mechanisms in cases in which national authorities are unwilling or unable to bring alleged perpetrators to justice. While a key challenge in conflict areas is weak political will, often a lack of capacity and resources severely cripples the ability of national authorities to prosecute child rights violations. In this context, the provision of capacity-building support by the United Nations to Governments may assist in reducing the accountability gap.

### **Inclusion of child protection issues in peace talks and peace agreements**

15. Ceasefire agreements and peace processes have been strategic instruments with which to engage armed forces and armed groups on child protection concerns. Since the mandate of my Special Representative was created, peace negotiations in several country situations have demonstrated that peace talks can provide the context to engage in advocacy with parties to conflict regarding action plans on grave violations against children and other commitments for protection of children. They have also demonstrated that the protection and rights of children constitute a useful entry point for building confidence between parties. While it is better to maintain a separate negotiation track for child protection, parallel processes can mutually reinforce each other at various stages of engagement with parties.

16. Ensuring the inclusion of child protection provisions in peace agreements so as to, among others, regulate the release and reintegration of children formerly associated with armed forces or armed groups can provide a useful framework to deepen dialogue between parties and child protection partners. Other key elements in peace agreements are the establishment of 18 years as the minimum age for persons to join the armed forces, including armed groups that are being integrated; provisions ensuring family tracing and reunification; the need to address sexual abuse of children during and after conflict; the commitment to taking all measures to protect children from explosive remnants of war, including landmines; the principle that no amnesty should be granted for adult perpetrators of violations against children; and the principle that children associated with armed groups should be regarded as victims and not as perpetrators.

### **Human rights due diligence policy and the Security Council framework on children and armed conflict**

17. In July 2011, the United Nations instituted a system-wide human rights due diligence policy to regulate the provision of United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces such as militaries and the police. This policy sets out the practical measures that all United Nations entities must take to ensure that any support provided to non-United Nations security forces is consistent with the responsibility of the Organization to respect and promote international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, including the rights of children affected by conflict. United Nations departments, agencies and programmes must assess the risks of the recipient entity committing human rights violations and put in place systems for monitoring compliance. The Security Council-mandated monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict, the listing of parties committing such violations and the action plans to stop such violations may serve as complementary platforms to the policy, including to monitor the behaviour of those security forces receiving United Nations support.

18. In various country situations, action plans to cease the recruitment and use of children provide a useful cooperation framework for the United Nations to assist Governments in building the capacity of national security forces to address child rights violations. Such action plans include provisions on the screening of troops to prevent underage recruitment, the appointment of military focal points and the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring compliance. This framework, mandated by the Security Council, could be used to enhance compliance by armed forces with international human rights standards, including under the human rights

due diligence policy framework. What are known as “report cards”,<sup>4</sup> used to enforce compliance by individual commanders responsible for the behaviour of their troops, provide an instrument to ensure that no political gain is made by commanders in recruiting children and that a recipient of United Nations support is a legitimate partner for capacity-building support. Adequately applied, the human rights due diligence policy should contribute to strengthening the rule of law and a culture of protection of human rights, including child rights, prevention of violations and strengthened accountability.

#### **IV. Cooperation with regional organizations on child protection in armed conflict**

19. The growing involvement of regional and subregional organizations in conflict mediation, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions highlights the importance of developing partnerships between the United Nations and those organizations to promote adequate protection for children affected by conflict in their respective mandates and work. The engagement of regional and subregional organizations in peace support and peace enforcement missions brings to the fore a wide range of child protection challenges, from ensuring that troops uphold international humanitarian law in the conduct of military operations to handling children associated with armed forces and armed groups. While procedures to avoid civilian casualties are generally in place, more efforts should be made to ensure that children are protected during such operations, including by reviewing and strengthening the rules of engagement and the conduct of investigations.

##### **European Union**

20. In 2003, dialogue between the European Union and my Special Representative led to the adoption of Union guidelines on children and armed conflict, in which the States members of the Union committed themselves to addressing the impact of armed conflict on children in non-Union settings, in the context of its human rights policy, its Common Foreign and Security Policy and its policies on humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. Dialogue is continuing on strengthening and implementing the guidelines, including through longer-term reintegration support for children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and the development of child-specific training for States members of the Union participating in crisis management operations. Due consideration should also be given to the list of perpetrators of violations against children included in the present report when providing bilateral or multilateral support to security or justice system reforms in third countries.

##### **African Union**

21. With the growing role of the African Union in peace support and peace enforcement missions, such as in Somalia, Mali and Central Africa, child protection challenges during military operations have also increased. In line with Security Council resolution 2033 (2012), on partnerships between the United Nations and

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<sup>4</sup> Report cards, as used in the context of Nepal, show compliance by individual commanders with the provisions of an action plan. They are used as a tool to address remaining challenges to full compliance.

regional organizations, in particular the African Union, my Special Representative envisages stronger cooperation with the peace and security mandates of the African Union. In that regard, the upcoming deployments of child protection capacity to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the African Union Peace Support Operations Division are seen as positive steps. The United Nations is also working with the African Union on developing procedures for the handover of children encountered during military operations. Discussions are also continuing on the alignment of national legislation of African States with international instruments on child rights, training for troop contributors to African Union and United Nations peacekeeping missions, capacity-building within the African Union Commission and the development of policy guidelines on children and armed conflict.

#### **North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

22. Over the past few years, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan have jointly taken a number of practical measures that serve as a good basis for further integrating child protection considerations into North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military training, mission planning and conduct of operations. This cooperation is creating a set of best practices currently being integrated into NATO predeployment training modules. Following a high-level briefing by my Special Representative to the North Atlantic Council in January 2012, NATO appointed its Assistant Secretary General for Operations as the high-level focal point for children and armed conflict, in charge of mainstreaming child protection in NATO training and operations. The issue of children affected by armed conflict was also highlighted in the declaration issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago, United States of America, on 20 May 2012. In November 2012, the NATO Military Committee adopted guidelines to integrate Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and related resolutions into NATO military doctrine, training and operational planning and conduct, including quarterly reporting on children and armed conflict and the appointment of technical focal points.

## **V. 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**

#### **Afghanistan**

23. In 2012, the country task force on monitoring and reporting in Afghanistan reported 66 cases of recruitment and use of boys, some as young as 8 years of age. Verification of such incidents remained a challenge, however, owing to the prevailing situation of conflict and resulting security constraints.

24. During the reporting period, 47 children were reportedly recruited and used by armed groups, notably the Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network, in addition to the Haqqani

network and Hezb-e-Islami. Most were used to manufacture and plant improvised explosive devices and to transport provisions. At least 10 were recruited by armed groups to conduct suicide attacks. On 8 September 2012, a 16-year-old boy was killed while conducting a suicide attack at the entrance to the ISAF headquarters in Kabul. During the attack, seven children were killed and two others injured. There were also reports of cross-border recruitment of children by armed groups, including the Taliban forces, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. In several instances, children in detention reported that they had received military training in madrasas in the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In February and September 2012, a Taliban spokesperson rejected reports that the Taliban forces recruited, used or abducted children.

25. The official age requirements for enlistment notwithstanding, the Afghan National Police and the Afghan Local Police were reportedly responsible for 19 cases of underage recruitment in 2012. In May 2012, for example, a 14-year-old boy was observed in police uniform in a police station in the city of Kandahar, reportedly recruited by a relative. During the reporting period, the country task force engaged in consultations with the Government to assess the presence of children within the ranks of the national police and to prevent underage recruitment. Concern also remained over the informal use of children for security-related tasks by the Afghan national security forces, including the national police, the local police and the army.

26. The country task force documented 189 cases of boys detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres by the Afghan authorities in 2012. A further unknown number of children were held in detention facilities of the national police and the National Directorate of Security. The country task force expressed concern over continuing reports of ill-treatment in those detention facilities, the public display of child detainees in national media and the lack of documentation and follow-up on the release of those children. The exact number of children held in the detention facilities of the international military forces remained unknown. In July 2012, however, the country task force received information that at least 90 children were being held in such a detention facility in Parwan. On 25 March 2013, the facility was transferred to the Afghan authorities. My Special Representative was also informed by the legal counsel of Hamidullah Khan, a Pakistani male, that he had been arrested in August 2008, aged 14 years, by forces of the United States near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and had been detained at Bagram Air Force Base without formal charge, apparently for security reasons, for more than four years. The United Nations has no access or additional information.

27. The country task force reported 18 incidents of abduction involving 67 boys. Verified information attributed the cases to the Taliban, the local police and other pro-Government militias. Children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment, sexual abuse and also intimidation in cases in which families worked or were perceived to be working for the Government or the international military forces. In one case, on 29 August 2012, the Taliban abducted and beheaded a 12-year-old boy in Kandahar Province in retaliation against his brother, an officer in the local police.

28. The country task force documented 1,304 conflict-related child casualties. Of those casualties, 283 cases of killing of children and 507 cases of injuring were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces. A total of 90 cases of killing of children and 82 cases of injuring were attributed to pro-Government forces,

including the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. The remaining cases, in which 116 children were killed and 226 injured, related to explosive remnants of war, crossfire incidents and cross-border shelling.

29. The vast majority of the incidents resulted from attacks with improvised explosive devices (399 child casualties) and suicide attacks, including by child suicide bombers (110 child casualties). Children were also victims of explosive weapons in populated areas, including mortar attacks, shelling and shooting between pro-Government forces and various armed groups (397 child casualties), explosive remnants of war (162 child casualties) and air strikes by the international military forces (74 child casualties). Some of the incidents were acknowledged by ISAF. Furthermore, artillery and mortar shelling from across the Afghanistan-Pakistan border killed at least 1 child and injured 25 others.

30. The country task force received isolated reports of sexual violence against girls and boys by members of armed groups, the Afghan national security forces and the international military forces. While only five cases were reported during the reporting period, sexual violence against children continued to be underreported owing to stigmatization and fear of retaliation. Some boys held in detention on charges relating to national security also reported sexual violence or threats of sexual violence upon arrest by the Afghan national security forces or in detention. At least one of those cases related to the practice of *bachah-bazi* (sexual abuse of boys by men in a position of power). In this regard, it should be noted that a joint team, comprising the Ministry of the Interior and the National Directorate of Security, was established to detect and investigate such incidents.

31. The country task force documented 167 incidents affecting education, of which 49 per cent were attributed to armed groups, including Taliban forces, 25 per cent to pro-Government forces and 26 per cent to unidentified perpetrators. Armed groups conducted targeted attacks against schools, including using improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, burned schools and abducted and killed education personnel. Armed groups were also responsible for acts of intimidation, threats against teachers and pupils and the forced closure of schools. In 2012, the Taliban issued five statements in which it denied attacking schools and announced that it would set up a commission for education. The Taliban also issued a letter in which it opposed girls' education and threatened girls who continued to attend school, however. Throughout the reporting period, the country task force verified 10 cases of use of schools for military purposes, including 3 by armed groups and 7 by pro-Government forces. It received reports of a further 30 incidents of attacks against health facilities and health personnel, mostly carried out by armed groups. Such cases include abduction of medical personnel and attacks on medical facilities with improvised explosive devices.

32. The country task force verified 33 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, largely attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban. In some areas, however, armed groups also facilitated the provision of lifesaving health and other emergency services, especially in areas not under the Government's control.

33. In March 2012, the Government submitted its first progress report detailing the steps taken towards implementation of the action plan on underage recruitment by the national security forces, which it had signed with the United Nations in January 2011. In particular, the Ministry of the Interior reported the establishment of a monthly monitoring and reporting system, public campaigns on birth registration

and training of Afghan national security forces personnel on age assessment procedures. It also provided information on training on child rights and prevention of underage recruitment conducted in seven Afghan national police zones, in addition to awareness-raising on gender-based violence and underage recruitment in 77 schools and 24 mosques. In parallel, the Ministry pursued efforts to prevent the falsification of national identity cards through the development of a biometric identity card system. Child centres established within national police recruitment centres in Ghor, Badghis, Herat and Farah Provinces documented attempts to enlist children into the national police and the army. Consequently, 122 underage recruits were rejected in 2012. Those encouraging measures notwithstanding, sustained engagement by both the United Nations and the Government is needed to build on the momentum created by the signature of the action plan.

34. The prevailing security situation in Afghanistan and fragmentation of armed groups continued to impede dialogue on the recruitment of children in 2012. The interlinkages between armed groups in Afghanistan made identification of perpetrators and their accountability for violations against children a challenge. Dialogue at the community level, however, continued to prove partially successful, especially with regard to the continuation of vaccination campaigns and the reopening of schools in some parts of the country.

### **Central African Republic**

35. The reporting period saw an overall decrease in the occurrence of grave violations against children. Hostilities resumed in December 2012 between the Government and the Séléka coalition,<sup>5</sup> however, and, limited access notwithstanding, the United Nations received alarming reports continuing into 2013 of recruitment and use of children by armed groups and pro-Government militias, killing of children associated with those groups in the course of military operations and sexual violence against children by armed groups. Although these developments do not fall within the reporting period, the progress achieved and the violations committed in 2012 need to be placed against the backdrop of the recent deterioration of the security situation.

36. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 41 cases of recruitment of children, of which 23 occurred in Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures, 14 in Haute-Kotto prefecture, 2 in Nana Grébizi prefecture and 2 in Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) appeared to be responsible for most of the cases, closely followed by the Séléka coalition. In December 2012, the country task force verified 11 cases of rerecruitment of boys by the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale (CPJP fondamentale) and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), both part of the Séléka coalition, in Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures. Eight of those children had earlier been associated with UFDR and three with CPJP and all had been separated from them by child protection actors earlier in 2012. On 24 December 2012, the Central African National Police broke into a reception centre in Bangui and detained 64 children formerly associated with CPJP and UFDR, alleging that they were rebels. The children were paraded through

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<sup>5</sup> The Séléka coalition is composed of the Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro, the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale, the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement and the Union des forces républicaines.



Bangui market and questioned by the national police. Following high-level advocacy by the United Nations, they were eventually released. Owing to security constraints, the country task force was unable to verify the presence of children in the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice in Birao (Vakaga prefecture) and in the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain in Kabo (Nana Grébizi prefecture).

37. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 10 cases of killing of children, as opposed to 88 in 2011. This decrease appeared to be linked to the cessation of hostilities between CPJP and UFDR in 2012. During armed confrontations on 23 January 2012 between the Central African and Chadian armed forces on the one hand, and the Front patriotique pour le redressement (FPR)<sup>6</sup> on the other, four children were killed. Overall, the total number of child casualties in 2012 is estimated to be higher, given that the country task force was unable to verify incidents that occurred during the crisis of December 2012 owing to security constraints.

38. Incidents of sexual violence remained a concern throughout 2012. The country task force verified 22 cases, of which 13 were perpetrated by members of FPR, who raped several girls between 9 and 17 years of age in the villages of Damara and Ngoukpe (Ombella-Mpoko prefecture). The country task force also received reports of rape of girls in Bambari, Bria, Ndele and Bangui by the Séléka coalition in December 2012. Between 2 and 5 February 2012, members of the Chadian army in Ndele raped three 15-year-old girls and a 17-year-old girl during their return to Chad after providing support to the offensive by the Central African armed forces against FPR. Although the cases were reported to the Governments of the Central African Republic and Chad, no action has been taken to date.

39. The number of attacks on schools and hospitals decreased, with 6 incidents recorded in 2012, compared with 12 in 2011. In January 2012, for example, the school in Ouadango (Nana Grébizi prefecture) was destroyed when a Chadian army helicopter landed on it during a military operation against FPR. Two other schools were used by CPJP in Yangoundrounja (Haute-Kotto prefecture) and Miamani (Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture) as military outposts. Three health centres in Nana Grébizi, Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures were used by CPJP and medical equipment there was looted. CPJP also continued to use the health centre in Aigbando (Haute-Kotto prefecture), affecting the access to health services of more than 1,000 children.

40. Humanitarian access was severely hampered, especially in Bamingui-Bangoran, Basse Kotto, Ouham, Haute-Kotto, Mbomou, Haut-Mbomou and Vakaga prefectures, owing to the presence of armed groups in those regions. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded an increase in attacks by CPJP, UFDR and the Séléka coalition against humanitarian organizations, with 18 incidents in Bamingui-Bangoran and Haute-Kotto prefectures between October and December 2012. On 15 November 2012, for example, Chadian elements of the tripartite force composed of military units from the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan broke into a non-governmental organization compound in Birao (Vakaga prefecture) and assaulted a humanitarian worker. It is estimated that some

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<sup>6</sup> The Front patriotique pour le redressement was formally dismantled in 2012. Its remnants, however, continued to be active in the Central African Republic.

395,200 children were deprived of humanitarian assistance in the affected areas owing to security risks.

41. During the reporting period, CPJP failed to honour its commitment to implement the action plan to end the recruitment and use of children signed by its leadership in November 2011. The splintering of CPJP and a lack of internal cohesion complicated implementation. Children continued to be recruited into the ranks of CPJP and commanders opposed the release of children. During a verification mission by the United Nations in November 2012, 30 children who had been identified by the CPJP leadership for release were prevented from leaving the group. On a separate occasion, on 7 December 2012, CPJP elements in Aigbandou prevented the United Nations from separating two girls, aged 14 and 17 years, who had been forcibly recruited by CPJP elements.

42. The implementation of the action plan signed with the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie (APRD) was delayed owing to the arrest of the APRD leadership on 6 January 2012. APRD had signed an action plan in October 2011 and released and reintegrated some 1,300 children in 2009 and 2010. During the period under review, APRD was dismantled and all its elements demobilized.

43. Although the release of children from the ranks of UFDR had begun in 2012, further progress was limited. A first commitment to release all children remaining in its ranks had been signed by UFDR with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in 2007. In November 2011, UFDR reiterated that commitment and allowed the United Nations to verify the presence of children remaining in its ranks. A formal action plan has yet to be signed. Difficulties in gaining access to CPJP and UFDR in remote areas of Vakaga and Haute-Kotto prefectures also hindered the verification and separation of children.

44. During the reporting period, 345 children (222 boys and 123 girls) were separated from CPJP (157) in Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto and Vakaga prefectures; UFDR (170) in Haute-Kotto and Bamingui-Bangoran prefectures; and escaped from LRA (18) in Haut-Mbomou and Mbomou prefectures. In addition, the United Nations estimates that up to 35 children associated with FPR were repatriated to Chad following the dismantling of that armed group in September 2012.

### **Chad**

45. Notwithstanding progress in the implementation of the action plan and although the national army of Chad did not recruit children as a matter of policy, the country task force verified 34 cases of recruitment of children by the army during the reporting period. In June 2012, a joint verification mission by the Government and the United Nations identified 24 children in an army training centre. An additional 10 cases were verified by the head of the army in the Moussoro training centre in September 2012 in the framework of the action plan. All 34 children appeared to have been enlisted in the context of a recruitment drive between February and March 2012, during which the army gained 8,000 new recruits.

46. Following the repatriation of 362 former FPR combatants from the Central African Republic, 26 children between 11 and 17 years of age were identified and informally released on 12 October 2012 during a joint mission by the United

Nations and the Ministry of Social Welfare. An additional 23 children were identified by the International Committee of the Red Cross on 23 October 2012. There were no reports of recruitment and use of children by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) during the reporting period. In March 2012, the country task force received allegations of recruitment of displaced children by unidentified armed elements in Assoungba and Kemititi. These cases are yet to be verified.

47. With regard to the implementation of the action plan signed between the Government and the United Nations in June 2011, my Special Representative intensified dialogue with the Government to accelerate the implementation process. In February 2012, the Government appointed technical focal points in the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Social Welfare and, in May 2012, the Prime Minister appointed his legal adviser as a high-level focal point to support implementation. In addition, the army reiterated its commitment to facilitating access to the United Nations for verification of military sites and issued a series of military directives prohibiting underage recruitment, calling upon the Chief of Staff of the army, the Director General of the National Gendarmerie and the Director General of the Garde nationale et nomade to ensure their full and swift implementation.

48. Those positive steps notwithstanding, further measures are needed to strengthen the screening mechanisms for recruitment by the army and procedures need to be finalized to prevent the enlistment of children. While the issuance of military directives concerning the prohibition of underage recruitment is consistent with the action plan, such instructions need to clearly spell out sanctions for breaches, as set out in the action plan. Furthermore, no investigations into allegations of recruitment and use of children were undertaken, nor was disciplinary action taken against recruiters.

49. The actions taken by the Government for the release, temporary care and reunification of separated children, while encouraging, are not yet in line with the commitments made in the action plan. For example, 18 of the 24 children identified in Mongo were not part of a separation process involving the United Nations and therefore could not benefit from reintegration assistance. Similarly, the 10 children identified in the Moussoro training centre were released and reunited with their families in N'Djamena without receiving reintegration support.

### **Côte d'Ivoire**

50. Since the end of the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire in May 2011, the United Nations has observed a decrease in the number of grave violations against children, with 65 cases documented in 2012, as opposed to 336 in 2011. Of those 65 cases, 34 were attributed to the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire and 31 to armed elements, consisting of pro-Gbagbo elements and other militia groups operating along the border.

51. The United Nations verified seven cases of recruitment and use of children, all attributed to the national armed forces, during the reporting period. In April 2012, for example, it verified the presence of four children between 14 and 16 years of age at army checkpoints in the towns of Mahapleu, Tai and Duekuoe. In October 2012, it also documented three cases of boys manning an army checkpoint near San Pedro. The boys had been recruited by the army in 2011, when they were 17 years of age.

52. The United Nations documented 9 cases of killing and 21 cases of maiming of children in 2012. Of those cases, 14 were a result of unexploded ordnance, mostly along the border with Liberia, and occurred during or following attacks carried out by unidentified armed groups operating in those areas. Four cases of killing of children were attributed to an attack perpetrated by armed youth groups in the Nahibly camp for internally displaced persons in Duekoue in July 2012. In addition, a child was killed during an operation by the national armed forces in Arrah and another during an attack by an unidentified armed group in Paha-Tabou.

53. During the reporting period, the United Nations registered 21 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against children, of which 9 were perpetrated by the national armed forces and 12 by unidentified armed elements. Such incidents were particularly prevalent in the west of Côte d'Ivoire, where armed elements continued to attack civilians, in particular women and girls, at checkpoints and during patrols.

54. The number of attacks against schools and hospitals significantly decreased during the reporting period, with 7 verified cases in 2012, as opposed to 477 in 2011. The United Nations verified that the national armed forces used a health centre, a primary school and a children's community education centre in Grabou. In addition, they erected checkpoints in the vicinity of four primary schools located in Touba, Ziriglo, Tao-Zeo and Keibly, putting children at risk of attack by armed elements.

55. A national child protection policy was finalized in 2012 and is pending adoption by the Government. On 27 December 2012, the Chief of Staff of the national armed forces designated a child protection focal point and committed himself to developing an operational workplan to work with the United Nations to prevent violations against children, in particular recruitment and use of children. A national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy for former combatants was adopted in August 2012, in which it was stated that efforts had been made to discharge and reintegrate children. That commitment has not yet translated into a clear implementation strategy, however. I encourage the Government to develop such a strategy to ensure the full reintegration of any children identified in the course of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

56. The resurgence of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following the creation of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in April 2012 resulted in a marked increase in the number of grave violations against children. The M23 offensive stemmed from the defection of a significant number of commanding officers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, affecting the capacity of the Congolese security forces. The vacuum left by those troops contributed to an overall climate of lawlessness and insecurity characterized by widespread, systematic and violent attacks against civilians by a variety of armed groups, including the fragmented constellation of self-defence militias commonly known as Raïa Mutomboki, which, together with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), was responsible for reciprocal retaliatory attacks.

57. In 2012, 578 children, including 26 girls, were recruited into armed forces and armed groups. The main perpetrators were Mai Mai groups (263), including the Mai Mai groups under the command of "Colonel Tawimbi" operating in the area of Uvira (116), the Mai Mai groups under the command of "General Lafontaine" and

former Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) elements (29), the Mai Mai Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) of “Colonel Janvier” (21) and other Mai Mai groups. Other perpetrators included FDLR (83), M23 (65), the Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC) (52) and LRA (31). Some 80 per cent of the recruitment cases in 2012 took place in North Kivu and South Kivu.

58. The country task force documented 20 cases of recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces in 2012, including nine boys who were integrated into the national armed forces from Mai Mai groups or recruited by former Congrès national pour la défense du peuple elements who later defected to join the M23 offensive. In addition, 47 boys were arrested and detained by the Congolese security forces for alleged association with armed groups, but were subsequently released after strong advocacy by the United Nations. Most of the arrests took place in North Kivu, mainly involving boys formerly associated with M23. The children were detained by the national armed forces for up to seven months, with some reporting ill-treatment in detention.

59. M23 was responsible for systematic recruitment and use of children. A total of 65 boys between 13 and 17 years of age, including 25 who claimed to be Rwandan, escaped or surrendered from M23 between April and December 2012. A total of 21 of those boys, including 18 claiming to be Rwandan and 3 Congolese, said that they had been recruited on Rwandan territory to fight in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While initially used as porters, most ended up on the battlefield as combatants or escorts of commanders. Testimonies from former M23 combatants suggested that hundreds of children remained in M23. They also reported a high number of child casualties during clashes with the national armed forces and killing, maiming and ill-treatment of young recruits within M23.

60. As a direct result of conflict-related violence, 154 children (including 86 boys and 64 girls) were killed and 113 (including 76 boys and 35 girls) injured in 2012. Between April and September 2012, Raïa Mutomboki killed and maimed children in their houses with machetes during a series of violent attacks against the civilian population in Masisi territory, North Kivu. A coalition composed of FDLR and Nyatura opposing Raïa Mutomboki was reportedly responsible for 51 child casualties. The national armed forces were responsible for 30 child casualties. During clashes with M23 on 28 October in Sake, North Kivu, five children were injured and two killed by mortars fired by the national armed forces. Other perpetrators were Mai Mai groups (30 casualties), M23 (7 casualties), the Congolese National Police (6 casualties) and LRA (2 casualties).

61. During the reporting period, 185 girls, most of whom were between 15 and 17 years of age, were subjected to rape or other forms of sexual violence. A total of 11 were under 10 years of age. More than half of the cases were perpetrated in the Kivus. The national armed forces were responsible for 102 cases, including an incident of mass rape. In November 2012, national armed forces elements raped more than 100 female victims, including at least 24 girls, in Minova, South Kivu, as they retreated following the fall of Goma to M23. In another mass rape incident in June 2012, members of Mai Mai Simba raped 28 girls between 10 and 17 years of age in Epulu, Orientale Province. A total of 81 other cases of sexual violence against children were recorded in Orientale Province, mainly perpetrated by Mai Mai elements (50, including 42 by Mai Mai Simba), FRPI (17) and FDLR (11).

62. In 2012, the country task force documented 33 incidents affecting schools (18) and hospitals (15). Most took place in North Kivu (16), South Kivu (11) and Orientale Province (6). Six schools were looted or damaged in arson attacks by armed groups. The national armed forces were responsible for the military use of 11 schools and FDLR for 1 school. In addition, 11 health providers were targeted during the reporting period: 6 in North Kivu, 3 in South Kivu and 2 in Orientale Province. The national armed forces were reportedly responsible for five incidents of looting of medical facilities, while FDLR reportedly pillaged a health centre and abducted a nurse who had denounced a rape perpetrated by FDLR elements. In two separate incidents in July and October 2012, LRA looted two health centres in Orientale Province.

63. During the reporting period, the country task force documented 256 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. North Kivu was the most affected, with a total of 123 cases, mainly in and around Goma, Masisi and Rutshuru territories as a result of clashes between M23 and the national armed forces. In South Kivu, 74 incidents were reported, mostly in and around Bukavu, Fizi and Shabunda. Nine other incidents occurred in Orientale Province. Although in most cases the perpetrators could not be identified, 38 cases were attributed to armed groups, including FDLR, Mai Mai groups and Raïa Mutomboki. Another 26 incidents were attributed to the Congolese security forces.

64. On 4 October 2012, the Government and the United Nations signed an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children, in addition to sexual violence against children, by the national armed forces and security forces. The Government and the United Nations committed themselves to working through a joint technical working group in four areas: the separation and protection of children associated with armed forces and groups; response to child victims; prevention of grave violations against children; and efforts to combat impunity for perpetrators. Progress has been made in the facilitation of unimpeded access for the United Nations to national armed forces battalions and detention centres, resulting in the release of children associated with armed forces and armed groups, in addition to the joint screening of new recruits. This exercise prevented 269 children from joining the national armed forces in 2012. The integration of armed groups into the national armed forces continued to represent a useful entry point for the release of children. In October 2012, for example, 49 children were separated during a partial integration of Nyatura elements into the national armed forces in North Kivu.

65. In 2012, 1,497 children (1,334 boys and 163 girls) were separated or escaped from armed forces and armed groups. Most (1,453) were Congolese, with a further 40 Rwandans, 2 Ugandans (associated with the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda), 1 South Sudanese and 1 Central African (both associated with LRA). Children escaped or were released from M23 (65 boys), Mai Mai groups (458 boys and 28 girls), LRA (121 boys and 116 girls), FDLR (211 boys and 1 girl), FRPI (121 boys and 10 girls), the national armed forces (96 boys and 5 girls), Nyatura (70 boys) and Raïa Mutomboki (48 boys). In 2012, 5,584 children associated with armed forces and armed groups received support from the United Nations, as did 5,022 child victims of sexual violence.

66. While the efforts of the Government to cease underage recruitment are commendable, the lack of accountability for perpetrators of grave violations against children remains of concern. More has to be done to ensure that adult perpetrators

are duly prosecuted. Of the 185 cases of rape and sexual violence against children by government security forces documented in 2012, only 40 alleged perpetrators were arrested and 4 sentenced. A further 12 commanders involved in the Minova mass rape incident were removed from their posts and handed over to justice.

## **Iraq**

67. In 2012, the country task force reported 355 incidents of grave violations against children. The most affected governorates were Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala, Anbar and Salahaddin. Islamic State of Iraq/Al-Qaida in Iraq (ISI/AQ-I)<sup>7</sup> was responsible for most of the incidents.

68. During the reporting period, the country task force reported 178 incidents of killing and maiming of children, of which 123 were verified. A total of 412 child casualties were recorded, including the killing of 102 children (63 boys and 39 girls) and the injuring of 310 (176 boys and 134 girls) in waves of coordinated attacks throughout the country, mainly using improvised explosive devices. On 3 July 2012, in the Diwaniya district of Qadissiya governorate, an attack with an improvised explosive device claimed by ISI/AQ-I killed 12 boys and 4 girls and injured 16 boys and 6 girls.

69. The country task force also received reports of child recruitment by ISI/AQ-I, mostly in Ninewa (in particular in Mosul) and Salahaddin governorates. In all verified cases, the children were boys between 14 and 17 years of age who were used for support functions such as transporting improvised explosive devices, acting as lookouts and planting explosives. On 17 May 2012, in the Mosul district of Ninewa governorate, the Iraqi security forces killed two boys aged 16 and 17 years while they were reportedly planting a roadside bomb, a technique used by ISI/AQ-I.

70. Allegations were documented in Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar governorates on the reported association of children with the Awakening Councils. These reports indicated that boys were reportedly manning checkpoints after having been locally recruited using false identification documents.

71. As at December 2012, 302 children, including 13 girls, were held in detention facilities and had been indicted or convicted on terrorism-related charges under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (2005). These children, on average between 15 and 17 years of age, had been in detention for periods ranging from two months to more than three years.

72. The prevailing security situation also affected schools and hospitals. During the reporting period, education and health facilities were damaged by improvised explosive devices and small arms fire, and personnel were targeted. The country task force documented 42 incidents in Baghdad, Babil, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar governorates, of which 15 attacks against schools and 8 attacks against medical facilities were verified. In addition, 19 education staff and 17 medical personnel were killed or injured in 2012. In an incident on 24 September 2012 in Anbar governorate, a car bomb detonated in front of Al-Kifah Primary School on the first day of school, killing four girls and a boy and injuring six other children.

73. In 2012, the country task force also documented 14 cases of abduction of children, involving seven boys and seven girls. Although the motives for most of

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<sup>7</sup> Al-Qaida in Iraq is the military component of the Islamic State of Iraq.

these incidents remained unclear, a strong nexus between the abduction of children and the funding of non-State armed groups in Iraq was observed. ISI/AQ-I was allegedly responsible for most of the incidents. Although most cases related to funding the activities of these armed groups, the abduction of a boy in Mosul in March 2012 was allegedly linked to forced recruitment into Birds of Paradise, the AQ-I youth wing.

74. The country task force further verified three incidents of denial of humanitarian access during the reporting period. In an incident on 13 June 2012, 27 civilians were killed and dozens of others injured when a transport truck used for the delivery of humanitarian supplies exploded in a camp for internally displaced persons near Baghdad. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

75. High-level engagement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011 notwithstanding, a formal government mechanism on grave violations against children is yet to be established. I encourage the Government to establish such an interministerial committee to discuss and follow up on child protection concerns with the country task force.

### **Lebanon**

76. The United Nations reported incidents of grave violations against children resulting from clashes between armed groups in Lebanon and hostilities along its borders. During the reporting period, the level and scale of armed violence affecting children increased, in particular as a result of the impact of the Syrian conflict on Lebanon. The United Nations documented 24 violations against children, most of which involved killing and maiming, compared with 11 in 2011. Most affected were the border areas between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic in the north and the Bekaa valley, in addition to the area in and around Tripoli.

77. The United Nations received reports on the participation of children in armed clashes between opposing political groups in Lebanon. In June 2012, for example, four boys between 15 and 17 years of age were arrested for their involvement in a protest against the national armed forces, following the harassment of a resident of the Nahr el-Bared Palestinian camp in Tripoli. The United Nations also received allegations of Syrian refugee children in border areas of Lebanon being pressured into joining armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic. Anecdotal information regarding possible association of children with armed militias, in particular in and around Tripoli, was also prevalent.

78. The increasing number of Syrian refugees crossing into Lebanon created growing threats of exposure of children to landmines and unexploded ordnance. Cross-border shelling and armed clashes inside Lebanon posed new risks to children. Such incidents resulted in the killing of five boys and a girl between 8 months and 15 years of age and the maiming of two girls and three boys between 11 and 15 years of age, mostly in Tripoli and Wadi Khalid, northern Lebanon.

79. In March 2012, armed clashes between rival Palestinian factions in front of a school in the Ein el-Hillweh Palestinian camp, Sidon district, during school hours led to the disruption of schooling. During the incident, children between 6 and 10 years of age were evacuated from the school. On various occasions in July, August, November and December 2012, schooling was further disrupted in Beddawi



Palestinian camp owing to armed clashes in the areas of Bab al-Tabbaneh and Jabal Mohsen in Tripoli.

## **Libya**

80. In 2012, children in Libya remained affected by tensions that escalated into armed confrontations, mainly in Bani Walid, Kufra, Sirte, Zliten and Sabha, in some instances involving the use of heavy weapons. It should be noted that access to conflict areas and affected populations remained extremely limited throughout the reporting period and that security-related travel restrictions by the United Nations continued to limit the gathering of information. Increased control by the Government notwithstanding, many armed brigades continued to display a lack of discipline and command structure, which led in some instances to grave violations against children.

81. The United Nations received allegations of use of children by armed brigades and observed children carrying weapons on several occasions. During the conflict in Kufra in February 2012, for example, children were seen carrying weapons, manning checkpoints and securing buildings with both the Zwaya and Tabu brigades. In June 2012, the United Nations observed boys between 16 and 18 years of age carrying weapons in Kufra.

82. Child casualties were reported as a result of armed confrontations among brigades, and between brigades and the Libyan army or the Libya Shield brigade (an auxiliary unit of the Libyan army). In accordance with the information received from the United Nations and its partners, at least 12 children (8 boys and 4 girls) were killed and 33 (29 boys and 4 girls) injured in crossfire or through the use of heavy weaponry. In view of the lack of access to affected areas and the limited disaggregated data, it is likely that the number of child casualties remains underreported. In May and June 2012, the Kufra General Hospital registered 10 child casualties, including 2 children killed during armed confrontations between the Zwaya and Tabu brigades. Incidents relating to explosive remnants of war also led to 22 child casualties, mainly in Misrata, Zintan, Kufra, Sirte and Gharyan.

83. According to the Ministry of Education, five schools in Benghazi were attacked while being used as polling stations. On 6 July 2012, one school used for the elections was targeted by small arms fire and improvised explosive devices. On 28 July 2012, an improvised explosive device was dismantled at a school in Abdelrwak, Buhdeima area, which was being used as a polling station. Schools were also attacked when used as shelters for internally displaced persons. On 24 June 2012, in the Zwaya area of Kufra, a school sheltering 20 internally displaced persons was hit by a rocket from the Tabu area, injuring at least five children.

84. During the reporting period, armed confrontations also resulted in damage to health facilities. Sabha Central Hospital was attacked in April 2012 during the fighting between Tabu brigades and an Arab brigade. In October 2012, a hospital in Bani Walid was severely damaged and its equipment destroyed or looted by armed brigades, including the Libya Shield, the Misrata Shield and the 28 May brigades, during confrontations with the social council of Warfalla tribes. In view of the limited security of the medical facilities in Sabha at the time of the fighting in September 2012, combatants carried weapons inside the health facilities. On 24 March 2012, two individuals, including a nurse, were shot inside the hospital. On 11 September 2012, fighting between Alqmazfah Algdadfa tribesmen and the

Supreme Security Committee, which is under control of the Ministry of the Interior, took place inside the Sabha medical centre while patients were being treated. In addition, the United Nations received allegations of threats against medical personnel. On 21 September 2012, medical staff in Sabha protested against the deterioration of the security situation in the hospital, claiming that several staff had been attacked and others threatened.

85. The United Nations recorded several cases of hampering of access for humanitarian assistance in conflict-affected areas, including through abduction, attacks or threats against humanitarian personnel, in Kufra, Sabha, Benghazi and Misrata.

**Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African region (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda)**

86. The United Nations continued to receive reports on grave violations against children by LRA in the Central African region throughout 2012. Whereas 22 incidents were reported in the Central African Republic and 71 incidents in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, no incidents were reported in South Sudan in 2012. Even though no incidents have been reported in Uganda since 2006, Ugandan troops continued to pursue LRA. These cases are, however, merely indicative of the actual scope of grave violations against children, given that insecurity and poor infrastructure continued to hamper the reporting of violations. With 416,000 internally displaced persons and 26,000 refugees triggered by LRA, the armed group remained a serious threat to civilians in the region.

87. In the Central African Republic, 23 children were reportedly recruited by LRA in the south-east of the country. During an LRA attack at a mining site in the town of Nzako, Haute-Kotto prefecture, at least six people were killed, including several children. Owing to limited access, however, the exact number of child victims could not be verified.

88. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 58 children (23 girls and 35 boys between 2 and 17 years of age) were abducted by LRA in 2012. In contrast to previous years, they were used mainly as porters to carry looted goods, rather than to participate in attacks. Children continued to be victims of LRA attacks, however. In two separate LRA attacks, a girl and a boy were killed and a girl and three boys injured in Haut Uélé prefecture between January and May 2012. A case in which a girl was raped by LRA was documented in May 2012, while two other girls who escaped from the group in 2012 reported having been raped while in captivity. In total, 41 children (19 girls and 22 boys) escaped or were released from LRA during the reporting period. Between January and October 2012, LRA also attacked two health centres and three schools.

89. In South Sudan, no attacks on or grave violations against children by LRA were reported in 2012. LRA remained a threat to civilians, however, operating from bases inside the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Between January and December 2012, family tracing and reunification efforts were undertaken for 48 children (34 girls and 14 boys) who were rescued from LRA.

90. Uganda continued to play a major role in combating LRA with the participation of 2,000 troops in the Regional Task Force set up by the African Union

for that purpose. To implement its standard operating procedures on the repatriation and handover of children separated from LRA, as agreed with the United Nations in June 2011, the army received implementation training in Uganda in May and June 2012. The armed forces of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan have yet to adopt standard operating procedures for the handover of children who escape from LRA.

## **Mali**

91. The serious deterioration of the security situation in Mali in 2012 was characterized by a large number of grave violations against children by various armed groups. At different points in time, armed groups active in northern Mali formed shifting coalitions, involving joint military operations and co-location of troops. On the basis of the limited information available, membership of these armed groups has been extremely fluid, which presents a challenge when attempting to establish command responsibility for the violations against children reported throughout 2012. Although the prevailing situation of insecurity severely limited access, the United Nations received numerous reports that armed groups, including the Mouvement national de liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA), the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO), Ansar Dine and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), were responsible for extensive recruitment and use of children. Initial information indicated that hundreds of children, mainly boys between 12 and 15 years of age, were enlisted during the reporting period. Children were used by the groups to man checkpoints and conduct patrols. Shifting alliances among armed groups resulted in the rerecruitment of children by different groups. As MNLA progressively lost control over northern Mali to Ansar Dine and MUJAO, some children shifted their loyalty to Ansar Dine, in particular those belonging to the Kidal-based group of Iyad Ag Ghali.

92. Reports of abduction and forced recruitment of children notwithstanding, many children allegedly joined armed groups for reasons of poverty or ethnic affiliation. *Talibé* children, entrusted by their parents to marabouts, or religious teachers, for Islamic instruction, were particularly vulnerable to recruitment, in addition to children belonging to the Tuareg, Arab, Peuhl and Songhai ethnic groups. MUJAO and Ansar Dine reportedly paid child recruits and their parents. Children as young as 12 years of age were enticed by MUJAO with the promise of receiving Koranic education. Children associated with MUJAO were seen standing guard in a secondary school in Douentza and carrying out menial tasks in a gendarmerie camp in Taoussa. MUJAO was reportedly also responsible for the forced recruitment of 15 children between 13 and 18 years of age in Menaka, following clashes in Konna, leading families to send their children to the Niger to prevent recruitment.

93. Children, both boys and girls, were also associated with pro-Government militias. For example, in the area of Mopti/Sévaré, which is controlled by the Government, the United Nations received reports of recruitment of children by Ganda Izo, Ganda Koy and the Forces de libération du nord. As some militias are being integrated into the Armed Forces of Mali, there is an urgent need for screening and separation of these children.

94. Children were also captured by the Malian armed forces during military operations in northern Mali. At least four children allegedly associated with

MUJAO were detained by the Malian authorities, one of whom was reported to have been transferred to a juvenile rehabilitation centre. On 9 March 2013, French troops captured five child combatants in the course of military operations and transferred them to the Malian authorities. The children were immediately handed over to UNICEF for interim care. While children are currently being automatically transferred from the French armed forces via the Malian gendarmerie to UNICEF, the need remains to formalize this arrangement through standard operating procedures for the handover of children encountered during combat.

95. There is very limited information available for 2012 on the killing and maiming of children. Nevertheless, 17 incidents were reported during 2012 in which 6 children were killed and 22 maimed by explosive remnants of war. During the offensive, armouries of the national armed forces were pillaged, especially in Timbuktu, and weapons and munitions were scattered in the vicinity of towns. Armed groups also laid mines and left other explosive devices in northern Mali in anticipation of military operations, resulting in the killing and maiming of children. Between March and August 2012, 28 serious incidents were allegedly caused by mines and explosive remnants of war in northern Mali, killing 24 children. It is further alleged that children associated with armed groups were killed and maimed during the French and Malian military campaign initiated in January 2013, including during aerial bombardments. Some of those children were reportedly used as human shields by armed groups. Concern also remained over inter-ethnic reprisals against children of Arab or Tuareg origin, including by the national armed forces.

96. Sexual violence against girls by armed groups was reported to be widespread and systematic in northern Mali (Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and part of Mopti). In total, 211 cases of sexual violence (including rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, sexual violence in places of detention and gang rape) by MNLA, MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM have been reported since January 2012. The United Nations gathered information on cases of girls who had been raped by several members of armed groups. Cases of forced marriage of women and girls by MUJAO, Ansar Dine and AQIM were reported in all regions under their control. Parents were reportedly coerced to hand over their daughters for marriage to members of those groups, resulting in rape and sexual slavery. The girls were often raped repeatedly by several men in the groups' camps. Reports have also been received that girls from the Bella ethnic group, a Tuareg caste considered to be inferior to the so-called "light-skinned" Tuareg, were particularly vulnerable to abduction for purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation.

97. The MNLA offensive and subsequent takeover of northern Mali by armed groups had a devastating effect on children's access to education. A total of 115 schools were looted, damaged, bombed, used for military purposes or contaminated with unexploded ordnance. Armed groups reportedly interfered in the conduct of classes, demanding that their interpretation of sharia law be taught. As at February 2013, 86 per cent of pupils remaining in the north still lacked access to education.

98. In October 2012, the Government established an interministerial working group to prevent grave violations against children. The objectives of this entity include public information campaigns to prevent recruitment and use of children and joint verification missions with international partners to ascertain the presence of children in self-defence militias. On 7 February 2013, an interministerial circular

was signed on the prevention, protection and return to families of children associated with armed forces and armed groups.

### **Myanmar**

99. In 2012, there were encouraging commitments and actions by the Government to prevent and end grave violations against children. The country task force, however, continued to document violations during the reporting period. Most took place during military clashes in Kachin and Shan States between the Tatmadaw Kyi and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), and between the national armed forces and the Shan State Army North and the Shan State Army South. Other incidents resulted from bomb explosions and unexploded ordnance in Kayin State and Sagaing Region. To date, the country task force has remained constrained by capacity, access and security impediments that presented a challenge for comprehensive monitoring and verification.

100. While the number of cases of recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces decreased because of prevention measures and strengthened recruitment processes, recruitment and use of children remained of concern in 2012. The number of complaints of underage recruitment by the national armed forces increased from 236 in 2011 to 274 in 2012 as a result of enhanced awareness among the national armed forces and the general public of recruitment and the channels for raising such cases, including through the International Labour Organization (ILO) forced labour complaint mechanism, local-level child protection groups, national and international protection actors and direct approaches to military bases and relevant ministries. The country task force also received information that children had been deployed to the front line with exposure to both combat and non-combat duties. Nine children recruited by the national armed forces were deployed during the reporting period to Kachin State, where they were captured and detained by KIA, which notified ILO early in 2012 and released them in January 2013.

101. In addition, the country task force received reports of association of children with non-State armed groups. Verified reports indicated that children were present in the ranks of KIA and the United Wa State Army (UWSA). One case in April 2012 involved the abduction of three boys of 14 years of age by KIA from a village in Wine Maw township. The country task force also received information on the use of boys by UWSA to man checkpoints and secure offices. Reports further alleged that UWSA continued to require that one child in each family in the Wa autonomous zones be sent to UWSA for what it termed “military service”. Children were also reportedly present in the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Karenni Army.

102. Children were also victims of landmines, unexploded ordnance, mortar and grenade attacks and crossfire between the national armed forces and non-State armed groups. Late in 2012, hostilities intensified between the national armed forces and KIA in Kachin State, including air strikes and shelling by the national armed forces, in addition to the use of improvised explosive devices by KIA. The country task force verified that 13 boys and 4 girls between 3 and 17 years of age were killed in five incidents in Kayin State, Kachin State and Sagaing Region. The national armed forces and non-State armed groups (including the Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army, the Karenni National Progressive

Party/Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army,<sup>8</sup> UWSA and KIA) also continued to use landmines to restrict the movement of people, hinder the mobility of troops and mark areas of operations.

103. On 27 June 2012, the Government and the United Nations signed in the presence of my Special Representative an action plan to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the national armed forces. Subsequently, a senior national armed forces liaison officer was appointed to oversee its implementation and a joint committee comprising the country task force and senior officials of the national armed forces and government ministries was created. The country task force and the national armed forces also developed detailed operational procedures for the identification, verification and discharge of children.

104. Throughout September 2012, military focal points in the national armed forces carried out training sessions on the action plan in each regional command, targeting officers responsible for the identification and registration of children within their battalions. The national armed forces also issued directives on the implementation of the action plan and developed communication materials for distribution to the military rank and file. In addition, the national armed forces launched a process of identification and verification that led to the discharge of 42 children in September 2012. The national armed forces reported that, since October 2012, a board had been established in each regional command to review the age of all new recruits. The Commander-in-Chief also issued a directive in which he stated that recruiters of children would face action under section 374 of the Myanmar Penal Code and section 65 of the Defence Services Act. In that regard, the Government reported to the country task force that, by the end of November 2012, 30 commissioned officers and 154 non-commissioned officers had been subjected to disciplinary measures for recruitment and use of children.

105. The country task force, however, remained concerned with regard to United Nations access to national armed forces operational regiments. In December 2012, the national armed forces informed the country task force that access to those regiments would be subject to consideration upon completion of United Nations monitoring of recruitment units and training facilities.

106. Pursuant to the action plan, the Government also committed itself to facilitating processes to end child recruitment by non-State armed groups and to facilitating the release and reintegration of all children within its sovereign territory. During the reporting period, however, efforts to secure the signature of the action plan and provision of support to identify and discharge children from the national armed forces were accorded priority.

107. In 2012, a total of 97 underage recruits were discharged from the national armed forces. Of those underage recruits, 42 were released under the framework of the action plan during a discharge ceremony in September 2012, while 45 were released under the ILO forced labour complaint mechanism. In October 2012, the country task force submitted 25 new cases of underage recruitment received through the ILO complaint mechanism to the national armed forces senior liaison officer for verification under the action plan framework. In addition, the Government reported

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<sup>8</sup> The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army listed in my eleventh annual report (A/66/782-S/2012/261) changed its name in 2011 to the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army as the armed wing of the Kloo Htoo Baw Karen Organization.

that, in 2012, 538 potential new recruits had been rejected at the recruitment screening stage for being underage.

### **Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel**

108. In 2012, Palestinian and Israeli children continued to be affected by the prevailing situation of conflict. In the West Bank, the number of Palestinian children killed and injured during demonstrations and violence by Israeli settlers remained a serious concern. Throughout the reporting period, there were several escalations of violence between armed groups in Gaza and Israeli forces that resulted in the killing and injuring of Palestinian children and the injuring of Israeli children. During the reporting period, 50 Palestinian children (40 boys and 10 girls) were killed and 665 (640 boys and 25 girls) injured in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and 17 Israeli children were injured in Israel, marking a significant increase compared with 2011.

109. In the West Bank, four Palestinian boys were killed and 552 Palestinian children, including 16 girls, injured during the reporting period. Of the children killed, two were victims of unexploded ordnance and two were shot by Israeli forces during demonstrations. On 12 December 2012, a 17-year-old boy was shot and killed at a checkpoint at the entrance to Al-Masharqa neighbourhood in the old city of Hebron. Since mid-November 2012, an increase in the use of lethal force by Israeli forces has been observed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, also affecting children. A total of 436 Palestinian children were injured during demonstrations in clashes with the Israeli forces: 69 during military operations involving live ammunition, physical assault, gas canisters, rubber-coated metal bullets or tear gas inhalation; 39 as a result of settler violence; and 8 as a result of unexploded ordnance. Although no children were killed by Israeli settlers in 2012, 18 were injured as a result of physical assault, stone throwing or the use of Molotov cocktails or live ammunition. A total of 21 children were injured as a result of intervention by Israeli forces following clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers.

110. In Gaza, 46 Palestinian children were killed during the reporting period, the vast majority in November 2012 during an operation in Gaza codenamed "Pillar of Defence". During the first two weeks of November, armed violence escalated intermittently as the Israeli forces attacked various targets inside Gaza and Palestinian armed groups fired rockets into southern Israel. Between 14 and 21 November 2012, 32 Palestinian children were killed by Israeli air strikes. In three other incidents, Palestinian children were allegedly killed by Palestinian rockets aimed at Israel that fell short and landed in Gaza. Outside the November escalation, another 11 children were killed in Gaza: 3 as a result of Israeli air strikes; 3 by Israeli tank shells; 1 boy during an incursion into Gaza by Israeli forces; 1 boy as a result of mishandling a weapon found at home; 1 boy while mishandling unexploded ordnance; and 2 other children as a result of Palestinian rockets aimed at Israel that fell short and landed in Gaza.

111. A further 113 children were injured in Gaza as a result of Israeli military operations, during demonstrations or as a result of unexploded ordnance. In one particular incident, on 30 March 2012, 23 boys were injured during demonstrations, 21 as a result of the use of live ammunition by Israeli forces and 2 owing to severe tear gas inhalation.

112. During the reporting period, 17 Israeli children were injured. In November 2012, during the escalation of violence in Gaza, Palestinian armed groups launched rockets at southern Israel. On 15 November 2012, 14 Israeli children, including an 8-month-old baby, were injured. Three other Israeli children were injured inside the West Bank. On 10 July 2012, two settler children were injured during clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in Al-Khalil neighbourhood of the old city of Hebron. On 8 April 2012, a girl was injured when the vehicle in which she was travelling was hit by an object thrown by an unidentified person on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

113. On 3 June 2012, a 17-year-old Palestinian boy was reportedly killed by an Israeli air strike on a motorcycle on which members of the Abdul Qader Al-Husseini armed group were travelling in Abasan, southern Gaza. On 21 February 2012, Israeli forces reportedly used a Palestinian boy as a human shield. The 15-year-old boy from Beit Ummar was taken from his home by Israeli forces and forced to walk in front of a military jeep at which villagers were throwing stones, in violation of an Israeli Supreme Court order forbidding the use of human shields. During the reporting period, four other cases of attempted use of children by Israeli forces for military intelligence purposes were reported in the Megiddo and Al-Jalame interrogation sites. These cases involved Palestinian boys between 15 and 17 years of age who were arrested and offered money, entry to Israel and a car or mobile telephone in exchange for intelligence on activities in their villages.

114. In 2012, Palestinian children continued to be arrested and detained by Israeli forces for alleged security offences and prosecuted in juvenile military courts. At the end of December 2012, 194 boys and 1 girl, of between 12 and 17 years of age, were in Israeli military detention for alleged security infractions. Of those children, 119 were being held in pretrial detention and 76 had been convicted and were serving a sentence. According to the Israeli Prison Service, 73 child detainees were transferred to prisons inside Israel during the reporting period. Such transfers contravene article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

115. In 2012, in relation to those cases of military detention, 115 cases of ill-treatment were documented through affidavits taken by lawyers. All 115 Palestinian boys reported being subjected to cruel and degrading ill-treatment by the Israeli forces and the Israeli police, including but not limited to the practice of blindfolding and painful restraint during arrest, transfer and interrogation; strip-searching; verbal abuse; physical violence, including beating and kicking; and threats of violence. A total of 21 boys were also held in solitary confinement for a period ranging from 1 to 20 days at Al-Jalame, Hasharon and Petah Tikva interrogation sites, in addition to the Megiddo prison inside Israel.

116. On 1 August 2012, Israeli Military Order No. 1685 established that children arrested and detained by the Israeli forces must be brought before a judge within four days of arrest, instead of the previously allowed eight days. Another military order, issued on 28 November 2012, which will enter into force in April 2013, will further halve the length of pretrial detention, stipulating that children under 14 years of age should be brought before a judge within 24 hours of arrest and children between 14 and 18 years of age within 48 hours. Although this represents progress, the duration remains double the maximum pretrial detention period for Israeli children under Israeli juvenile law.



117. In 2012, a significant number of attacks on schools and education facilities continued to be reported in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. A total of 321 cases were reported in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, in 2012, compared with 46 in 2011. Seven attacks against Israeli schools were reported.

118. A total of 25 incidents of attacks on schools were reported in the West Bank in 2012. In 11 instances, the Israeli forces entered or attempted to enter school premises during search operations, to remove Palestinian flags from the rooftops of schools or for other unknown reasons, causing disruption to classes and sometimes damage to schools. In another four instances, the Israeli forces fired live ammunition or tear gas at schools. In a worrisome spike in incidents, on four separate occasions, Israeli settlers from Yitzhar settlement threw stones at the school in Urif (Nablus). In one particular instance, on 23 April 2012, the stone-throwing by settlers triggered clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces and settlers from the Yitzhar settlement, after which tear gas was fired at the Palestinians, injuring eight children. In addition, on six occasions, Israeli forces also entered the Haj Ma'zoz Al Masri Secondary School for Girls in Nablus to secure the area for Israeli settlers during night-time religious events.

119. The vast majority of the incidents affecting schools in Gaza occurred between 14 and 21 November 2012, during the Israeli military operation. A total of 285 school buildings suffered damage as a result of Israeli air strikes on nearby locations, including 60 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school buildings. Six UNRWA health centres also suffered damage during the escalation in November.

120. In southern Israel, six school buildings were damaged by rockets launched by Palestinian armed groups during the hostilities in November 2012. One additional Israeli school in Beersheba was damaged on 11 March 2012 by rocket fire from Gaza. No injuries to children were reported as a result of the incident, given that the school had been closed that day as a precautionary measure.

## **Somalia**

121. In 2012, the country task force documented 4,660 cases of violations against children, of which 2,051 concerned recruitment and use of children (2,008 boys and 43 girls). Children were reportedly recruited by armed forces and armed groups from camps for internally displaced persons, schools and villages. Al-Shabaab also coerced teachers into enlisting pupils.

122. Al-Shabaab was the main perpetrator (1,789 cases of recruitment and use of children), followed by the Somali National Armed Forces (179 cases). A total of 53 of those cases took place after the Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan on 3 July 2012 to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children.<sup>9</sup> On 9 September 2012, five boys between 16 and 17 years of age were recruited by the national armed forces in Beletweine district, Hiran Region. They were previously associated with Al-Shabaab and had escaped to join the government forces. In addition, it was reported that, in April 2012, a girl carried out a suicide attack at the

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<sup>9</sup> With the establishment of a federal parliament on 20 August 2012, the Transitional Federal Government is now referred to as the Government of Somalia and its military forces as the Somali National Armed Forces.

National Theatre. Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a, a Government-allied militia integrated into the national armed forces in 2012, was responsible for 51 cases of recruitment and use of children. On 18 February 2012, six children between 15 and 17 years of age were recruited by the militia in Beletweine district.

123. In 2012, the country task force verified 296 cases of killing of children (228 boys and 62 girls) and 485 cases of maiming of children (326 boys and 132 girls). The killings were perpetrated by unknown armed groups (111), Al-Shabaab (94) and the national armed forces (70). According to the World Health Organization, the four major hospitals in Mogadishu treated weapons-related injuries of 230 children under 5 years of age during the period under review. Most of the cases verified by the country task force involved crossfire and mortar attacks. On 10 March 2012, for example, stray bullets injured three children between 11 and 14 years of age during fighting between Al-Shabaab and the national armed forces in Yurkud village, Berdaale district, Bay Region. Children were also allegedly killed for spying. On 18 January 2012, a 15-year-old boy associated with Al-Shabaab was killed by Al-Shabaab in Rabdhure district, Bakool Region, for allegedly spying for the national armed forces. On 16 September 2012, the country task force received allegations of ill-treatment of children implicating the national armed forces in Afgoye district, Lower Shabelle Region. According to reliable sources, the national armed forces arrested and detained 10 children on suspicion of being Al-Shabaab members. It is alleged that they were subjected to ill-treatment and acts tantamount to torture while in police custody. That information, however, could not be verified.

124. During the reporting period, the country task force received reports of 213 cases of sexual violence committed against 210 girls and 3 boys, mostly in central and southern Somalia. The incidents were attributed to the national armed forces (119), Al-Shabaab (51) and unknown armed groups (43). Following the end of the transitional period and establishment of the new Government, the Government issued a statement on 25 November 2012 in which it acknowledged that sexual violence was being perpetrated by its national armed forces and committed itself to ending the violations. My Special Representative will work with the Government to decisively address the issue.

125. During the reporting period, Al-Shabaab (51) and the national armed forces (14) were also responsible for attacks on schools. Al-Shabaab was responsible for a further 11 attacks on hospitals in 2012 in Hiran (4), Lower Juba (4), Middle Shabelle (2) and Middle Juba (1).

126. The country task force received information on 1,533 cases of abduction (1,458 boys and 75 girls) during the reporting period. Most were reported in central and southern Somalia and were perpetrated by Al-Shabaab (780) and the national armed forces and allied militias (720). On 28 May 2012, for example, around 30 children between 12 and 17 years of age were taken into custody by the national armed forces in Afgoye corridor, Lower Shabelle Region, on suspicion of being members of Al-Shabaab. The country task force is following up on this incident. Most of the southern and central parts of Somalia remained inaccessible, however, owing to the volatile security situation.

127. In 2012, humanitarian access continued to be affected by attacks targeting humanitarian workers, roadblocks and looting of humanitarian supplies, mainly in southern Somalia. There were a total of 96 attacks on aid workers or their assets,

27 incidents of aid interventions (aid diversions, lootings, confiscations or sabotages) and 20 cases relating to denial of movement.

128. On 3 July 2012, the Transitional Federal Government signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, and, on 6 August 2012, another action plan to end killing and maiming of children. Progress towards their implementation was limited, however, owing to the election period and the appointment of the new Government. The President nevertheless pledged his strong commitment to implementing both action plans. The Government reported that it had issued strict guidelines prohibiting the recruitment of children into the national armed forces and that the implementation of the action plan was in the planning process.

129. In October 2012, the Government established, together with the United Nations, a joint technical committee in charge of the coordination and implementation of the action plans. On 7 and 8 October 2012, the country task force held a validation workshop with the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of the Interior to finalize standard operating procedures for the handling and release of children who are captured, who surrender or who are otherwise separated from armed groups and who find themselves in the custody of the national armed forces or AMISOM. AMISOM efforts to reduce civilian casualties notwithstanding, slow progress has been made in the implementation of the civilian casualty, tracking, analysis and response cell. AMISOM has, however, instituted training on protection of women and children as part of the predeployment training for all AMISOM troops.

### **South Sudan**

130. During the reporting period, the country task force verified the recruitment and use of 252 boys between 14 and 17 years of age. Of those boys, 106 were associated with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), 68 with militia allied to David Yau Yau, Gabriel Tanginyang and Peter Gadet, 53 with militia allied to Hassan Deng in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State and 25 with militia allied to General James Kubrin Ngare. Children associated with SPLA were identified in convoys protecting high-ranking officials, wearing SPLA uniforms, during SPLA military recruitment drives and in SPLA barracks.

131. The country task force reported that 18 boys and 5 girls were killed and 23 boys and 8 girls injured in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile and Western Bahr el Ghazal States during the reporting period. In two separate incidents in 2012, a child was reportedly killed and a 6-year-old boy reportedly injured during clashes between SPLA and militia allied to David Yau Yau in Jonglei State. In addition, in April 2012, four children were injured by explosive remnants of war in Bentiu, Unity State. The country task force also received reports of child casualties as a result of aerial bombardments.

132. During the reporting period, the country task force obtained information on eight cases of sexual violence affecting 12 girls. SPLA soldiers in Jonglei, Unity and Western Bahr el Ghazal States were allegedly responsible for six of those incidents. The country task force also reported the abduction of girls for sexual violence purposes in the context of inter-communal conflict. For example, a girl in Pibor, Jonglei State, was abducted by armed men of the Lou Nuer tribe, held in captivity for several weeks and raped. In another incident in February 2012, two girls were raped by unidentified armed men in military uniforms in Mayendit, Unity State.

133. SPLA reportedly used 18 schools for military purposes, 13 of which were already being so used since 2011. By the end of 2012, 15 of the schools had been vacated. The military use of the schools reportedly affected more than 13,000 children. In October 2012, Juba Day Secondary School, in Central Equatoria State, was closed for a week following a violent crackdown on student protests by the South Sudan National Police Service using live ammunition.

134. In 2012, 129 children were abducted in the context of inter-communal conflicts and a further 243 were documented missing. While 110 abducted children were recovered in Jonglei State during the reporting period, the whereabouts of the others remain unknown. In July and August 2012, two girls aged 10 and 13 years were allegedly abducted by SPLA members in Jonglei State. Although the United Nations inquired with SPLA about the cases, no feedback has been received to date.

135. The country task force received reports of at least 197 incidents of denial of humanitarian access. Forceful entry into humanitarian compounds, harassment and physical assault of humanitarian workers hampered the ability of humanitarian actors to gain access to the civilian population. During the first quarter of 2012, nine incidents of violence against humanitarian personnel by SPLA soldiers were reported in Central Equatoria and Warrap States.

136. On 13 March 2012, my Special Representative witnessed the signing of a revised action plan by SPLA as a renewed commitment to ceasing and preventing the recruitment and use of children. Since the signature of the action plan, a national committee, consisting of the South Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, SPLA military judge advocates, the SPLA spokesperson and the United Nations, has been established to implement the provisions of the action plan.

137. A system of screening and early identification of children has been established. Consequently, 421 boys and 29 girls who sought to voluntarily enlist in SPLA in 2012 were rejected. SPLA also issued a series of military orders to vacate schools and to grant unimpeded access to the United Nations. The country task force was granted access to 71 SPLA barracks during the reporting period. The Government also initiated the development of civil registration and birth registration systems. Of the 252 boys identified as associated with SPLA and militia groups, 230 were released, reunited with their families and provided with reintegration support.

## **Sudan**

### *Darfur*

138. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded 31 cases of recruitment and use of children: 11 by the Popular Defence Forces, 4 by the Central Reserve Police, 3 by JEM, 2 by the Sudanese Armed Forces and 11 by unidentified armed groups. Three boys between 14 and 17 years of age were abducted for recruitment purposes by JEM in northern Darfur, but managed to escape and were subsequently detained by the national armed forces before being released and reunited with their families.

139. In 2012, 62 children (44 boys and 18 girls) were killed and 57 (42 boys and 15 girls) injured during hostilities in Darfur. Of those children, 27 were killed by stray bullets during clashes between unidentified armed groups, 26 during air strikes by the national armed forces and 9 by unexploded ordnance. The increase in the

number of child casualties — 119 children in 2012 compared with 71 children in 2011 — is attributed to the escalation of violence between government forces and armed groups during the reporting period, in addition to inter-ethnic fighting in various areas of Darfur.

140. The country task force reported 36 cases of rape of girls between 5 and 17 years of age in 2012. In areas under the Government's control, several documented incidents of rape were attributed to government forces, including the national armed forces, the Central Reserve Police, the Popular Defence Forces, the police and the Border Intelligence Forces. Perpetrators also included unidentified armed men. These figures do not reflect the actual scope of sexual violence against children in Darfur, given that access to some areas remained limited.

141. In 2012, movement restrictions for humanitarian actors on security grounds continued to affect the delivery of assistance to children. Restrictions on movement by road from El Fasher to El Daein, for example, heavily affected humanitarian aid. On four separate occasions, refusal of clearance for humanitarian actors to gain access to areas not under the control of the Government impeded the provision of humanitarian assistance to children.

142. Among developments in the reporting period, a focal point to engage with the country task force on child protection concerns was appointed by JEM in January 2012. Following further consultations, on 11 September 2012, JEM issued a command order in which it prohibited the recruitment and use of children and, on 25 September 2012, it submitted to the United Nations a commitment to release children and to report on progress made. In November 2012, the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid also issued a command order in which it prohibited the recruitment and use of children. Sudanese Liberation Army/Historical Leadership submitted two progress reports in which it outlined steps taken towards ending recruitment and use of children. Although there were allegations of recruitment and use of children by that armed group during the reporting period, they could not be substantiated. Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will, JEM/Peace Wing and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace Wing have been removed from the annexes to the present report, since no information was available on recruitment and use of children by these groups in 2012, nor that the groups were militarily active.

143. The Government informed the country task force that the Ministry of Defence had approved the development of an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, which would apply also to other groups affiliated with the national armed forces, including the Popular Defence Forces. That commitment was reiterated to a United Nations technical mission that visited the Sudan in April 2013.

144. In January 2012, the Government established a national human rights commission to monitor and investigate human rights and child rights violations. In January 2012, the Police Commissioner created a national coordination mechanism for family and children protection units. Efforts were also made by the police and its Family Child Protection Unit to investigate cases of violations against children, an exercise that resulted in the arrest of a number of alleged perpetrators. On 18 July 2012, for example, a court in Zalingei, Central Darfur, sentenced a soldier to 20 years' imprisonment for the rape of an 8-year-old girl.

145. A list of 120 children released by Sudanese Liberation Army/Historical Leadership was submitted in 2011 to the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and

Reintegration Commission and the United Nations. The registration process of these children began in January 2013. In addition, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur provided training on child rights and child protection to 118 commanders and combatants of the Liberation and Justice Movement in El Fasher and Nyala.

*Three areas (South Kordofan, Blue Nile State and Abyei)*

146. During the reporting period, 125 boys between 11 and 17 years of age were reportedly recruited and used by armed forces and armed groups in South Kordofan (31), Blue Nile State (46) and Abyei (48). Of those boys, 65 were reportedly recruited by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N), 12 by the Popular Defence Forces and 48 by SPLA. In addition, the United Nations continued to receive allegations of recruitment and use of children by SPLM-N in areas not controlled by the Government. Verification of those allegations remained impossible, however, owing to access restrictions.

147. In 2012, the United Nations received reports that 31 children had been killed in Kadugli and 1 in South Kordofan/Abyei. In that regard, nine incidents of aerial bombardments and shelling resulted in the killing of 10 boys and 10 girls, some only a month old. Six incidents involving 15 children were attributed to the national armed forces, while three other incidents were attributed to SPLM-N. Three boys were killed and one maimed by unexploded ordnance. A total of 43 children were reportedly injured in South Kordofan (42) and Abyei (1): 41 as a result of aerial bombardments and shelling by the national armed forces and SPLM-N, 1 by crossfire and 1 by unexploded ordnance.

148. Although the Government allowed United Nations national staff limited access to the areas under its control for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, movement of international staff outside the capitals of South Kordofan and Blue Nile State was restricted. No humanitarian assistance could be delivered to children in areas held by SPLM-N. The Government continued to impose restrictions on access for humanitarian actors both in government-held and non-government-held areas in Blue Nile State and South Kordofan. Verification of reports of grave violations against children was impossible in areas not controlled by the Government.

149. In a verification process with the Sudan Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the United Nations supported the registration of 18 children formerly associated with armed groups, who were reunited with their families and received reintegration support. An additional 42 children escaped from an SPLM-N camp and were registered with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in Blue Nile State. During the reporting period, SPLM-N committed itself to engaging in dialogue with the United Nations to address the presence of children within its ranks.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

150. The Syrian conflict has entered its third year. The situation for children has deteriorated in all areas of concern. Among the well in excess of 70,000 people estimated to have been killed to date, many thousands are children. Sizeable numbers of children have been killed and gravely injured in shelling and fighting, while thousands more have seen family members killed or injured or have lived through shelling, missile firing and heavy aerial and artillery bombardment of their

homes, schools and hospitals by the government forces, resulting in severe psychological distress. The use of terror tactics by armed opposition groups, such as car and other bombs, in civilian areas, including near schools, and the association of children with such armed groups rose sharply over the reporting period.

151. Children in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be killed, injured and maimed by heavy artillery, air strikes, crossfire and explosive remnants of war as a direct result of the conflict in incidents that occurred in Damascus, Homs, Dera'a and Aleppo, among others. Refugee children inside the Syrian Arab Republic have also been directly affected. Palestinian and other refugee children have been killed, injured, forced to flee their homes and live in need in shelters for internally displaced persons. Government air strikes and bombardment predominated in areas controlled by the Free Syrian Army and other opposition groups. Government forces and allied *shabbiha* militia continued incursions in areas of contested control. On 25 May 2012, government soldiers and *shabbiha* members reportedly entered El Houleh village, Homs governorate, and killed 100 civilians, including at least 41 children. The local school, where people had sought refuge, was reportedly bombed by government forces in July 2012, resulting in the death of two children.

152. The use of heavy weaponry and the alleged use of cluster munitions in heavily populated areas resulted in child and other civilian casualties. In a village near Ar Raqqah, survivors alleged that dozens of cluster munitions had been dropped on their homes over a period of days in March 2013. A witness recounted seeing two boys, aged 9 and 13 years, suffer injury and the loss of their hands and limbs when they picked up unexploded cluster bomblets. Further reports were received of cluster munitions being used in Hamah, Ar Rastan, Mohassan, Aleppo and Idlib. Although government forces were allegedly responsible for most of those casualties, opposition groups have also reportedly acquired and used heavy weapons against the civilian population.

153. The United Nations also received reports of opposition armed groups engaging in terror tactics, such as car and other bombings, near schools and in public places, resulting in the death of and injury to children and other civilians. It was not possible to attribute responsibility for specific incidents that led to child casualties, owing to the nature of the operational structure of armed opposition groups in the Syrian Arab Republic and the lack of access for the United Nations to carry out investigations.

154. Detention, torture and ill-treatment of children for alleged association with the opposition continued to be a worrying trend. In that regard, there were a number of accounts of sexual violence against boys to obtain information or a confession by the State forces, largely but not exclusively by members of the State intelligence services and the Syrian Armed Forces. Child detainees, largely boys and as young as 14 years of age, suffered similar or identical methods of torture as adults, including electric shock, beatings, stress positions and threats and acts of sexual torture. For example, a 16-year-old boy from Kafr Nabl, Idlib governorate, reported witnessing the sexual assault and killing of his 14-year-old friend while in detention. According to witnesses, a number of children continue to be held as ransom for parents and other relatives associated with opposition fighters to force them to turn themselves in to the State authorities.

155. Information was received that the national armed forces used children as human shields. In an incident in May 2012, the national armed forces reportedly

raided the local primary school in As Safira, Aleppo governorate, took hostage 30 boys and 25 girls between 10 and 13 years of age and walked them in front of their forces in order to flush out a local Free Syrian Army unit that had recently taken the town. There were also a number of allegations of use of children between 15 and 17 years of age by *shabbiha* members in village incursions in Hamah governorate in January 2013.

156. The United Nations has received a growing number of reports of use of children by armed opposition groups, such as the Free Syrian Army. From accounts received, child association with the Free Syrian Army is often linked to an older relative facilitating recruitment or in instances in which the child has lost all members of his or her family. It is also linked to the fact that there is no central recruitment authority among the Free Syrian Army and that many forces are clan-based or village-based. Consequently, children, on average between 15 and 17 years of age, have been used in both combat and support roles, such as food and water portering and loading bullets into cartridges. A former Free Syrian Army combatant of Kafr Zeita village stated to the United Nations that children as young as 14 years were largely used for loading bullets, delivering food and evacuating the injured. Medical staff reported treating boys between 16 and 17 years of age injured in combat who were associated with the Free Syrian Army. For example, a 16-year-old boy receiving medical treatment for wounds suffered in the Salah-ad-Din neighbourhood of Aleppo recounted that he had spent three months with a Free Syrian Army unit. He had been injured in fighting against government forces in the first week of March 2013. It should also be noted that accounts stated that some Free Syrian Army units, including in Dayr Az Zawr city, had rejected children who had approached them to join or had released associated children when so requested by their families.

157. The United Nations received information suggesting that schools and hospitals were targeted by the Government. Reports were also received of schools being used and damaged by armed opposition groups. A total of 167 education personnel, including 69 teachers, were reported to have been killed as at the end of February 2013, while 2,445 schools were reported to have been damaged. Some 2,000 schools are being used as shelters for internally displaced persons. In some areas, children have not attended school in more than 18 months. Palestinian children residing in refugee camps in the Syrian Arab Republic are equally affected by the conflict. The education system in particular has been severely affected. As at April 2013, 69 of 118 UNRWA schools were closed, with only 23,700 of more than 67,000 enrolled pupils attending classes.

158. Reports indicated that schools continued to be bombed, shelled and raided by government forces. On the other hand, several parties to the conflict were responsible for using schools for military purposes. There are numerous incidents of government forces entering schools and using them either as a temporary base or as a detention facility. The Free Syrian Army allegedly used schools in a number of areas as bases, makeshift hospitals and, in some instances, ammunition storage and detention centres. In one example, Free Syrian Army elements in Kafr Zeita, Idlib governorate, used two classrooms of the Al Shahid Wahid Al Jusef High School as barracks for a number of days while children were attending classes.

159. The United Nations received further information that hospitals and makeshift hospitals had been bombed and, in some cases, specifically targeted by government



forces, allegedly because they housed wounded Free Syrian Army elements. Reports have also been received of government forces entering hospitals and arresting young men and boys suspected of being Free Syrian Army sympathizers. In one instance, eyewitnesses stated that men and boys who sought assistance at the Kendi State Hospital in Aleppo were arrested for association with the opposition before entering. The hospital also housed a government sniper position. Attacks or threats of attacks against medical personnel, in addition to reprisals for medically assisting those suspected of links to the opposition, were also documented.

160. As noted in my report on sexual violence in conflict (A/67/792-S/2013/149), United Nations monitors received credible allegations of sexual violence against women and girls, in particular during raids conducted by the Syrian military in Homs and other areas, but also in detention facilities or at checkpoints. The United Nations is also concerned about allegations of abduction and rape of women and girls by armed opposition groups in cities, villages and neighbourhoods perceived to be in favour of the Government.

161. The conflict has also created an environment in which it has become extremely difficult to reach affected populations for humanitarian purposes. Medical care remained inadequate in contested areas, with many children succumbing to their wounds for lack of proper or timely attention. Lastly, fighting continued to force populations to leave their homes, with the latest United Nations figures indicating that there are more than 1.3 million Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries and 4.25 million persons displaced inside the country, half of whom are children.

162. My Special Representative was invited by the Government to assess first-hand the conflict's impact on children, to discuss strengthening the monitoring of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic and to better advocate child protection. During her visit, she met relevant ministers, the United Nations country team, civil society members, internally displaced persons and children. In this regard, I welcome the Government's commitment to cooperating with the United Nations in monitoring grave child rights violations and to establishing an interministerial committee on children affected by conflict. The Government has also informed my Special Representative that it will take measures to ensure the education of displaced children and to rebuild destroyed or damaged school facilities. My Special Representative was also able to reach out to Free Syrian Army commanders in Homs and Rif Damascus governorates regarding their responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and prevent association of children with their forces. In addition, I am encouraged that my Special Representative received a communication from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in which it committed itself to collaborating with the United Nations to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

## **Yemen**

163. The signing of the transition agreement in Yemen, the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and implementation mechanism in November 2011 and the launch of the political transition in February 2012 led to a decrease in the number of grave violations committed against children. Nevertheless, hostilities between the Government and Ansar al-Sharia/Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and their effect on the civilian population remained of concern and resulted in grave violations against children.

164. In 2012, the United Nations verified 53 reports of recruitment and use of children between 13 and 17 years of age. Of those cases of recruitment, 25 boys were recruited by the government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the Republican Guards, the newly integrated First Armoured Division, the military police and the central security forces.<sup>10</sup> Many children recruited by the national armed forces were enlisted through brokers, such as military officers, family members and local sheikhs, who further facilitated their recruitment through false documentation and birth certificates. Some children reported fear of reprisal if it became known that they had enlisted with false documentation. Children often received a monthly stipend or retainer from the unit that recruited them.

165. The United Nations continued to face challenges in monitoring violations by the Al-Houthi armed group operating in Sa'ada governorate. Reports of recruitment and use of children could not be verified owing to security constraints. Nevertheless, the United Nations could verify the use of three boys by Al-Houthi in Hajja governorate, who were armed, manning checkpoints or "guarding" health centres. With regard to association of children with pro-Government militias, the United Nations documented the case of three children aged 13, 16 and 17 years, respectively, who were recruited and used for checkpoint duty by the Popular Resistance Committee in Abyan governorate. The recruitment and use of children by Ansar al-Sharia appeared to have increased during the reporting period. Of the 19 children verified to be associated with Ansar al-Sharia, 2 boys were killed and 3 injured in combat. The others are believed to still be with the group.

166. In 2012, at least 50 children (45 boys and 5 girls) were reportedly killed and 165 (140 boys and 25 girls) maimed. Many child casualties related to landmines, unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war. While in most of the incidents the perpetrators remained unknown, some have been attributed to the national armed forces, Ansar al-Sharia and AQAP. Five incidents were reported of drone strikes allegedly targeting AQAP and Ansar al-Sharia in Abyan, Shabwa and Al Bayda governorates, resulting in the killing of two boys and maiming of six boys and a girl. In one such incident, a 16-year-old boy was killed by a drone strike allegedly targeting an AQAP leader. A further 14 boys were killed, and 51 boys and 10 girls maimed, by landmines or unexploded ordnance during the reporting period. Attacks with improvised explosive devices killed 11 boys and maimed 16 boys and 1 girl. Two children were killed while conducting a suicide attack.

167. An emerging concern with regard to Ansar al-Sharia is the sexual abuse of boys associated with the group. The United Nations documented that three boys recruited by the group had been subjected to sexual violence. The United Nations further verified seven cases of forced marriage of girls between 13 and 17 years of age in Abyan governorate with members of Ansar al-Sharia. In two of those cases, a 15-year-old girl and a 17-year-old girl were offered as "gifts" by their brothers to leaders of Ansar al-Sharia in exchange for being allowed to join the group. The number of forced marriages is likely to be underreported owing to stigmatization and fear of reprisal.

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<sup>10</sup> On 19 December 2012, the President of Yemen issued a decree to define a new structure for the armed forces, in effect abolishing the Republican Guards and the First Armoured Division. In another decree, on 21 February 2013, the President declared the restructuring of the Ministry of the Interior, which includes the renaming of the central security forces to the special security forces.

168. During the reporting period, the United Nations received reports of 165 incidents of attacks on schools, most of which occurred in Sana'a and Abyan governorates. Ansar al-Sharia, the First Armoured Division and Al-Houthi were responsible for the incidents. In 61 incidents, teachers and pupils were threatened or intimidated. In another 57 incidents, schools were physically damaged by shelling, aerial bombardments and improvised explosive devices. Such attacks mainly took place during clashes between the Republican Guard and armed tribal groups, and in hostilities between government forces and Ansar al-Sharia. Supporters of Ansar al-Sharia also damaged schools and destroyed textbooks in an attempt to prevent the reopening of schools. In addition, a United Nations-supported child-friendly space providing psychosocial assistance to children in Sana'a was looted by the First Armoured Division. An additional 36 incidents involved the military use of schools for weapons storage, sometimes resulting in their closure.

169. A total of 11 attacks on hospitals were reported in Hajja and Aden. In Hajja, Al-Houthi was responsible for nine incidents of intimidation of health personnel and eight cases of military use of medical facilities, resulting in the closure of health centres affecting some 5,000 children. The central security forces were responsible for two incidents in Aden in which they forcibly entered hospitals in search of patients and damaged the medical facilities.

170. The United Nations received reports of 33 incidents of denial of humanitarian access affecting children. This figure included 16 incidents of hijackings of United Nations or non-governmental organization vehicles; the abduction of 16 humanitarian personnel; 5 cases of threats against or arrests of humanitarian personnel; and physical attacks against humanitarian workers and their compounds.

171. Tangible progress was made in dialogue with the relevant parties on the preparation and implementation of action plans to halt and prevent violations against children. On 18 April 2012, the Minister of the Interior sent a letter to the police and other relevant authorities in which he ordered the full implementation of Police Commission Law No. 15 (2000), which stipulated 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment, and the release of any children present in the ranks of the government security forces. During an official visit to Yemen in November 2012, my Special Representative met the President and other senior government officials, in addition to the leadership of Al-Houthi and the First Armoured Division. During her visit, the Government committed itself to developing an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. The leadership of Al-Houthi also agreed to enter into a dialogue with the United Nations on the issue. In addition, the President issued a decree to prohibit underage recruitment and immediately thereafter established an interministerial committee to serve as liaison for the development of an action plan.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Colombia**

172. In 2012, hostilities continued between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Colombian national army. On 18 October 2012, however, peace talks were initiated between the Government and FARC-EP in Oslo.

173. Widespread and systematic recruitment and use of children by non-State armed groups was documented in 2012. Although the full scale and scope remain unknown, around 300 cases of recruitment and use were reported by the country task force in 23 of the 32 departments and in Bogotá. In 2012, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute documented 188 children separated from FARC-EP, 37 from ELN, 34 from armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia and 4 from the Ejército Popular de Liberación.

174. FARC-EP and ELN continued to recruit and use children. In February 2012, a 10-year-old girl and a 12-year-old boy, both wearing FARC-EP uniforms, were found in Meta during a raid by the Colombian army. The country task force also verified cases of recruitment and use by non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia. In March 2012, for example, a 16-year-old boy was offered money to join the Ejército Revolucionario Popular Anticomunista de Colombia (ERPAC) in Meta. In March and April 2012, threats of recruitment of children by FARC-EP, ERPAC, Las Aguilas Negras, Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños were reported in the departments of Antioquia, Cordoba, Guaviare and Meta. In Guaviare, the threats forced seven boys between 14 and 18 years of age into displacement.

175. Children were also killed and maimed during attacks carried out by non-State armed groups or in crossfire between non-State armed groups or between non-State armed groups and the Colombian security forces. In March 2012, for example, four boys and four girls between 14 and 16 years of age were killed in the crossfire when a FARC-EP camp in Meta was attacked by the Colombian army. In October 2012, a 13-year-old girl was killed and another girl injured by the army during an attack against alleged members of FARC-EP in Cauca. In 2012, at least 52 children (32 boys and 20 girls) were injured and 13 children (12 boys and 1 girl) killed by anti-personnel mines or explosive remnants of war.

176. While underreported, girls continued to be victims of sexual violence attributed to members of non-State armed groups. Girls associated with such groups were often forced into sexual relations with adults and, allegedly, to have an abortion if they became pregnant. In March 2012, a 16-year-old girl in Nariño was raped several times by hooded members of an unidentified non-State armed group. In July 2012, an 11-year-old girl was raped by a FARC-EP member in Valle del Cauca. A large proportion of sexual violence is being perpetrated by so-called criminal gangs ("Bacrim"). Since the Government does not acknowledge these non-State armed groups that emerged after the demobilization process as actors in the armed conflict, victims of sexual violence by them have faced major obstacles in gaining access to benefits under the Victims' Act (Act No. 1448 of 2011). Reports have also been received of cases of sexual violence against children by members of the Colombian security forces. In October 2012 in Nariño, members of the army reportedly sexually abused at least 11 girls, most of them of Afro-Colombian ethnicity, including an 8-year-old girl.

177. Teachers and pupils continued to be targeted and threatened by non-State armed groups for preventing the recruitment of children. In September 2012, for example, three teachers and a head teacher in Arauca were forced into displacement following threats from an unidentified armed group. The military use of schools by the army was reported in several departments. In July 2012, the army used a school

for military purposes in fighting against FARC-EP in Cauca. The infrastructure of the school was damaged and unexploded ordnance found in the vicinity.

178. Although Colombia, as a signatory State to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, made significant efforts to eliminate landmines, contamination by landmines, unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices continued to cause mobility restrictions and complicate aid delivery in several departments, including Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Putumayo. In the last-mentioned department, for example, landmines laid by FARC-EP have intermittently confined hundreds of civilians and prevented timely assistance from reaching an estimated 1,000 flood-affected families. Restrictions imposed by ERPAC, Las Aguilas Negras, Los Rastrojos and Los Urabefios were also reported in urban areas of Antioquia, Cordoba and Valle del Cauca departments. In 2012, more than 46,000 persons, of whom some 30 per cent were children, were internally displaced in 18 departments, affecting rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in particular.

179. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children continued to be disproportionately affected by all grave violations. Among the demobilized children assisted by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, some 8 per cent were indigenous, even though indigenous children constitute just 1.55 per cent of the Colombian population.

180. The Government voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on the condition that any dialogue between the United Nations and armed groups would take place with its consent. There was no contact or dialogue between the United Nations system and non-State armed groups during the reporting period. A general agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace was signed by the Government and FARC-EP in Havana on 26 August 2012, with representatives of Cuba and Norway as guarantors. The issue of children and armed conflict was absent from the agenda.

181. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute provided protection to 264 children (67 girls and 197 boys) who had been separated from non-State armed groups. Children separated from armed groups formed after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations were not systematically referred to the Institute, efforts by the Government of Colombia notwithstanding. Some children were referred to the Attorney General for prosecution. All children, as victims, should be accorded the same benefits and protection, regardless of the group that recruited or used them. The lack of information on cases taken up by the Office of the Attorney General and the limited number of prosecutions involving violations against children remained a challenge. While at least 5,075 children were separated from non-State armed groups by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, to date there have been only 25 convictions for child recruitment, 3 under the Justice and Peace Act (Act No. 975 of 2005) and 22 through the Human Rights Unit of the Office of the Attorney General. Efforts by the Government of Colombia notwithstanding, children continued to face difficulties in gaining access to justice, while impunity for violations against children remained a concern.

182. The early warning system operated by the Office of the Ombudsman prepared a report on recruitment and use of children in Guania, Guaviare, Meta and Vichada to identify the impact of the armed conflict on children and to promote prevention and protection measures. In addition, in November 2012, the Ministry of Defence

issued a law enforcement agencies protocol for the management of sexual violence with emphasis on sexual violence in instances of armed conflict, in addition to an operating charter for its implementation.

### **India**

183. In 2012, the United Nations received reports of violations against children by parties in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha States. Although verification by the United Nations was not possible, the allegations are supported by reports submitted to Parliament. Recruitment and use of children by Maoist armed groups otherwise known as Naxalites, is alleged to have continued during the reporting period. Reports alleged that the Naxalites resorted to large-scale recruitment of children between 6 and 12 years of age into what they term “children’s units” (*Bal Sanghatans*) in the affected states. Children were reported to have performed various tasks, including fighting with crude weapons such as sticks or acting as informants. Children as young as 12 years of age were reported to be present in Maoist youth groups and allied militia, handling weapons and improvised explosive devices. Children were reportedly not allowed to leave those associations and faced severe reprisals, including the killing of family members, if they did so. According to government sources, children were reportedly used as human shields by the Maoist armed groups in confrontations with Indian security forces. In Chhattisgarh, seven children were reportedly killed in the crossfire between the Central Reserve Police Force and the Maoist armed groups in June 2012. Reports also indicated that the Maoists destroyed school buildings. The destruction of 267 schools since 2006 by the Maoists, including 3 in 2012, was reported. The number of schools destroyed over the past six years has raised concerns with regard to children’s access to education. The Government has stated that it has adopted an integrated approach to address the protection needs of children in areas of civil unrest, especially relating to security, development and good governance.

### **Pakistan**

184. In 2012, Pakistan continued to experience attacks by armed groups using terror tactics and associated with the Taliban and/or Al-Qaida, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Balochistan and urban centres. During the reporting period, at least 91 children were reportedly killed and 137 injured in the course of indiscriminate attacks on public places, largely attributed to TTP. A total of 51 children were reportedly killed by improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs and suicide bombings, 26 by mortar attacks and 14 by landmines and unexploded ordnance. On 24 November 2012, for example, at least four children were reportedly killed in a roadside bomb attack on a procession in Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. In addition, drone attacks were reported in the tribal areas of Pakistan. No exact data were available on the number of child casualties in those attacks. In one reported case, however, at least five children between 4 and 12 years of age were injured in a drone attack on 24 October 2012 in Tappi village, North Waziristan Agency. The United Nations has no access to those areas to verify the reports.

185. The recruitment, training and use of child suicide bombers by the Taliban, including TTP, in the tribal border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained a concern in 2012. On 4 May 2012, for example, a 15-year-old boy with explosives

strapped to his body reportedly committed a suicide attack in a crowded market place in Bajaur Agency, killing 26 persons and injuring 75. In another incident, on 20 November 2012, a 13-year-old boy from Khyber Agency who was wearing a suicide jacket was reportedly apprehended and detained by the police, along with his adult handler, while entering Peshawar. No exact figures are available on the number of children currently in detention in Pakistan under security regulations. The Government, however, reported that more than 1,150 boys had passed through de-radicalization and skills development programmes in Malakand district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. By the end of 2012, 40 children, including 23 new cases from 2012, were continuing to reside in the Sabaoon rehabilitation and reintegration centre for children taken into custody by the Pakistan security forces for alleged association with armed groups.

186. During the reporting period, armed groups opposed to secular and girls' education, including TTP, increasingly targeted schools, teachers and schoolchildren, in particular girls, in attacks with improvised explosive devices and drive-by shootings. A total of 118 schools, most of which were primary schools, were reportedly damaged or destroyed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (77), the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (40) and Balochistan (1) in such armed attacks. On 9 October 2012, TTP gunmen shot and seriously injured 14-year-old schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai and two other schoolgirls who were returning from school in Mingora, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Malala Yousafzai was known as a child activist speaking out against the forced closure of girls' schools by TTP in the Swat valley. In respect of attacks against medical personnel, 11 health workers administering polio vaccinations to children were killed and 4 more injured in targeted attacks in 2012. Of those, 9 health-care workers, including a 17-year-old girl, were killed in a series of attacks between 17 and 19 December 2012 in Karachi, Peshawar, Charsadda and Sindh.

187. In 2012, the Government took policy and legislative steps towards better protection of children, including the approval of a child protection policy for the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the extension of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act (2010) to the Provincially Administered Tribal Areas.

### **Philippines**

188. During the reporting period, the country task force recorded 11 incidents of recruitment and use of children, involving 23 boys and 3 girls between 12 and 17 years of age. That figure represents a decrease in 2012, given that there were 26 incidents affecting 33 boys and 21 girls in 2011. Of those cases, 2 were reportedly recruited and used by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, 11 by the New People's Army (NPA), 11 by the Abu Sayyaf Group and 2 by the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

189. That an action plan was signed between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the United Nations in 2009 notwithstanding, Front base commands continued to provide training, weapons and uniforms to children and to use them as guides, messengers and porters. In July 2012, a 16-year-old boy and a 17-year-old girl were recruited by the 103rd Base Command in Lanao del Sur Province, provided with martial arts training and used for weapons maintenance. Although the United Nations has no access to the areas under the control of the Bangsamoro Islamic

Freedom Fighters (BIFF), a breakaway faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front led by Commander “Kato”, the country task force continued to receive credible reports that the armed group was actively training and providing weapons to children.

190. The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP), the political wing of NPA, continued to claim that it did not recruit children as combatants, but admitted that it recruited, trained and used them for non-combat purposes. Children continued to be killed and injured as a result of their affiliation with NPA in 2012. On 26 August 2012, for example, the country task force verified the killing of a 17-year-old NPA fighter during hostilities with the national armed forces in Paquibato district, Davao City.

191. The country task force also verified two incidents of recruitment and use of children by the Abu Sayyaf Group in Sulu and Basilan, involving at least 11 boys between 13 and 16 years of age. On 14 September 2012, for example, a 13-year-old boy armed with an M-203 grenade launcher was killed during an armed encounter with the national armed forces in Sumisip municipality, Basilan Province.

192. The United Nations remained concerned over the use of children by the national armed forces as guides and informants during military operations. In a verified case in July 2012, the Fifty-Seventh Infantry Battalion forced two boys aged 12 and 13 years to serve as guides to locate an NPA camp in North Cotabato Province. Upon notification of the incident, the national armed forces initiated an investigation on 20 March 2013. During the reporting period, it was also observed that the national armed forces continued to release names and pictures of children to the media, labelling them as members of armed groups.

193. In 2012, the country task force documented 66 cases of killing and maiming of children, of which 4 reportedly implicated the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, 3 NPA, 1 the Abu Sayyaf Group, 14 the national armed forces and 44 unidentified perpetrators. As a result of the attacks, 29 children were reportedly killed and 37 reportedly injured. There were no clashes between the national armed forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in 2012. Most cases involving the Front related to internecine conflicts within Moro communities. During the reporting period, NPA conducted high-profile attacks on the national armed forces, often at the cost of the civilian population. On 1 September 2012, for example, NPA fighters of the Merardo Arce Command threw a grenade at a military outpost in a civilian community, injuring more than 50 persons, including 12 boys and 9 girls between 4 and 17 years of age.

194. In the course of their counter-insurgency campaign, the national armed forces were reportedly involved in indiscriminate attacks on civilian residences where NPA fighters were allegedly present. In a verified case, two boys aged 8 and 13 years were killed and a 5-year-old girl injured when the Twenty-Seventh Infantry Battalion strafed a house in Kiblawan municipality, Davao del Sur Province, on 18 October 2012. Following the incident, the national armed forces relieved and restricted to their barracks an officer and 11 enlisted personnel, who, at the time of writing of the present report, were undergoing pretrial investigation by the General Court Martial.

195. In 2012, incidents continued to occur in which schools were damaged in the course of hostilities. In July 2012, fighters from the Abu Sayyaf Group partially



burned down Tipo-Tipo Central Elementary School in an effort to distract a military pursuit by the national armed forces after skirmishes in Sumisip municipality, Basilan Province. In August 2012, four schools were reportedly damaged by crossfire during armed encounters between the national armed forces and BIFF in Datu Unsay.

196. The military use of schools remained a concern. In four verified incidents, the national armed forces stationed military units in public elementary schools in Mindanao. In June 2012, the country task force verified that three units of the national armed forces had established a detachment next to Salipongan Primary School in Tugaya municipality, Lanao del Sur Province, resulting in the closure of the school for two weeks.

197. Since the expiry of the action plan between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the United Nations in July 2011, after two years of implementation, the signing of an addendum to extend the action plan remains pending. A significant delay in its implementation notwithstanding, the Front continued to express commitment in principle to the action plan. Recent progress in the peace talks between the Front and the Government, which resulted in the signing in October 2012 of a framework for a comprehensive peace agreement, may accelerate, with the support of the international community, the full implementation of the action plan, including the reintegration of children into civilian life. The framework agreement ensures specific social protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups, with particular emphasis on women and children in Bangsamoro areas.

198. In January 2012, a United Nations technical team met members of the NDFP negotiating panel for an initial discussion on child protection concerns. NDFP continued to deny that NPA had children in its ranks, but clarified its position that children of 15 years of age and older might be assigned to NPA self-defence and other non-combat units. On 29 June 2012, NDFP issued a unilateral declaration and programme of action on the rights, protection and welfare of children, in which it refuted the listing of NPA in the present report and rejected the application of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to non-State armed groups and the Paris Principles. The activities put forward in the declaration do not include provisions on United Nations access and compliance monitoring.

199. I am pleased to note that the Government is finalizing the implementation of the monitoring, reporting and response system to prevent and respond to specific incidents of grave violations against children. The national armed forces are also preparing draft guidelines on the conduct of operations inside or within the immediate premises of schools and hospitals, which are expected to be launched as an operational directive during the first half of 2013. In addition, with regard to the use of children during military operations, the national armed forces have issued directives prohibiting such use of children, assigning responsibility to commanders, institutionalizing investigations and putting in place corrective measures.

#### **Southern border provinces of Thailand**

200. In 2012, efforts were made by the Government to protect children, who nevertheless continued to be victims of indiscriminate attacks by armed groups in the southern border provinces of Thailand: Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat and Songkhla. As a result of those attacks, which included drive-by shootings and bombings in

crowded public places, 5 children were reportedly killed and at least 48 injured during the reporting period. In one instance, an 11-month-old boy was killed and a 10-month-old boy injured during a drive-by shooting at a tea house in Rangae district, Narathiwat Province, on 11 December 2012. The coordinated bomb attacks in Yala and Hat Yai of 31 March 2012 injured more than 300 civilians, including at least 16 children. The Government is investigating the incidents.

201. During the reporting period, armed groups also continued to carry out targeted attacks against schools and teachers. In 2012, at least 11 schools were partially damaged or destroyed in arson attacks or attacks with improvised explosive devices. On 24 September 2012, a bomb exploded at the entrance of Batu Mitrapap 66 School in Bacho district, Narathiwat Province, injuring two school directors. In another incident, Bang Maruat School in Panare district, Pattani Province, was burned down by militants on 29 November 2012. In addition, 11 incidents of targeted attacks were documented in 2012, resulting in the killing of six teachers and the injuring of eight others, with a worrisome spike in the final quarter of 2012. On 22 November 2012, the director of the Tha Kam Cham School in Nong Chik district, Pattani Province, was killed. As a result, the Confederation of Teachers of Southern Border Provinces closed 332 schools in the region for 10 days. On 11 December 2012, militants entered Ban Ba Ngo School in Mayo district, Pattani Province, and killed the school director and a teacher in front of the children. Some 1,200 government-run schools serving more than 200,000 schoolchildren in the four provinces were closed again for two days for security reasons. In those incidents, military personnel were also victims of the attacks. Since the attacks, the Government has stepped up investigations and boosted security measures.

202. Concern remained over the issue of informal association of children with village defence militias (*Chor Ror Bor*), who allegedly carry out duties similar to formal adult members. In this regard, the Government put in place clear regulations on the non-recruitment of children under the age of 18 years by those militias and sent reminders to all provinces to adhere to the provisions of the policy. The involvement of children in armed forces and armed groups remains to be explicitly criminalized in national legislation. The Government is amending the Child Protection Act of 2003 to explicitly criminalize the involvement of children with armed forces and armed groups.

203. I welcome the fact that the Government and the United Nations country team are engaging in dialogue on access to the southern border provinces to conduct independent verification of and report on alleged violations against children, including through minimum operating modalities. I encourage the Government to strengthen that dialogue with a view to agreeing on the minimum operating modalities to ensure the country team such access.

## **VI. Recommendations**

204. I welcome the signing of action plans by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar and Somalia, in addition to the progress made by other parties in releasing children. I strongly urge all parties to immediately cease all grave violations against children, and those parties who have been listed in my annual reports for recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children,

sexual violence against children and/or attacks on schools and hospitals or protected personnel, and who have not concluded action plans to do so without delay.

205. I note with appreciation that the number of action plans signed or under negotiation continued to increase in 2012. I call upon the donor community to enjoin a discussion to address the funding gaps for the implementation of these action plans and associated monitoring.

206. 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 and to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups for dialogue, conclusion and follow-up on action plans in order to bring an end to violations, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. Such contact does not prejudge the political or legal status of those non-State armed groups.

207. I am encouraged by the increasing engagement between Member States and the United Nations at the country level for the better protection of children affected by armed conflict. In particular, I should like to highlight the value of interministerial committees as a successful partnership framework with Governments to discuss and follow up on child protection commitments and to foster action plan implementation. In that regard, I call upon Member States concerned to use interministerial committees more widely in cooperation with the United Nations.

208. The toll on children of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is unacceptable and unbearable. Urgent measures must be taken immediately by the parties to protect the lives and dignity of all children. I urge the Government immediately to cease bombardments of civilian areas, including the use of long-range missiles, artillery, air strikes and cluster munitions. The Government should be held responsible for all grave violations committed by groups affiliated to it, including the *shabbiha* and the intelligence forces. I also call upon the Government to put an end to the detention and any form of ill-treatment, including torture, of children for alleged association with the opposition. The use of terror tactics against the civilian population can also not be tolerated. In this regard, I urge all armed opposition groups to put an immediate end to these acts that cost the lives of children in the Syrian Arab Republic and to end the recruitment of children.

209. I reiterate my call upon the Security Council to tackle the issue of persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, with the support of my Special Representative. The Council may wish to consider:

(a) Reaffirming its commitment to dealing with persistent perpetrators by requesting my Special Representative to brief it more regularly, devoting consultations to persistent perpetrators and including child protection as a specific issue of focus when undertaking relevant field visits;

(b) Continuing to consider the application of targeted measures and, in this regard, reviewing information provided in my annual reports to expedite current designation processes;

(c) Requesting its Working Group, in the light of recent discussions on persistent perpetrators, to update its toolkit (see S/2006/724) to include adequate mechanisms to deal with persistent perpetrators and, in this regard, to organize regular sessions on persistent perpetrators and the implementation of action plans.

210. I 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, including the deployment of child protection advisers.

211. I call upon the Council to strengthen provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates, recognizing the country situations indicated herein that are without a political or peacekeeping mission and for which responsibility for these issues falls upon the Resident Coordinator.

212. In view of the continuing efforts of regional and subregional organizations in conflict prevention, mediation and peace support operations, I call upon all those organizations to further mainstream child protection considerations in their guidance and policy development, mission planning, training of personnel and conduct of peace support operations.

213. Compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, with their emphasis on special protection for children, remains key to preventing grave violations against children. In this regard, I welcome the ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict during the reporting period, and I call upon Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify this key legal instrument. I encourage all States parties to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to implement the recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and to engage with the Committee and the wider United Nations system in this regard.

## **VII. Lists in the annexes to the present report<sup>11</sup>**

214. In the annexes to the present report, nine new parties to conflict are listed for recruitment and use of children: Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale, Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro and Union des forces républicaines in the Central African Republic; M23 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; MNLA, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in Mali; the Free Syrian Army in the Syrian Arab Republic; and Ansar al-Sharia in Yemen. The listing in my previous reports of Mai Mai groups for recruitment and use of children has been changed into the listing of APCLS under “Colonel Janvier”, Mai Mai “Lafontaine” and former elements of PARECO, and Mai Mai “Tawimbi”. Six new parties are listed for sexual violence against children: MNLA, MUJAO and Ansar Dine in Mali; M23 and Mai Mai Simba “Morgan” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and the government forces in the Syrian Arab Republic.

215. During the previous reporting period, all parties in Nepal and Sri Lanka were delisted after full implementation of their action plans. In 2012, no further violations were recorded by any party in those country situations. While JEM remains listed under the Sudan section of the annexes, it has been removed from the Chad section, given that the United Nations no longer has information indicating that JEM is involved in violations against children on Chadian territory. APRD,

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<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the lists is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In that regard, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing violations.

which signed an action plan with the United Nations in October 2011, released some 1,300 children from its ranks and was dismantled as an armed group in 2012. Since it is no longer active, it has been removed from the annexes. Reference to the self-defence militia supported by the Central African Republic has also been removed, since it is no longer active. In the Sudan, Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will, JEM/Peace Wing and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace Wing have also been removed from the annexes, given that none remains militarily active.

## 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<sup>\*,a</sup>**

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
2. Haqqani network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d</sup>

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

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
2. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale (CPJP fondamentale), as part of the Séléka coalition<sup>a</sup>
3. Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro (CPSK), as part of the Séléka coalition<sup>a</sup>
4. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)<sup>a</sup>
5. Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricain pour la justice (MLCJ)<sup>a</sup>
6. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), as part of the Séléka coalition.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
7. Union des forces républicaines (UFR), as part of the Séléka coalition<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

### **Parties in Chad**

National Army of Chad.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC).<sup>a,c</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).<sup>a,c,d</sup>

3. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri/Front populaire pour la justice au Congo (FRPI/FPJC)<sup>a,c</sup>

4. Mai Mai Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) “Colonel Janvier”<sup>a</sup>

5. Mai Mai “Lafontaine” and former elements of the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)<sup>a</sup>

6. Mai Mai Simba “Morgan”<sup>c</sup>

7. Mai Mai “Tawimbi”<sup>a</sup>

8. Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23)<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)/Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I)<sup>a,b,d</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

1. Ansar Dine<sup>a,c</sup>

2. Mouvement national de libération de l’Azawad (MNLA)<sup>a,c</sup>

3. Mouvement pour l’unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest (MUJAO)<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)<sup>a</sup>

2. Kachin Independence Army (KIA)<sup>a</sup>

3. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).<sup>a</sup> This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.

4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>

5. Karenni Army (KA).<sup>a</sup> This party has sought to conclude an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), but the United Nations has been prevented from doing so by the Government of Myanmar.

6. Shan State Army South (SSA-S)<sup>a</sup>

7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces.<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

8. United Wa State Army (UWSA)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b</sup>

2. Somali National Armed Forces.<sup>a,b</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

1. Government forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Popular Defence Forces (PDF), the Sudan police forces (Border Intelligence Forces and Central Reserve Police)<sup>a</sup>

2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>

3. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>

4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>

5. Sudan Liberation Army/Historical Leadership<sup>a</sup>

6. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>

7. Sudan Liberation Army/Mother Wing (Abu Gasim)<sup>a</sup>

8. Sudan Liberation Army/Unity<sup>a</sup>

9. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

1. Free Syrian Army<sup>a</sup>

2. Government forces, including the Syrian Armed Forces, the intelligence forces and the *shabbiha* militia<sup>b,c,d</sup>

#### **Parties in Yemen**

1. Al-Houthi<sup>a</sup>

2. Ansar al-Sharia<sup>a</sup>

3. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the First Armoured Division, the military police, the special security forces, the Republican Guards and pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>



## 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. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)<sup>a</sup>
2. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).<sup>a</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).
3. New People's Army (NPA)<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2013, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2068 \(2012\)](#), by which the Council requested me to continue to submit annual reports on the implementation of its resolutions and presidential statements on children and armed conflict.
2. The report highlights global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children in 2013 and 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. In follow-up to the previous report ([A/67/845-S/2013/245](#)), it provides an update on the cooperation among partners to the children and armed conflict agenda, including within the United Nations system.
3. In line with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, the present 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, recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals and recurrent attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel, in contravention of international law.
4. All information presented in this report 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 factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field, and with relevant Member States.
5. 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. In the implementation of her mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach on the issue, with an emphasis on humanitarian principles, aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children affected by conflict in situations of concern. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State party does not affect its legal status.

## **II. The impact of armed conflict on children**

### **Trends and developments**

6. Armed conflict continued to have a disproportionate impact on children. Indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas or attacks directly targeting civilians, through explosive weapons, air strikes or the use of terror tactics, took a worrisome toll on children. In 2013, the United Nations observed a significant spike in the killing and maiming of children in several situations, including in Afghanistan and Iraq.

7. The reporting period witnessed a deepening of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, where intensifying hostilities led to widespread grave violations against children and a worsening humanitarian crisis. In the Central African Republic, the recruitment and use of children became endemic throughout 2013 and increased with the surge in violence that has plagued the country since mid-September. With the resumption of conflict in South Sudan, pro-Government and opposition forces reportedly used children on a large scale and committed other grave violations.

8. The situation in northern Nigeria became of grave concern. While the humanitarian situation affecting at least half of the population living in north-eastern Nigeria remained critical, the extremist group known as Boko Haram intensified attacks on schools, resulting in the killing and maiming of children and other grave violations.

9. The recruitment and use of children in conflict remained prevalent. More than 4,000 cases were documented by the United Nations in 2013, but thousands more children are estimated to have been recruited and used. Impunity for grave violations against children, in particular sexual violence, is common to several situations and exacerbates even further the vulnerability of children. The detention of children for alleged association with armed groups or on security charges, highlighted as a concern in my previous annual report, continued in 17 of the 23 situations considered in the present report.

10. These and other worrisome trends during the reporting period call for a redoubling of efforts to better implement available tools to address the plight of children affected by armed conflict. Concrete and pragmatic measures must lead the way. The United Nations, and in particular my Special Representative, have sent a strong message in 2013 that efforts are being made to step up to the challenge.

## **“Children, Not Soldiers”**

11. On 6 March 2014, my Special Representative and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) launched the United Nations global campaign entitled “Children, Not Soldiers” to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in conflict by the end of 2016. On 7 March, the Security Council endorsed the campaign’s objectives in its resolution [2143 \(2014\)](#).

12. The campaign will be implemented in close cooperation with the eight Governments listed in the annexes to the present report for recruitment and use of children, all of which have signed or committed to an action plan and endorsed the campaign. The campaign aims at expediting the implementation of commitments to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children through the development of road maps identifying gaps and outstanding measures to be adopted by the Governments concerned, with the support of the United Nations and partners. Progress will be assessed against regular, joint reviews by the United Nations and Governments concerned.

13. Enhanced coordination between the United Nations country task forces and Governments concerned ensures that road maps identify remaining gaps and set priority activities, benchmarks and detailed deadlines. Such efforts will allow for expedited, yet context-specific and sustainable implementation of action plans. A clear sequencing of activities and measures provides the basis for step-by-step compliance assessments, reflecting the remaining challenges identified by both signatories to action plans, thus ensuring a structured path to delisting for all parties concerned. In that regard, the establishment of interministerial committees, facilitating an all-inclusive government approach, is critical. I note with satisfaction that the existing tools incorporated into this campaign, at this initial stage, have already yielded results. For example, in Chad, through the joint efforts of the Government and the United Nations system, 2013 marked a year of positive progress. Since May 2013, based on a mutually agreed set of priority measures, the Government and military authorities have intensified their efforts to reach compliance with the engagements undertaken in the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2011.

## **Engaging armed groups**

14. As I emphasized in my message for the launch of the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign, the ultimate goal is to ensure that no child is associated with parties to conflict — ever, anywhere. In that regard, it is important to note that the campaign, while focusing on State actors, does not diminish the attention paid to non-State actors. On the contrary, as described in the present report, and despite the ongoing challenges in respect of access to and dialogue with non-State armed groups to end grave violations against children, the number of public statements and command orders issued by armed groups prohibiting the recruitment and use of children has increased. That trend was observed in nine situations described in the report and provides a basis for building momentum to address grave violations against children by armed groups.

15. Fifty-one armed groups are included in the lists annexed to the present report. Those parties are very diverse in nature and require different strategies of

engagement, and the implementation of child protection commitments may vary considerably. Advocacy strategies require the identification of specific incentives based on the military structure, size, modus operandi and other characteristics of armed groups. Taking those aspects into account, concrete commitments are then identified by the United Nations and translated into activities and measures with the armed group concerned, culminating in an action plan agreed on by both signatories.

16. Entry points for initial contact are chosen strategically in close cooperation with all pertinent actors in a given situation. Peace processes, for example, have provided strategic opportunities to reach armed groups that have already showed a willingness to discuss political commitments. It is also crucial to mainstream the children and armed conflict agenda into other forms and venues of engagement with armed groups. Sensitization on the consequences of the military use of schools may lead to a dialogue on how to end the use of children and the use of schools.

17. The Arms Trade Treaty adopted by the General Assembly in April 2013 is a significant new instrument. Keeping armed groups from acquiring arms and ammunition contributes to the protection of children in conflict situations.

### **Protecting education and health care in conflict**

18. Attacks on schools and hospitals are a common feature in the majority of situations covered in the present report. I welcome the guidance note on Security Council resolution [1998 \(2011\)](#) issued jointly by my Special Representative, UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. Its timeliness was further underlined by Security Council resolution [2143 \(2014\)](#), in which the Council reiterated its concern regarding attacks on schools and hospitals and requested enhanced monitoring of the military use of schools. That practice, which deprives children of their basic right to access to education and puts them at risk, was documented in 15 of 23 situations.

19. The guidance note provides conceptual clarity and technical advice, including advocacy tools and an action plan template to end and prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and protected personnel, as well as an operational strategy to deter the use of schools. Therefore, it is not only a crucial tool for United Nations child protection, education and health practitioners on the ground. It may also serve Member States, regional and subregional organizations, or other pertinent actors as guidance for advocacy with third parties, or may serve to develop additional binding measures to better prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and to deter the military use of schools in accordance with international law in that regard. As for other child protection concerns, the protection of schools and hospitals should be introduced in military planning and operating procedures at all times. Creating awareness and mainstreaming at peacetime — setting in motion a cultural change — is crucial to preventing violations in times of conflict.

### **Mainstreaming of the children and armed conflict agenda**

20. I welcome the continued support and attention of the Security Council to the children and armed conflict agenda in its thematic resolutions. I commend the Council for mainstreaming that agenda in many of its country-specific and thematic resolutions. It is also thanks to the Council's initiative that the plight of children in

conflict is better recognized today than ever before. Cooperation among United Nations entities as well as with other partners from diverse thematic backgrounds continues to be strengthened, for example, through the above-mentioned guidance note on resolution 1998 (2011), as does the expertise of actors working for the well-being and protection of children. In view of the latter, I welcome the Council's appraisal of the importance of training, in particular in view of the predeployment child protection training for peacekeepers launched on 8 April 2014 by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and the strengthening of the child protection adviser capacity.

21. The present report could not have been produced without the Council's groundbreaking resolutions on children and armed conflict. In that regard, my "Rights up front" initiative, which ensures that the mandated human rights responsibilities of the Organization are fully integrated across its peace and security work, also supports strengthened action on grave violations against children.

22. The United Nations continued to work with regional and subregional organizations in the light of their increasing role in mediation, peacekeeping operations and peacebuilding missions, as well as in the development of child protection standards and best practices. On 17 September 2013, my Special Representative signed a declaration of intent with the Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission, which is being implemented in partnership with UNICEF. Through the expert advice of a child protection specialist, the Peace and Security Department, with the support of the Office of my Special Representative and UNICEF, is working to develop guidance and mainstream child protection in the policies and activities of the African Union. I also welcome the continued role of the European Union in addressing the impact of armed conflict on children, including its outspoken support for and advocacy of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. The Office of my Special Representative continued to work with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with regard to the mainstreaming of child protection standards among the forces of its member States.

### **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**

##### **Afghanistan**

23. Although the recruitment and use of children remained underreported owing to security constraints, the United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 97 children (all boys), as young as eight years of age. The majority of the children (72) were reportedly recruited and used by armed opposition groups, including the Taliban and the Haqqani Network. Nine of the children were recruited to conduct suicide attacks. In one incident, in May 2013, a 15-year-old boy conducted a suicide attack against an Afghan Local Police commander in Muqur district, Ghazni Province, killing three local police officers and two civilians, and injuring 16 civilians. Children were also recruited to manufacture and plant improvised

explosive devices, as combatants and for other roles, including as sex slaves. In one particular case in Laghman Province, State authorities arrested 21 children, as young as seven years of age, allegedly on their way to Pakistan for suicide attack training by the Taliban. The Taliban rejected the allegations. According to the Government, all the children were released and reunited with their families. The recruitment and use of 25 children was attributed to the Afghan national security forces, including 14 by the local police, 5 by the national police and 1 by the Afghan national army. For example, a 12-year-old boy was killed when national police elements forced him to check a suspicious looking object. One boy associated with the Afghan national army in Kunar Province was used as a porter and was injured by an improvised explosive device. In a positive trend, child protection units within national police recruitment centres in the western region rejected 132 boys from voluntary enlistment.

24. According to the Ministry of Justice, 196 boys were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres across the country on national security-related charges, including for alleged association with armed opposition groups as of December 2013. The United Nations remained concerned regarding several reports of alleged ill-treatment and sexual abuse of child detainees. On 31 July 2013, the United Nations was granted access to the Parwan Detention Facility to meet with 2 of the 70 boys who had been arrested by international military forces between December 2009 and May 2013 and had been detained in the facility under the authority of the Government of Afghanistan at the time of the visit. Most of the children are believed to be in detention without charges and without the opportunity to have access to a court to assess the lawfulness of their detention.

25. At least 545 children were killed and 1,149 injured in 790 documented incidents. Child casualties increased by 30 per cent in 2013 compared with 2012. Armed opposition groups, including the Taliban and Hezb-e-Islami, were responsible for a majority (889) of the recorded child casualties. The use of improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, including by boys in at least two instances, resulted in the killing of 229 children and in injury to 396 others. On 17 May, for example, two improvised explosive devices were detonated in Kandahar city, killing a six-year-old boy and injuring 18 boys and a girl, as young as four. Pro-Government forces, including international military forces, were responsible for the killing of at least 81 children and injury to 125 others, mainly resulting from clashes with armed groups. At least 120 of those casualties were caused by Afghan national security forces, which, as part of the handover and transition of security responsibilities to Afghan forces, has taken the lead in all operations since 18 June. Thirty-seven children were killed and 19 others were injured in international military air strikes. In addition, clashes between pro-Government forces and armed groups resulted in 167 children killed and 432 injured, including by gun shots and artillery and mortar shelling, for which it was not possible to verify a perpetrator. Some incidents were acknowledged by international security forces. Finally, civilian casualties resulting from drone strikes increased from 16 in 2012 to 59 in 2013, including the killing of 2 children. For example, on 27 November, in Mohammad Aqa district, Logar Province, a 10-year-old boy was killed in a reported drone strike on the premises of Shahid Ghulam Sakhi High School.

26. Twelve incidents of sexual violence against 11 boys and five girls were verified during the reporting period, including by the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and the national police. Sexual violence against children remains a feature of the

conflict but continues to be underreported owing to a climate of impunity as well as fear of reprisals and stigmatization. At least 15 boys detained by Afghan national security forces on national security-related charges claimed to having been raped or received threats of sexual violence upon arrest or in detention. Several reports on the sexual abuse of boys by Taliban and Haqqani Network commanders were also received, including from a 16-year-old boy formerly associated with the Haqqani Network and arrested by the national police in December 2013. The practice of *bacha-bazi*, the use of boys as sex slaves by men in positions of power, remained a serious concern. The Government stated that any act of sexual violence against children by elements of the Afghan national security forces was subject to criminal investigation, and an educational programme to prevent the practice of *bacha-bazi* was prepared in 2013 with the assistance of the national police.

27. Schools continued to be attacked by parties to conflict or indirectly damaged in clashes. In at least 73 incidents, schools were attacked, resulting in the killing of at least 11 children and in injury to 46 others. In some incidents, improvised explosive devices were planted inside school premises by armed opposition groups. Schools were also damaged by nearby suicide and improvised explosive device attacks targeting public areas or Government and international military forces, resulting in the killing of children. The Taliban also continued to issue threats against girls' schools and other schools. For instance, in May 2013, local Taliban members in Nangarhar Province, issued a letter in which they threatened teachers and children at a girls' school with acid attacks if they continued to attend school. Also in May, in Zabul Province, the Taliban forced the closure of 40 schools in retaliation for Government action against the groups. At least 13 teachers were killed or injured in 2013 and eight teachers were abducted by armed opposition groups.

28. According to the Afghan Ministry of Education, approximately 115,000 children were affected by the temporary or permanent closure of 539 schools owing to the security situation in the southern (482 cases), south-eastern (39) and western (18) regions. In addition, the military use of schools by the Afghan national security forces continued to put children at risk of attacks by armed groups and affect their access to education in at least 15 documented incidents. For example, in October, in Warduj district of Badakhshan Province, the Afghan national security forces temporarily closed down three schools for use as forward bases and installed artillery on the roofs. The Government states that orders have been disseminated to all Afghan national security forces units to refrain from using schools or health clinics as bases.

29. Incidents affecting access by children to health care included damage to health-care facilities, the placement of improvised explosive devices within the premises of clinics and hospitals, and forced entry into and looting of health-care facilities. In addition, at least 39 health-care personnel were killed or injured, abducted or intimidated. All the incidents were attributed to armed opposition groups, except one incident of forced entry into a health-care facility and its temporary use by international military forces and two incidents involving the intimidation of health-care personnel and forced entry by Afghan national security forces. The remaining incidents were attributed to armed opposition groups, including the Taliban. Although the Taliban publicly supported polio vaccination efforts in 2013, local factions in several provinces continued to restrict access for vaccination campaigns.



30. At least 30 children were abducted in 17 verified incidents, including 16 attributed to the Taliban and other armed opposition groups. Children were abducted for their alleged involvement in spying on behalf of the Government or international forces, for recruitment, sexual abuse and as reprisal against family members working or allegedly supporting the Government or international forces. At least 10 boys abducted by the Taliban were executed, including 2 who were abducted on 23 May for alleged spying for the Afghan national security forces in Bati Kot district of Nangarhar Province, as stated in a letter issued by the Taliban. Both boys were tortured before they were killed. On 19 October, in Bala Buluk district, Farah Province, in the only documented incident perpetrated by the local police, four boys were summarily executed after being abducted and blamed for planting improvised explosive devices for armed opposition groups.

31. At least 83 humanitarian staff were abducted and 35 were killed or injured by armed opposition groups during the reporting period. Humanitarian access was also affected by at least 23 incidents of attacks on or looting of humanitarian convoys and facilities of humanitarian agencies.

32. I welcome the progress made regarding compliance with the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, including owing to the unimpeded access granted to the United Nations for screening purposes and the continuing build-up of child protection units within national and local police recruitment centres. I encourage the Government of Afghanistan to redouble its efforts and expedite the implementation of the action plan in line with the 15-point “road map towards compliance”, drafted in August 2013 with the United Nations and the assistance of the Office of my Special Representative. I note that the Government submitted its third progress report in March 2014, in which it detailed the steps taken towards the implementation of the action plan, and that international organizations have offered to assist the Government in its obligations in that regard.

### **Central African Republic**

33. Throughout 2013, the human rights situation worsened dramatically, with a multiplication and shifting of alliances of armed groups: on the one hand, the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP), the CPJP fondamentale, the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) and the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), which came to form, or were associated in varying degrees with, the Séléka coalition; and the anti-Balaka, a local defence militia, which emerged in the second half of the year in response to the systematic attacks against the civilian population by the ex-Séléka coalition. Starting in December 2012, the Séléka coalition advanced towards Bangui, seizing the capital on 24 March 2013 and ousting President François Bozizé. Michel Djotodia, one of Séléka’s leaders, declared himself the new Head of State.

34. On 13 September, Michel Djotodia dismantled the Séléka<sup>1</sup> by presidential decree. However, widespread abuses continued to be perpetrated between September and December 2013 by ex-Séléka units that refused to disband and continued to engage in systematic killings, rape and torture, and the looting and destruction of villages.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference will be made to Séléka when the incidents took place prior to the dismantlement (January to September) and ex-Séléka when incidents occurred after September.

35. In response to the systematic exactions and attacks against civilians by the ex-Séléka between September and November 2013, the anti-Balaka became increasingly organized in different parts of the country. In some cases, the militias were associated with elements of the former Central African Armed Forces. Tensions between the Muslim and Christian communities were exacerbated by increasing clashes between the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka.

36. On 5 December, anti-Balaka elements launched a coordinated attack against ex-Séléka positions in Bangui, which triggered a wave of violence with grave violations being committed by both sides.

37. Access by the United Nations remained severely restricted throughout 2013, significantly disrupting the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children. Documented cases of grave violations are only indicative, therefore, of the actual scale of violations that has occurred.

38. Both the anti-Balaka and the Séléka coalition, prior and after its dismantlement, systematically recruited and used children. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 171 boys and 17 girls, and estimates that several thousand children have been and remain associated with the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka. The progressive deterioration of the security environment also led to the re-recruitment of children. For example, on 1 April, 41 children (36 boys and 5 girls), separated from CPJP in August 2012, were re-recruited by Séléka elements in the north-eastern towns of Ndélé and Bria from a Transit and Orientation Centre. In December, five boys previously separated from the ex-Séléka were re-recruited by the anti-Balaka in Bangui.

39. Hundreds of children are estimated to have been killed or maimed by machetes, firearms and other weaponry. The United Nations verified the killing of 27 children and the maiming of 115 others. Most documented incidents occurred in the context of the unconstitutional change of power on 24 March 2013 and the December attacks by the anti-Balaka on ex-Séléka positions in Bangui. The latter resulted in the death of an estimated 1,000 civilians, including many children.

40. While the majority of the children were killed or maimed in the context of clashes between the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka, targeted attacks against children were also documented. In two separate incidents, in December 2013 and early January 2014, six boys were beheaded by Muslim civilians in retaliation for attacks by the anti-Balaka. On 2 December, 10 children were wounded in an anti-Balaka attack against civilians in the town of Boali. In early 2014, grave violations continued to be committed by both sides.

41. The United Nations has documented sexual violence against 20 girls, mainly by the Séléka. For instance, on 29 July, an 11-year-old girl was raped by a Séléka combatant in the town of Bossangoa. Weak monitoring capacity, fear of stigmatization and a climate of impunity continue to heavily affect reporting on sexual violence. Nonetheless, credible reports suggest that sexual violence by Séléka combatants was part of a larger pattern of systematic violations committed against civilians in areas under their control throughout 2013.

42. At least 36 schools and five hospitals were attacked by ex-Séléka. For example, on 24 August, the Séléka burned down a school in Nana Gribizi Province after school authorities refused to hand over their archives. On 5 December, ex-Séléka combatants attacked the “Hôpital de l’amitié” in Bangui and summarily

executed 10 patients. The hospital remained closed until 4 January 2014 and after security provisions by the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) were put in place. In addition, at least 20 schools were reportedly used as bases and barracks by the ex-Séléka throughout the Central African Republic. Many schools remained closed throughout the Central African Republic, after having been looted or used by armed groups, damaged by shelling or destroyed by fire, causing a heavy impact on the right of children to education. A group of anti-Balaka and former elements of the national armed forces were observed using a school in Bangui following the 5 December attacks. The ex-Séléka also used and looted health facilities in at least seven documented cases. For example, from July to September, a Séléka unit established its base at the Ouandago health-care centre in Nana Gribizi before leaving the centre as a result of humanitarian advocacy efforts.

43. Owing to the security situation, humanitarian access was limited in large areas of the Central African Republic. The United Nations documented specific cases of denial of humanitarian access by the national armed forces in two incidents and by the ex-Séléka in 22 incidents. For example, in February, the national armed forces prevented international humanitarian non-governmental organizations from leaving Bangui because of their alleged support of the Séléka. On 11 February 2013, the Séléka prevented a United Nations plane from landing in Bria, preventing the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The compounds of many international non-governmental organizations were looted throughout the year.

44. On 26 November, the Ministry of Defence granted the United Nations unconditional screening access to military barracks and cantonment sites in view of the separation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups. The transitional authorities reiterated such commitments following a visit by my Special Representative in December. A total of 149 children were separated from the ex-Séléka. The fluid command structure of the anti-Balaka, among other challenges, was an obstacle to opening a structured dialogue. The United Nations continued to engage with international forces, including Operation Sangaris and MISCA, on the development of standard operating procedures for the separation and referral of children associated with armed groups. In early 2014, a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy was under revision by the transitional Government. At the time of reporting, the United Nations was working closely with the transitional authorities in that regard to ensure that the national strategy included adequate provisions on the release and reintegration of children.

45. The abominable atrocities committed against children by armed groups and in the context of the ongoing violence must stop and perpetrators must be held accountable. I am deeply concerned about the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the continued climate of lawlessness and impunity. In view of the re-establishment of national security forces, the ongoing disarmament of the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka must be accompanied by a thorough investigation of operational and political chains of command responsible for grave violations against children.

## **Chad**

46. The deployment of Chadian troops to the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) prompted renewed momentum to accelerate the implementation of the action plan signed in June 2011 to end and prevent under-age

recruitment in the Armée nationale tchadienne. My Special Representative, jointly with UNICEF, visited Chad in May 2013. On that occasion, the Chadian authorities renewed their commitment to engage constructively with the United Nations to expedite the implementation of the action plan, appointed a high-level focal point in that regard and adopted a road map detailing 10 specific and time-bound measures to be implemented in the short and long term to achieve compliance with the action plan.

47. Since then, the Government of Chad, in cooperation with the United Nations and other partners, has taken significant steps to fulfil its obligations. A central child protection unit in the Ministry of Defence and one in each of the eight “defence and security zones” were established to coordinate the monitoring and protection of children’s rights and to implement awareness-raising activities. Between August and October 2013, the Government and the United Nations jointly conducted screening and age verification of approximately 3,800 troops of the armée nationale tchadienne in all eight zones. Age verification standards had been previously developed during a workshop organized by the United Nations in July. In addition, between August and September 2013, a training-the-trainers programme on child protection was attended by 346 members of the armée nationale tchadienne. A child protection training module to be integrated in the curricula of the police and gendarmerie and of the senior military school in N’Djamena was under development at the time of reporting.

48. Since July 2013, troops of the armée nationale tchadienne to be deployed in Mali started to receive predeployment training on child protection and international humanitarian law, including 864 troops of the armée nationale tchadienne attending child protection training at the Loumia training centre in December. The United Nations stands ready to support further training initiatives for the troops, including the systematic training of troops for international peacekeeping operations.

49. In October 2013, a presidential directive was adopted to confirm 18 years as the minimum age for recruitment into the armed and security forces. It also established age verification procedures and instructed that “penal and disciplinary sanctions” would be taken against those violating the orders. The directive was disseminated among the commanders of all eight “defence and security zones”, including in the context of several training and verification missions. On 4 February 2014, the recruitment and use of children was explicitly criminalized through the adoption of a presidential decree. I encourage the National Assembly to expedite the consideration and adoption of the Child Protection Code, which will further strengthen the protection of children in Chad. Finally, following the adoption in May 2013 of the Law on the Organization of the Civil Registry, the United Nations, in collaboration with the Government, undertook the late registration of 100,000 births in N’Djamena and is developing a two-year strategy for capacity-building in civil registration.

50. While the efforts made by the Government to meet all obligations under the action plan resulted in significant progress, a number of challenges remained to ensure sustainability and the effective prevention of violations against children. Chad should pursue comprehensive and thorough screening and training of its armed and security forces to continue to prevent the presence of children, including in the light of Chad’s growing involvement in peacekeeping operations. While no new cases of recruitment of children were documented by the United Nations in

2013 and no children were found during the joint screening exercises, interviews confirmed that soldiers had been integrated in the past into the *armée nationale tchadienne* from armed groups while still under the age of 18. Moreover, the strengthening of operating procedures, such as those for age verification, which ensure the accountability of perpetrators, and free and accessible birth registration, should remain a priority for the Chadian authorities.

51. The security situation in neighbouring countries continued to affect children in Chad. At the time of reporting, the crisis in the Central African Republic, border porosity and weak State authority in the country had resulted in the inflow of approximately 80,000 refugees, including unaccompanied children into Chad. In May 2013, the United Nations received allegations of cross-border recruitment of Chadian children by the Séléka. A significant number of children associated with the ex-Séléka were reportedly crossing the border into the Central African Republic in Tissi area. In June, five Chadian children separated from the Séléka were re-recruited from a transit centre in Bangui, where they awaited repatriation to Chad and family reunification. In addition, a significant influx of refugees from Darfur, the Sudan, into areas contaminated with explosive remnants of war in Chad was recorded. On 28 June and 5 July, eight refugee children from Darfur, between 8 and 14 years of age, were killed (two boys) or maimed (six girls) in two incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Amboukoun, Tissi. I encourage the Chadian authorities to continue to work closely with the United Nations to provide refugee children with adequate protection and care.

### **Côte d'Ivoire**

52. Despite the ongoing peace and reconciliation process and ongoing efforts regarding the reintegration of ex-combatants, the overall child protection situation remains of concern in the light of insecurity in some areas and a lack of accountability for grave violations against children.

53. In 2013, the United Nations documented a total of 30 grave violations against children perpetrated by the Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI). Four cases of recruitment and use of children by FRCI were documented. The children, between 13 and 17 years of age, were manning FRCI checkpoints in Mankono and M'bahiakro and, in one case, served as a cook.

54. Sexual violence against children remained the most recurrent violation. At least 23 girls, between 11 and 17 years of age, were raped by FRCI elements (20) and unknown armed elements (3) in the northern and western parts of the country. Following advocacy by the United Nations, five FRCI elements were arrested, but charges were reclassified to indecent assault. At the time of reporting, one of the arrested FRCI elements had been prosecuted, and condemned to five years of imprisonment and fined. The impunity and weak capacity of the national judicial system to address sexual violence have hindered access to justice for victims across the country, including in Abidjan. As a result of such gaps in institutional capacity, but also owing to the fear of retaliation and stigmatization, out-of-court settlements of rape cases remain frequent and to the detriment of the victims' rights to access justice and compensation.

55. The United Nations also verified five cases of military use of schools and hospitals by FRCI. For example, a primary school in Dja-Kouakoukro was used by FRCI for military purposes, preventing children from attending classes for two

months. In addition, a health centre in Ranouinke had been used by FRCI since 2011. Following advocacy efforts, check points in the vicinity of three schools in Touba were dismantled in March 2013.

56. My Special Representative visited Côte d'Ivoire from 26 to 30 October 2013. During that occasion, she discussed with the national authorities the issue of impunity for sexual violence against children and advocated for the removal of the victim's obligation to produce a medical certificate as a requirement for filing a complaint and pressing charges against perpetrators.

57. A series of training and capacity-building sessions on child protection were organized by the United Nations for the defence and security forces. In November, a child protection cell was re-established within FRCI to liaise with child protection actors and deal with child protection concerns. The draft national child protection policy to address violence against children, assistance to child victims and the issue of impunity was pending adoption by the Government at the time of reporting. Furthermore, on 5 December, the Government adopted guidelines and procedures for service providers for the prevention, referral of and response to grave violations committed against children. Accountability for sexual violence against children and improved access to justice and adequate services should be the priorities for improved protection of children in Côte d'Ivoire.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

58. On 24 February 2013, as a result of international and regional mediation efforts, the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region was signed in Addis Ababa by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 10 regional countries as well as four international organizations. However, hostilities between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) continued until the military defeat of M23 in November. In the northern part of North Kivu, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) intensified attacks on FARDC and the civilian population, prompting FARDC to respond with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in early 2014. In addition, the security situation in Katanga Province also deteriorated in the last months of 2013, with systematic attacks on villages by Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga.

59. The United Nations documented 910 children (783 boys and 127 girls), who had been newly recruited and used by armed groups. Among them, 609 were Congolese, 28 Rwandan, and 5 Ugandan, while the nationality of 268 children remained undetermined. Almost half of the children were reportedly used as combatants, but children were also used as porters, cooks, informants and in other support roles. Most of the girls were subjected to sexual slavery. Armed groups recruiting children included the Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga, Mayi Mayi Simba "Morgan" and other Mayi Mayi groups (297 children), Nyatura (338), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (47), M23 (38), Raïa Mutomboki (37), Forces populaires congolais-Armée Populaire (FPC/AP) (ex-PARECO) (24), Forces de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI) (22), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (18), Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (16), Nduma défense du Congo (NDC)/Cheka (15) and other armed groups (58).

60. With regard to preventing new child recruits into FARDC during the comprehensive recruitment campaign in 2013, the United Nations separated 113 children, including 79 from training centres to which the United Nations was granted unimpeded access under the action plan process.

61. At least 136 children were arrested and detained by FARDC for alleged association with armed groups. Of these, 21 children formerly associated with M23 (13 Congolese and 8 claiming to be Rwandan) were arrested in North and South Kivu and transferred to FARDC military intelligence headquarters in Kinshasa. All children except for one were released following advocacy by MONUSCO.

62. At least 68 children were killed in 2013, compared with 154 documented cases in 2012; and at least 96 were maimed, compared with 113 documented cases in 2012. Most casualties were attributed to Mayi Mayi groups. For instance, on 25 September 2013, in Bulende, North Kivu, NDC/Cheka elements killed six children. In February 2013, Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga killed at least seven children and maimed four others during an attack on Kabwele village, Katanga. Two four-year-old girls were locked into a hut and burned alive, while other children were killed or maimed by arrows and bullets. M23 was responsible for 24 child casualties, mainly during clashes with FARDC. On 11 December 2013, in an attack by ADF in Beni Territory, 11 children, including a two-month-old girl, were severely mutilated and killed with machetes. Finally, FARDC was involved in the killing and maiming of 36 children, predominantly during clashes with armed groups. For example, on 24 July 2013, three children were killed and four maimed when FARDC launched rockets on M23 positions in Rumangabo, North Kivu.

63. The United Nations verified 209 cases of conflict-related sexual violence against girls, some as young as 4 years of age. Mayi Mayi groups and FARDC were identified as the main perpetrators with 91 and 43 verified cases, respectively. Mayi Mayi Simba “Morgan” elements in Orientale Province raped 59 girls in 2013. For instance, following the rape of 19 girls during an attack on 6 January 2013 in Mambasa territory, 25 girls were raped on 5 February during an attack on Bafwambaya village, Haut-Uélé territory.

64. Impunity for the perpetrators of sexual violence remained a concern. Of the 209 perpetrators identified, 66 were arrested and 36 were sentenced. Thirty-nine FARDC elements and seven high-ranking officers were also accused of mass rapes and other human rights violations committed in and around Minova, South Kivu, in late November and early December 2012 and are currently undergoing trial before the Operational Military Court of North Kivu Province.

65. The United Nations verified 95 attacks on schools. ADF were the most recurrent perpetrators, looting 21 schools in Beni territory, North Kivu, followed by FRPI, which looted and damaged 10 schools in Irumu territory, Ituri district. Other incidents were attributed to FARDC, Mayi Mayi groups, including APCLS, Yakutumba, and LaFontaine, FDLR, Raïa Mutomboki, Nyatura and M23. In addition, 25 incidents of military use of schools were reported, including 13 cases by FARDC. Forty-two attacks on hospitals were also documented, including the looting of medical supplies and equipment, affecting the health care of at least 5,000 children in North Kivu and Orientale Province. Seventeen cases were attributed to ADF, nine to FARDC, three to FRPI and two to M23. FARDC were urged by the United Nations to take disciplinary measures against FARDC elements that attacked or used schools or hospitals, as stipulated in the respective directive of 3 May 2013.

66. Parties to the conflict abducted 147 children (70 girls and 77 boys) in 2013. The abductees were mainly recruited as combatants, or subjected to sexual slavery or forced labour in mining sites controlled by armed groups. The vast majority of abductions occurred in Orientale Province (79) and in North Kivu (77). The most notorious perpetrators were Mayi Mayi Simba “Morgan”, abducting 39 children (27 girls and 12 boys), mainly for sexual slavery, followed by ADF (12 girls and 16 boys) and the FRPI (19 boys and 3 girls). FARDC reportedly abducted nine girls and one boy, as young as six. FARDC elements in Bweremana, North Kivu, and a group of presumed deserters from the same regiment were involved in two separate cases involving the abduction and rape of a total of nine girls.

67. The United Nations documented 109 security incidents affecting humanitarian access, of which 104 took place in the Kivus, attributed to the Raïa Mutomboki (16), FARDC (14), M23 (4) and the Police nationale congolaise (4) as well as Mayi Mayi and unknown armed groups. In 39 of these incidents, FARDC (12) or armed groups (27) elements physically assaulted humanitarian workers on duty.

68. A total of 1,722 children (210 girls and 1,512 boys), recruited both in 2013 and previous years, were separated from armed groups and armed forces in 2013. They escaped or were released mainly from Mayi Mayi groups (635), Nyatura (354), FDLR (140), Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) (19), M23 (83) and FARDC (10 in addition to the 113 mentioned above). The United Nations, in close cooperation with the Government of Uganda, was also following up on the status of 96 unaccompanied children among M23 elements who fled to Uganda. Throughout 2013, UNICEF partners have provided assistance to a total of 4,804 children (738 girls and 4,083 boys) formerly associated with armed groups and armed forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

69. In November, my Special Representative visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assess the Government’s progress in the implementation of the action plan. On 3 May, the Ministry of Defence issued a directive prohibiting the killing, maiming and, recruitment of, and sexual violence against, children as well as the military use of schools and hospitals, foreseeing disciplinary measures or military prosecution. The same day, the Agence nationale de renseignement issued a directive for children in detention for alleged association with armed groups to be handed over to the United Nations. FARDC has designated child protection focal points to work with the United Nations country task force in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since its establishment in December 2012, the joint technical working group in Kinshasa held 17 meetings and started a national prevention campaign.

## **Iraq**

70. 2013 was marked by a significant increase in the number of security incidents, resulting in the killing of 7,818 civilians, including at least 248 children. This is the highest number of casualties reported since 2008. The most affected governorates were Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diyala, Anbar, Wassit and Salahaddin. The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) and Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I) were allegedly responsible for most of the documented incidents.

71. Reports from the governorates of Anbar, Ninewa and Salahaddin indicated the continued association of children with various armed groups, including AQ-I. In addition, continued reports were received on boys manning the checkpoints of the



Awakening Councils under the control of the Ministry of Defence after having been recruited locally with falsified identification papers. Reporting is limited due to issues of access, insecurity in relevant areas, and the reluctance of authorities to release information on perpetrators. I note that Iraqi law prohibits the recruitment of children into Government forces and encourages its criminalization, in line with obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

72. As at December 2013, according to the Government, at least 391 children, including 18 girls, were being held in juvenile reformatory detention facilities (237), prisons or police stations under indictment or conviction for terrorism-related charges under article 4 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (2005). The children had been detained for periods ranging from two months to more than three years. Schools and learning programmes were established in four juvenile detention centres in the governorates of Baghdad, Thi-Qar and Basra with the support of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF.

73. According to the Government, 335 children were killed and 1,326 others injured in 2013. The United Nations, in 167 verified incidents, recorded 248 children killed and 665 others injured, including as a result of improvised explosive devices and in complex attacks. AQ-I was reportedly responsible for most of the incidents. On 11 March 2013, in Dibis district, Kirkuk governorate, the explosion of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device caused substantial damage to an adjacent secondary school and injured 106 students (70 boys and 36 girls, between 13 and 17 years of age). Assassinations and raids targeting members of the Awakening Council, police officers or military personnel and their families were also on the rise, resulting in the killing of 13 children and the injuring of 18 others in direct or indirect fire.

74. Twenty-seven attacks on schools and hospitals/medical facilities were reported, of which five were verified. Most were a result of improvised explosive devices placed inside or in the vicinity of schools and hospitals in the governorates of Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala and Ninewa. On 6 October, in Qabak village (Ninewa governorate), 15 children were killed and at least 112 injured by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in the playground of the primary school. The head of the school and an unknown number of teachers were also killed. On 27 June, in Baquba district (Diyala governorate), five ambulances were destroyed in the explosion of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device as they arrived to a scene where many civilians, including children, had been killed and injured in a previous improvised explosive device attack on a popular café. No one claimed responsibility for any of those incidents.

75. The United Nations also verified the killing or injuring of 13 education personnel and 16 medical staff. In an incident in Diyala governorate, on 1 August, a medical doctor was killed and his two children wounded in an improvised explosive device attack against their house by AQ-I, reportedly because he refused to issue falsified death certificates for the armed group. Threats against teachers, particularly in Diyala governorate, are a growing source of concern. For example, in December, flyers were spread in Diyala threatening English language teachers in primary and secondary schools. No one claimed responsibility for the incident. At the same time, a threat was publicized in social media targeting medical personnel and medical facilities.

76. On 28 November, in Wassit governorate, the 10-year-old son of a member of the local human rights committee was abducted and found dead, with apparent signs of torture. Owing to the sensitivity and suspicion involved in collecting information on abduction cases from communities or authorities and the reluctance of families to report to the police, abductions are believed to be underreported.

77. Interaction on child protection between the United Nations and the Iraqi authorities continued at the national and local levels throughout 2013. However, it remains a serious source of concern that the Government of Iraq is not adequately addressing the impact of the ongoing conflict on children. I urge the Government to take all measures to ensure an adequate response to the plight of children, including through the adoption of laws criminalizing violations committed against children by parties to the conflict. The United Nations in Iraq stands ready to further engage with the Government in tackling the issue. Due attention must be given to the detention of children under security charges. Legislative reform and appropriate policies and programmes for the overall protection of children in armed conflict, including the engagement of community, religious and tribal leaders, should also be addressed. The implementation of a high-level Government interministerial committee on children and armed conflict, as advocated for by my Special Representative during her meetings with Government representatives during her visit to Iraq in July 2013, would facilitate regular information-sharing on and response to grave violations against children, as well as collaboration with the United Nations in Iraq.

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine**

78. Palestinian and Israeli children continued to be affected by the prevailing situation of military occupation, conflict and closure. Eight Palestinian children (six boys and two girls) were killed and 1,265 were injured in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2013. In the West Bank, an upsurge was observed in the number of Palestinian children killed and injured by Israeli security forces during clashes and as a result of violence by Israeli settlers. Eight Israeli children were injured in the West Bank in incidents related to the presence of Israeli settlements, while no Israeli children were killed in 2013.

79. In the West Bank, four Palestinian boys were killed by live ammunition, including three during incursions by Israeli security forces into the Al Jalazun, Jenin and Ayda refugee camps. Incursions into camps have increased by 60 per cent compared with 2012. For example, on 7 December 2013, a 14-year-old Palestinian boy was shot and killed by the Israel Defense Forces near Al Jalazun, allegedly while throwing stones at the soldiers. The Israeli authorities under the Military Advocate General opened investigations in all four cases, which were under review at the time of reporting. The 1,235 children injured in the West Bank constitute more than double the number injured in 2012 (552). Of the 1,235, 961 were injured during clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinians during demonstrations, 183 during military operations, including search and arrest operations in villages or camps, four as a result of unexploded ordnances, and 86 as a result of settler violence, which saw a significant increase during 2013. During settler-related incidents, 49 children were injured directly by Israeli settlers by physical assault and stones or glass bottles thrown against Palestinian houses or cars. Of the 1,235 children injured in the West Bank, 155 were under the age of 12. Eight Israeli children were injured in Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including as a result of

stone throwing by Palestinians (seven) and, in one incident, live ammunition shot towards the Psagot settlement.

80. In Gaza, most cases of killing and maiming Palestinian children occurred between January and March 2013, following the November 2012 Israeli military offensive “Pillar of Defence”. Three Palestinian children were killed, including two boys in unexploded ordnance-related incidents and, on 24 December 2013, a three-year-old girl in a shelling by Israeli security forces of a building in Al Maghazi refugee camp. Ten children were injured during military operations in Gaza, including by live ammunition gun shots and tear gas canisters, and 20 others as a result of unexploded ordnance incidents.

81. In 2013, Palestinian children continued to be arrested and detained by Israeli security forces and prosecuted in juvenile military courts. By the end of December, 154 boys, between 14 and 17 years of age (including 14 under the age of 16) were held in Israeli military detention for alleged security violations, including in pretrial detention (106) and serving a sentence (48). The Government of Israel reported that 1,004 children were arrested by Israeli security forces in 2013; 349 were released the same day and 655 were referred to the Military Advocate General. The United Nations documented 107 cases of ill-treatment during arrest, transfer, interrogation and detention, including against children below the age of 12 in five cases. All of the 107 boys reported having been subjected to cruel and degrading ill-treatment by the Israel Defense Forces and the Israeli police, including painful restraint, blindfolding, strip-searching, verbal and physical abuse, solitary confinement and threats of violence. This number represents an estimated 15 per cent of the total number of Palestinian children arrested and detained in the West Bank by Israeli security forces in 2013. Fifty-one children reported being arrested at night and 45 children reported being arrested during clashes, demonstrations and at other friction points. Reported use of physical violence against children, including with sticks, increased with a majority of the cases reported in the first half of 2013. The Israeli authorities received 15 formal complaints in 2013 related to the reported abuse of Palestinian children during arrest, interrogation and detention. No cases have resulted in dismissal, indictment or arrest to date. In addition, five cases of threats of sexual violence were reported, compared with two cases in 2012. A higher percentage of children were detained in prison facilities inside Israel (76 per cent, compared with 63 in 2012) with at least three out of four children being transferred outside the occupied Palestinian territory in contravention of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

82. A regular bilateral dialogue between the United Nations at the field level and the Military Prosecutor for the West Bank was ongoing at the time of reporting and has produced a number of results, including an Israel Defense Forces agreement to pilot test the use of summonses in lieu of night arrests. However, incidents have occurred where children were threatened while being summoned, and other summons were presented during night raids. I remain hopeful that the pilot process will be fully implemented and provide adequate protection for children. In addition, two Military Orders were issued in relation to children arrested and detained for alleged security violations. The orders reduced the time a Palestinian child could be detained prior to appearing before a military court judge for the first time; however, the time periods provided in military law are still longer than what is provided to Israeli children under Israeli law.

83. Fifty-eight education-related incidents affecting 11,935 children were reported in the West Bank, resulting in damage to school facilities, interruption of classes and injury to children. Forty-one incidents involved Israeli security forces operations near or inside schools, forced entry without forewarning, the firing of tear gas canisters and sound bombs into school yards and, in some cases, structural damage to schools. In 15 of the incidents, Israeli security forces fired tear gas canisters into schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), some during class hours, without forewarning. In a majority of instances, schoolchildren and teachers were delayed or prevented from going to school owing to checkpoints, areas closed for military operations or exercises, military patrols in front of schools and preventive closures by the Israel Defense Forces. In 32 cases, teachers and children were arrested inside the school, at checkpoints or on their way to school. A further 15 incidents were related to settler violence in the areas of Nablus, Qalqiliya, Jerusalem and Hebron. This included physical assault of schoolchildren by settlers, absent or interrupted Israeli security forces escorts to schools in areas prone to settler violence, the evacuation of schools owing to the threat of settler attacks and sewage from Israeli settlements intentionally flooding school grounds. According to the Government of Israel, 63 rockets were fired from Gaza into Israel during 2013, resulting in school interferences for 12,229 Israeli children. The ceasefire understanding between the Government of Israel and Hamas resulted in a marked reduction of attacks on schools in Gaza. One incident was reported on 25 December, when Israeli security forces fired rockets damaging two schools. Shortages of construction materials in September 2013 owing to Israeli restrictions halted the construction of 13 Government schools, postponed the construction of another 26 and, in November, forced UNRWA to suspend the construction of 22 schools.

84. The Israeli blockade of Gaza since June 2007 continued to take a heavy toll on the more than 80 per cent of Gazan families dependent on humanitarian assistance. In 2013, 4,059 of 4,470 medical applications for children were approved; however, 409 applications, including for 215 boys and 194 girls, were delayed, usually as a result of the denial or delay of a permit for the child's parent. In one incident, the application of a 16-year-old girl scheduled to receive cancer treatment in Israel was delayed for 73 days. The recent movement restrictions imposed by the Government of Egypt have also affected the access to medical referrals.

85. I commend the State of Palestine for acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

### **Lebanon**

86. 2013 was marked by a significant increase in violence as a result of explosions inside Lebanon and along its borders, as well as sectarian violence between factions and communities, further exacerbated by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

87. The United Nations continued to receive allegations of use of children in sectarian clashes, specifically in the Tripoli neighbourhoods of Jabal Mohsen and Bab al-Tebbaneh, and on children in Lebanon being pressured into joining armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic. The majority of allegations received concerned Lebanese sectarian groups aligned with armed groups in the Syrian Arab Republic. Regarding the allegations of the involvement of children in armed violence in

Lebanon, I note the joint declaration by representatives of factions of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and of the forces of the Palestinian National Coalition in Lebanon, prohibiting the recruitment and use of children within their organizations.

88. Despite restricted monitoring access owing to the security situation, the United Nations documented 56 incidents of violations against children, including the killing of 11 children and injury caused to 21 others by landmines, unexploded ordnance, cross-border shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic, sectarian armed clashes and sniper fire.

89. The United Nations received confirmed information on 24 school buildings sustaining damage during clashes between sectarian groups as well as between sectarian groups and Government forces, specifically in Tripoli and in Sidon between the Sunni radical faction of Sheikh Ahmad al-Asir and the Lebanese Armed Forces in June. A total of 36 schools, namely in Sidon (20); Ein el-Helweh Palestinian Camp (9); Nahr el-Bared Palestinian Camp (5); and el Beddawi Palestinian Camp (2), were temporarily closed due to security threats and nearby clashes, affecting more than 40,000 students.

90. With the large influx of refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic into Lebanon, I thank the Government's efforts to enrol more than 102,000 Syrian children in the public school system. Moreover, UNRWA ensured access to education for more than 7,000 Palestinian refugee children from the Syrian Arab Republic in Lebanon. However, up to 300,000 refugee children remain without access to education.

91. During her visit to Lebanon in July 2013, my Special Representative met with senior members of the Government of Lebanon who committed to finalizing the ratification process of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which was pending in parliament. In late 2013, the Minister of Social Affairs publically called on all concerned actors in Lebanon to take concrete steps to end and prevent all violations against children in armed conflict. In view of the impact of armed conflict, including the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, on Lebanese children and refugee children in Lebanon, I urge the Government of Lebanon to follow up on the commitment made to my Special Representative and the call by the Minister for ratification of the Optional Protocol.

## **Libya**

92. The situation for children in Libya remained precarious in 2013, with political tensions escalating into armed confrontations in al-Ajailat, al-Shagiga, Ghadamis, Tripoli, Benghazi and Sabha, sometimes involving the use of heavy weapons. The United Nations continued to experience difficulty in gathering information owing to lack of security and a full monitoring mandate. Notwithstanding attempts by the Government to increase its control, many armed brigades under the nominal control of the Government continued to display a lack of discipline and command and control, leading in some instances to grave violations against children.

93. The United Nations documented the killing of 14 children (12 boys and 2 girls) between 4 and 17 years of age, and the injury of five others (four boys and one girl) in crossfire and improvised explosive device incidents or as a result of heavy weaponry. For example, in April in al-Shagiga, Nafousa Mountains, a four-year-old boy from the Mashashiya tribe was killed by a rocket hitting the family home during a clash between the Mashashiya and Zintan tribes. In three separate

incidents in Benghazi on 30 July, 3 August and 3 November, four boys, between 2 and 15 years of age, were killed in improvised explosive device attacks against their fathers, who were security officers. In Tripoli on 15 November, members of a Misratah brigade stationed in the Ghargour neighbourhood of Tripoli opened fire on protestors. During the ensuing clashes in Tripoli, at least 46 people were killed, including a 15-year-old girl and a 17-year-old boy, and 516 others were injured, including an unknown number of children.

94. Seven incidents of attacks on hospitals were recorded by the United Nations in Benghazi and Sabha, including explosions, the targeting of medical staff and shooting inside medical facilities by armed militias. For example, on 30 July, in Benghazi, armed men broke into a secure ward in the city's Al-Hawri hospital to carry out a revenge killing, shooting one man dead. In Benghazi, on 13 May, an improvised explosive device exploded in front of Al-Jalaa hospital, killing a 14-year-old boy and two adults as well as wounding up to 30 others. On 27 August, two out of three hospitals in Benghazi closed down owing to staff protesting against violence, following the beating of nurses, stabbing of doctors and smashing of equipment by armed elements. In addition, in May 2013, a device was detonated inside a school in the al-Salmani neighbourhood of Benghazi by unknown perpetrators without casualty. In October 2013, also in Benghazi, another explosion took place in al-Alwiya al-Hura school.

95. The United Nations continued to visit detention facilities where children were held, including six Tawergha boys 16 years of age in al-Wihda prison in Misrata, held since 2011 without charges. I call upon the Government of Libya to expedite the review of such cases by the competent judicial authorities as a priority.

**Lord's Resistance Army (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan)**

96. Despite continuing reports of sporadic attacks and abductions of children by LRA across the LRA-affected region, LRA has morphed into smaller cells and appears to have changed its modus operandi owing to the military pressure of the African Union regional task force. However, the instability in the Central African Republic and South Sudan could heighten the risk of an LRA resurgence in those areas. Attacks by LRA in 2013 largely took place in remote areas in the north-eastern region of Haut-Kotto prefecture of the Central African Republic, and in the Uélé districts of Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations recorded 353,000 persons, among them many children, displaced in areas affected by LRA.

97. During the reporting period, four boys were reportedly recruited by LRA in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, marking a drastic decrease in reported cases compared to previous years. In addition, two girls were killed by LRA elements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

98. Abductions of children by LRA remained stable with 65 cases reported from the south-eastern region of the Central African Republic (47) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Haut-Uélé district (18). The children were used for looting and the transport of pillaged goods and released within a short period of time. It is important to note that children, in particular girls, abducted or recruited by LRA are regularly subjected to sexual violence.

99. In 2013, 177 children were separated from LRA, including 121 Congolese, 47 Central Africans, 8 Ugandans and 1 South Sudanese. UNICEF and partners were supporting a transit centre in Yambio, South Sudan, where children received psychosocial counselling and medical services together with ongoing family tracing.

## **Mali**

100. In 2013, the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children was established in Mali following the listing of Ansar Dine, the Mouvement national pour la liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA), and the Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) in the annexes of my previous annual report. Favourable political and security developments occurred in Mali during the second half of 2013, including the signing of the Ouagadougou Preliminary Agreement and the successful holding of presidential and legislative elections, which contributed to a significant decrease in the cases of grave violations recorded. However, armed incursions by MUJAO into the northern regions of Kidal and Gao continued, putting children formerly associated with armed groups at risk of re-recruitment. Humanitarian and monitoring access to northern Mali remained severely limited due to security and capacity constraints.

101. All armed groups in the North, including Al-Qaida au Maghreb Islamique, Ansar Dine, MNLA and MUJAO perpetrated grave violations against children. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 57 children, all boys as young as 11 years of age. Most of the boys were recruited in the first half of 2013 by MUJAO and the MNLA and were used in combat, to man checkpoints and in support roles. Reportedly, families, imams and community leaders have facilitated the recruitment of children into armed groups. Children entrusted by their parents to marabouts were particularly vulnerable, and religious schools often served as places for indoctrination and recruitment.

102. The detention of children formerly associated with parties to conflict remained a concern. By December, the United Nations had verified the detention of 24 children under security charges after separation from armed groups by the Forces armées et de sécurités du Mali during military operations. Despite the signing of a protocol on the release and handover of children between the Government of Mali and the United Nations on 1 July, nine boys remained detained in Bamako under security charges at the time of reporting. The United Nations continued to follow up on this issue, in particular on children detained before the signing of the protocol.

103. Children constitute more than half of the documented casualties of explosive remnants of war in Mali with at least six killed and 51 others injured in 2013. In addition, children were killed and maimed in attacks by armed groups, including through the use of terror tactics. For example, on 23 October, a six-year-old boy was killed in a suicide attack on a checkpoint of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

104. As of December, 147,425 students returned to 769 reopened schools in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu; the regions that were most affected by the conflict. During the height of the conflict in 2013, all 1,418 schools in northern Mali were closed for an extended period. Access to education was also restricted owing to the use of schools by the military. For instance, on 14 November, 30 MNLA elements established a front post in a high school in Kidal town.

105. On 7 February 2013, an interministerial circular was signed by relevant ministers, outlining their commitment to end and prevent the recruitment of children and to ensure appropriate reintegration provisions. In addition, an initial 600 MSDF elements were trained on child protection by the United Nations. On 7 August 2013, the Government of Mali accepted the joint verification mechanism proposed by MINUSMA to conduct physical and administrative screening of elements of the Forces armées et de sécurités du Mali .

106. I encourage the Malian authorities to swiftly operationalize this joint mechanism and to ensure that specific procedures for the separation and reintegration of children associated with armed groups and forces are included in the development of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

### **Myanmar**

107. The recruitment and use of children by parties to conflict continued to be a concern in 2013. The United Nations received complaints of 37 children newly recruited into the Tatmadaw, including a 12-year-old boy, and 196 others previously recruited. Children used by the Tatmadaw continued to be deployed to the frontline as combatants and in other roles, in particular in Kachin State.

108. The number of reported arrests of children under charges of desertion from the Tatmadaw increased in 2013. Of 98 boys associated with the Tatmadaw, who were reported under the International Labour Organization (ILO) complaint mechanism, 40 were documented as absent without leave. Of the 40, 10 children were arrested and detained for alleged desertion. Four of the children were released from detention and discharged, including two in January 2014. In addition, children were arrested because of their alleged association with armed groups. For example, in Kachin State, a 16-year-old displaced boy was taken by the Tatmadaw on suspicion of being a Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldier. He was released after being used as a porter for weapons for two days.

109. Armed groups also continued to recruit and use children, including the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council. Several cases of children associated with KIA and KNLA were reported and verified. One boy was separated from KNLA upon advocacy by ILO. In a single incident in December 2013, the KIA forcibly recruited an unknown number of children from among 50 people. Thirty-two people had been released by the end of the reporting period. The remaining villagers, save one, were released in early January. Lack of access prevented the verification of reported use of children by the Shan State Army South, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army (KNPP/KA) and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). Approximately 20 children suspected of association with the United Wa State Army (UWSA) were observed by the United Nations in northern Shan State. On a positive note, the United Nations began to re-engage with armed groups listed for recruitment and use, including KNLA and KNPP/KA. KNPP proactively approached my Special Representative and subsequently the United Nations in Myanmar with a letter to renew previous engagements on the issue.

110. At least seven children were killed and six others injured in sporadic fighting between the Tatmadaw and KIA in Kachin and northern Shan States, including air strikes by the Tatmadaw. In addition, a two-month-old boy was injured by a grenade during a clash between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA on 16 March in Papun district,



Karen State. Also in Karen State, Hpa-an district, on 27 April, a newborn baby and an 18-month-old girl were injured in shelling during a clash between the Tatmadaw and the DKBA. Although it could not be verified whether parties to conflict continued to use landmines, limited efforts at demining, marking and signing continued to put children at risk. During the reporting period, four boys, between 13 and 17 years of age, were killed by landmines in Kayin and Kachin States and five boys, between 10 and 16 years of age, were injured by landmines in Kachin and Northern Shan State. In addition, the communal violence in Rakhine State continued to preoccupy child protection actors.

111. During clashes between the Tatmadaw and KIA from October to November 2013, several schools were reportedly damaged in Kachin State and several others were closed. From late December 2012 until mid-February 2013, schools in Laiza, Kachin State, remained closed owing to fighting between KIA and the Tatmadaw. Allegations of schools being damaged by the Tatmadaw in Shan State could not be verified because of denial of access to the area. In November 2013, Tatmadaw troops, reportedly to minimize civilian casualties, surrounded a Boarding School in Mansi Township, Kachin State, forcing over 300 schoolchildren to flee. In addition, in Kachin and northern Shan State, mine fields laid by the Tatmadaw and KIA in close proximity to schools and hospitals remained a concern.

112. Several reports of sexual violence against children by Tatmadaw soldiers were received in 2013, including the alleged gang-rape of a 14-year-old girl in northern Kachin State. In February 2014, a Tatmadaw soldier was sentenced to life imprisonment by a civilian court for the rape of a seven-year-old girl in northern Shan State.

113. Humanitarian access to areas affected by armed conflict improved during the reporting period but remained restricted in certain areas, including areas beyond Government control in Kachin and Kayin States. Humanitarian access to such areas was only granted in June, September and November, when seven humanitarian cross-line missions assisted over 23,000 people.

114. Access for monitoring purposes covered under the action plan with the Government of Myanmar improved during the reporting period but remained limited. An initial eight monitoring visits were allowed to selected operational Tatmadaw units in the second half of 2013. On 29 May, the United Nations and representatives of the Government conducted a joint midterm review on progress and challenges in the implementation of the action plan. In November, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict conducted a field visit to Myanmar, welcoming the Government's respective progress and stressing the need for continued efforts under the framework. In that regard, I welcome Myanmar's renewed commitment to the extended action plan in early 2014.

115. In 2013, 178 children, in one case as young as 12, were separated from the Tatmadaw, including 134 under the framework of the action plan and 15 through the ILO forced labour complaint mechanism. At the time of reporting, 197 other complaints of child recruitment shared by the United Nations were under review by the Government. Reports on the recruitment of children by the Tatmadaw received through the action plan complaints mechanism established in November 2012 increased significantly towards the end of the reporting period owing to a nationwide awareness campaign in consultation with the Government. I commend the ratification of ILO convention 182 (1999), prohibiting the worst forms of child

labour, including the recruitment and use of children. The United Nations in Myanmar stands ready to support the implementation of the action plan and to further engage with armed groups to end and prevent child recruitment. In that regard, I am encouraged by the ongoing peace talks between the Government and several non-State parties listed for the recruitment and use of children.

### **Somalia**

116. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 1,293 children, including by Al-Shabaab (908), the Somali National Army and allied militia (209), and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ) (111). The remaining cases were attributed to the Somaliland Armed Forces (15) and to unknown armed elements (36). Al-Shabaab continued its campaign for the recruitment of children and youth. For instance, on 24 January, Al-Shabaab recruited six boys, as young as 12, in a Koranic school in south-west Baidoa. In separate incidents, 19 children, as young as 15, were recruited during dedicated campaigns in Bardhere district, Gedo region, and Jilib district, Middle Juba region. Al-Shabaab uses children in various roles, including as combatants and to gather intelligence. Of particular concern are 14 cases of association of children with the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in various capacities, including to man checkpoints and as cooks. The United Nations has been regularly engaging with AMISOM leadership with a view to addressing these cases and enhancing the mainstreaming of child protection.

117. The arbitrary arrest and detention of 1,009 children by the national army, including during operations against Al-Shabaab, remained a grave concern in 2013. In 11 cases, girls who had been arrested were also raped. Upon advocacy by the United Nations, 41 children detained by the national army for alleged association with Al-Shabaab were released in 2013.

118. At least 237 children were reportedly killed (179 boys and 58 girls) and 494 children were injured (383 boys and 111 girls) in 2013. The national army and allied militias were reportedly responsible for 334 child casualties (98 killed and 236 injured), followed by unknown armed groups (83 killed, 174 injured), Al-Shabaab (47 killed, 67 injured), AMISOM (7 killed, 14 injured), ASWJ (two killed, one injured), and the Puntland and the Somaliland forces (one child each injured). Child casualties mainly resulted from crossfire during clashes and indiscriminate shelling. Thirty children were killed and 51 others injured in incidents involving improvised explosive devices. In one incident, in December, a 16-year-old boy was executed by the Al-Shabaab for attempted desertion.

119. In 154 incidents of sexual violence, 152 girls and 2 boys were raped, including by unknown armed elements (65), members of the national army and allied militias (49), Al-Shabaab (31), ASWJ (7) and the Somaliland forces (2). Twenty of the girls were subjected to sexual violence in the context of forced marriages following recruitment into Al-Shabaab. The rape of 21 children in 19 separate incidents by national army and unknown armed elements inside internally displaced persons camps was a particular concern since the camps were supposed to be a safe place for displaced children.

120. Fifty-four attacks on schools and 11 attacks on hospitals by the national army (28), Al-Shabaab (18), unknown armed groups (7) and ASWJ (1) were documented. Four of the attacks on schools by Al-Shabaab and an unknown armed

group resulted in the recruitment of 34 boys. In addition, Al-Shabaab used schools for recruitment campaigns.

121. In 2013, 863 boys and 237 girls formerly associated with armed forces or groups were enrolled in reintegration programmes in Mogadishu, Merka, Guriel, Dhusamareb and Afgoye districts. The United Nations also continued to engage with the Federal Government of Somalia to ensure the implementation of the two action plans to end and prevent the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children by the national army. With the establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNSAM) in July, one Child Protection Adviser was deployed to further support the process. In addition, a working group on children and armed conflict, comprising representatives of the Government, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, and the donor community, was established in Mogadishu and reviewed standard operating procedures for the handover of children formerly associated with armed forces and groups before adoption by the Government in March 2014. Furthermore, I welcome the commitment of the Federal Government of Somalia to become party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, in particular in respect of the involvement of children in armed conflict, and urge the Government to ratify them.

#### **South Sudan**

122. Before the most recent crisis, the Government of South Sudan had made tangible progress in addressing grave violations against children and implementing an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. Such progress included issuing command orders to stop recruitment and use of children within the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), undertaking joint verification visits with the United Nations to SPLA barracks, and regular training of SPLA troops. On 15 December 2013, fighting erupted between factions of SPLA aligned with the Government and former Vice-President Riek Machar Teny, reversing the initial progress made under the action plan.

123. The United Nations received credible information on grave violations against children by both pro-Government forces and opposition forces aligned with Riek Machar Teny. Thousands of children were reportedly mobilized in Upper Nile and Jonglei States by the Nuer ethnic group aligned with opposition forces, also known as the "White Army". Thousands of children were killed or maimed, raped, displaced or orphaned. Attacks on schools and hospitals and their military use by all parties were also widespread, depriving children of access to education and health care and adding to the humanitarian crisis. Although the United Nations was able to verify limited numbers of violations against children by all parties to conflict, documented cases remained only indicative at the time of reporting and further verification was ongoing. In the hospitals of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Juba and Malakal alone, 110 children received treatment for conflict-related injuries. Since the United Nations was still verifying information regarding ongoing violations at the time of reporting, the cases reported below are limited to the period before the events following 15 December 2013.

124. Before the crisis, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 162 children, all boys and mostly between 14 and 17 years of age. Of the 162 children, 99 were associated with SPLA, 3 with South Sudan national police services and 35 with militia allied to David Yau Yau in Jonglei, and 25 were

mobilized from Lou Nuer tribe to conduct community policing in Jonglei State. Children associated with SPLA were identified in military barracks, wearing SPLA uniforms as well as undergoing military training in conflict areas. In addition, reports of the recruitment and use of 133 children were pending verification at the time of reporting.

125. Sixty-three children were killed and 83 injured prior to the December crisis. Child casualties resulted from clashes between SPLA and armed groups, from inter-communal conflict in Jonglei, and from five separate incidents involving explosive remnants of war in Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei and Unity States.

126. The United Nations verified information of seven cases of sexual violence affecting seven girls. Individual SPLA soldiers in Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes, Unity, Upper Nile and Western Bahr-el-Ghazal States were allegedly responsible for the incidents.

127. During the reporting period, 26 new incidents of military use of schools and hospitals by SPLA (19), South Sudan national police services (6) and non-State actors (1) were documented, affecting the access to education of approximately 13,000 children. By 15 December, seven schools remained in use by SPLA, in contravention of the military order of 14 August 2013. The increased use of schools by SPLA also resulted from lessened cooperation with the United Nations following changes in SPLA leadership in January 2013. In addition, the United Nations verified the looting and burning of two hospitals located in Budi county, Eastern Equatoria State, resulting from clashes between cattle rustlers and Government forces. Militias allied with David Yau Yau allegedly burned another health centre in Pochalla County, Jonglei State.

128. As a result of inter-communal conflict, the United Nations received reports of 250 children abducted during the reporting period. The abduction of children continues to take place during cattle raiding and attacks at night where the sole aim is to abduct children.

129. The United Nations also received reports of at least 24 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including forceful entry into humanitarian compounds, harassment and physical assault of humanitarian workers that hampered the ability of humanitarian actors to access the population in dire need of assistance.

130. As far as the latest crisis is concerned, the United Nations repeatedly advocated against the involvement of children in the ongoing conflict, and was in the process of collecting and verifying information of violations against children since the beginning of the crisis. Discussions between the United Nations and all parties were ongoing in that regard. I commend all efforts taken by the Security Council, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and other regional actors to address the renewed escalation of conflict in South Sudan. I call upon all parties to immediately put an end to the unacceptable scale of violence against children and to ensure that perpetrators will be held accountable.

## **Sudan**

### *Three areas (South Kordofan, Blue Nile State and Abyei)*

131. The security situation in Blue Nile and South Kordofan remained volatile owing to continued fighting, primarily between Government forces and the Sudan

People Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N). Grave violations against children also resulted from fighting in West, South and North Kordofan between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), a coalition of SPLM-N, the Justice Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Army factions of Minni Minawi, (SLA-MM) and Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW). The security situation and access restrictions continued to have an impact on the ability of the United Nations to verify information, although access to Government-controlled areas slightly improved.

132. The United Nations recorded the recruitment and use of 42 children in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, including 2 by the SAF. Both boys, 13 and 14 years of age, were recruited in Blue Nile and remained associated with SAF at the time of reporting. Of the 40 children recruited and used by armed groups, 14 children, all boys, some as young as 12, were recruited by the Popular Defence Force (PDF) in Blue Nile (5 boys) and South Kordofan (9). At least 26 children (19 boys and 7 girls) were recruited and used by SPLM-N, including 10 (5 boys and 5 girls), as young as 12, escaping from an SPLM-N camp in Mandi, South Kordofan. Sixteen children (14 boys and 2 girls) were recruited by SPLM-N in Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Three of the children reported to have received military training in Blue Nile after having been recruited in South Sudan in April. The cases confirm previous allegations about the cross-border recruitment of children between South Sudan and the Sudan.

133. At least six children were killed in clashes, including between SAF and SRF, and between SPLM-N and the Central Reserve Police (CRP). In addition, 10 children were injured in mortar attacks by CRP (3) and SPLM-N (7). Furthermore, unexploded ordnance-related incidents resulted in at least six children being injured in Blue Nile, and six children reportedly killed and nine others injured in a single incident in Um Baraka, South Kordofan.

134. Sexual violence against children in the three areas continued to be underreported in 2013 owing to limited monitoring capacity and victims' fear of stigmatization. The United Nations documented the rape of three girls, between 14 and 17 years of age, by pro-Government militias in two separate incidents in Abu Zabad, South Kordofan, on 19 November.

135. In the only documented attack on a school, on 19 November 2013, a mortar shell by SPLM-N hit the yard of El Manar primary school for boys in Kadugli, South Kordofan, injuring a 10-year-old boy.

136. Access to Abyei via Kadugli, South Kordofan, was for the first time granted in September, but was quickly disrupted owing to intensified fighting between SAF and SPLM-N. No humanitarian access has been allowed in the non-Government controlled areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan since the conflict broke out in 2011.

137. The United Nations organized child protection training and orientation for 131 SAF and PDF officers. Nine children released by PDF in Abugibaiha, Talodi, and Kalogi, South Kordofan, and the 10 children who fled from the SPLM-N camp in Mandi, were reintegrated with support from the United Nations. Although the SPLM-N had expressed its intention to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to address grave violations against children in 2012, lack of access didn't allow any follow-up.

*Darfur*

138. The security situation in Darfur deteriorated owing to sporadic clashes between Government forces and armed groups as well as due to inter-communal and tribal clashes, including over natural resources. The increased mobilization and arming of children by communities further exacerbated the risk of the re-recruitment of demobilized children. The United Nations, in conducting monitoring in conjunction with the African Union through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), was able to verify four cases of recruitment by SAF and 14 by border guards, and received reports of 17 children allegedly recruited by SAF, border guards and SLA-AW. Challenges in monitoring and reporting in areas beyond Government control clearly limited the documentation and verification of child recruitment in Darfur.

139. The United Nations documented the killing of 91 children (71 boys and 20 girls) and injury to 98 others (64 boys and 34 girls). Forty-three children were shot and killed and 32 others injured during clashes between Government forces and armed groups as well as during inter- and intra-ethnic fighting. At least 31 children were killed and 14 others injured in SAF air strikes. Incidents involving explosive remnants of war also continued to be a major concern, killing 17 children and injuring 52 others.

140. At least 62 girls were raped in 40 separate incidents. Most cases were perpetrated by unknown armed elements, some of whom were wearing military uniforms. However, in three cases alleged perpetrators were identified as Government forces and, in one case, elements of SLA-MM. Government Police arrested a member of the Central Reserve Police for the rape of a 6-year-old girl on 17 October, and two Government Police officers were identified among the six men raping a 16-year-old girl on 5 February near the Al Meglis area of El Geneina, West Darfur. Sexual violence remained underreported owing to fear of stigmatization and reprisals by perpetrators as well as out-of-court settlements.

141. In three SAF air strikes on three schools in Dursa village, Central Darfur, in Um Dadeti, South Darfur, and in Tabit, North Darfur, all three schools sustained major damage and six schoolchildren were injured. In addition, between 15 and 17 April, unknown armed elements looted schools in Labado, East Darfur, following fighting between SAF and SLA-MM.

142. Fifteen cases of abduction of children were documented in Donkey Dreisa and in Hamada forest, South Darfur (12 cases), Labado and Muhajeria, East Darfur (2), and in Jabel Amer, West Darfur (1). For instance, in Labado and Muhajeria, a 15-year-old girl was abducted by pro-Government militia along with her 18-year-old sister, was used as a porter and was raped before being released.

143. The Government of the Sudan took some positive steps to end the recruitment and use of children. On 21 July, the Government enacted a law raising the age of recruitment into PDF from 16 to 18 years and establishing 18 as the minimum age for joining the national reserve service and the national service. I am encouraged by the ongoing discussions between the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan with a view of finalizing a draft action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. Progress was also made on dialogue with JEM/Jibril Ibrahim, SLA-MM and SLA-AW, which issued command orders prohibiting child recruitment within their ranks, and with Sheik Musa Hilal, who

issued a similar order to nomadic communities under his leadership. Furthermore, 405 children formerly associated with armed groups and forces, including with the disbanded SLA-Historical Leadership, received reintegration support.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

144. The conflict and violence in the Syrian Arab Republic reached unprecedented levels during 2013. Intense bombardments by Government forces on opposition-controlled or disputed areas, increased operations by a growing number of armed groups in constantly evolving coalitions as well as the expansion of the control of Islamist groups in northern Syrian Arab Republic led to massive grave violations against children. Hundreds of civilians, including many children, were killed during the chemical attack on Damascus suburbs in August.

145. Numerous armed groups are reportedly recruiting and using children in the Syrian Arab Republic, including several FSA-affiliated groups, the Kurdish People Protection Units (YPG), Ahrar al-Sham, Islamic State in Iraq and Sham (ISIS), Jhabat al-Nusra, and other armed groups. All of the groups actively recruit and use children for logistics, handling ammunition, manning checkpoints and as combatants. Reports indicated that the recruitment of children or pressure to join armed groups also occur among refugee populations in neighbouring countries. Most children associated with FSA-affiliated groups, as young as 14 years of age, indicated that they had received weapons training and 4,000 to 8,000 Syrian pounds pay per month. For instance, a 14-year-old boy who joined the al-Murabiteen battalion of the Falloujat Houran FSA brigade in Bosra al-Sham, Dara'a Governorate, reportedly received a 15 days of weapons training in al-Lajat valley close to Bosra al-Sham. In June 2013, two brothers, 16 and 17 years old, joined the FSA-affiliated Majd al-Islam brigade in Dara'a, where they cleaned weapons and performed security duties. YPG reportedly trained children with adults near Al-Qamishli, al-Hassakeh governorate and used them at checkpoints and in combat. For instance, a 14-year-old boy reportedly recruited in September 2013 was trained in Rassalein, al-Hassakeh governorate, and used in hostilities. Islamist groups such as ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra or Ahrar al-Sham also recruited and used children. A 15-year-old boy reportedly joined Ahrar al-Sham in Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor governorate, in March 2013 and continued to be associated with the group at the time of reporting. A 16-year-old boy reportedly joined Jabhat al-Nusra around April 2013 and stayed with the group for three months. ISIS reportedly used children as young as eight in hostilities. Children fighting with ISIS are reportedly paid like adults (35,000 Syrian pounds, approximately \$200) and undergo both weapons and jihadist indoctrination training.

146. Adults and children released from detention reported that children were still present in detention facilities and suffered treatment tantamount to torture. For instance, a 17-year-old boy accused of participating in anti-Government demonstrations was arrested by Government forces in March 2013, detained in Homs, and subsequently for three months in the Damascus Political Security Detention Centre, where he was repeatedly beaten and forced to remain in stress positions. The boy reported that other children were present in the detention centre. Children were also reportedly arrested and detained in October 2013 during the temporary evacuation of over 1,000 civilians from al-Moaddamiyeh besieged area in Rif Damascus. The Government stated that no children were detained during the evacuation. Several cases of arrest or detention may amount to enforced

disappearances. For instance, the whereabouts of two boys, 16 and 17 years old, reportedly detained by the Syrian Air Force Intelligence in Aleppo in May and June 2013 for alleged cooperation with the opposition remained unknown at the time of reporting. Approximately 1,500 detainees, including children, are reportedly held in the ISIS main detention centre in al-Raqqah. No disaggregated data on children was available. According to the Government, all detained children under 18 are prosecuted in accordance with juvenile law. In addition, the Government states that numerous amnesty decrees have been issued.

147. More than 10,000 children are estimated to have been killed since the outset of the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and the killing and maiming of children has increased exponentially in 2013. Government forces continued to indiscriminately shell civilian-populated areas, in particular in Homs and Aleppo, but also in Deir ez-Zor, Idlib, Damascus and Al-Raqqah governorates. The use of barrel bombs by Government forces in Aleppo city in December alone led to hundreds of children killed and injured. Children also continued to be killed in ground offensives by Government forces. On 29 January, during the “Al-Queiq river” massacre in Bustan al-Qasr district of Aleppo, at least 10 children were reportedly among those summarily executed. Other massacres were reportedly committed by Government forces in several villages in the Al-Sfera area, south of Aleppo, between April and June. For instance, on 21 June, in Mazrat al Rahib village, at least three children were reportedly summarily executed along with at least 58 men. In early May, a high number of children were reportedly among the hundreds of civilians killed and burned by Government forces in Ras al-Nabaa district of Baniyas town and al-Bayda village.

148. Armed groups also continued to kill and maim children, including through the use of terror tactics and during ground operations throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. For instance, during Eid al-Fitr in July, at least 13 children were killed in a mortar shelling on areas of Zahra, besieged by Jabhat al-Nusra, Ahrar al-Sham and ISIS/Land Liwa al-Tawhid. On 4 August, the end of Ramadan, armed groups, including Ahrar al-Sham, ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra, Jaish al Muhajireen wal-Ansar and Suqor al-izz, allegedly killed more than 200 persons, of whom at least 18 were children, including during executions of entire families in Latakia governorate during the “Barouda” offensive. On 10 September, Jabhat al-Nusra and Ahrar al-Sham allegedly attacked villages in eastern Homs, killing more than 30 civilians of which half were women and children.

149. While sexual violence against boys and girls in Government-controlled detention facilities has been documented previously, an increasing number of women and girls reported to the United Nations that they were subject to repeated sexual harassment at Government checkpoints. Government forces also reportedly abducted young women and girls in groups at checkpoints or in transport and released them a few days later in their village, intentionally exposing them as victims of rape and subjecting them to rejection by their families. Allegations of sexual violence against boys and girls by Jabhat al-Nusra and other unidentified armed groups were also received. For example, a boy of unknown age and his father were allegedly raped by several members of Jabhat al-Nusra. In another incident, a 15-year-old girl in Al Qoseir was reportedly gang-raped by unidentified armed elements and subsequently killed by family members for “having lost her sanity” following the event. The general fear of sexual violence by parties to the conflict continued to be stated as a reason for which Syrian families flee the country.



150. An increasing number of mosques hosting schools have reportedly been shelled during indiscriminate bombardments or directly targeted by missiles. For instance, on 30 July, Government forces shelled the Hamza mosque, recognized as a girls' school, in Anadan area, north of Aleppo. Nine girls, all younger than 10 years of age, and four female teachers were reportedly killed. ISIS control of school curricula, forcing teachers to introduce their ideology, was a growing concern. According to the Government, armed groups systematically targeted schools, with more than 3,000 being partially or completely destroyed. Hospitals and field clinics also continued to be damaged in targeted and indiscriminate shelling. For instance, in early November, in al-Bab district of Aleppo, Government forces shelled an opposition-run hospital twice, reportedly killing one doctor and two nurses. In March, an FSA brigade attacked the national hospital in Dara'a. According to the Government, 63 hospitals and 470 health centres have been targeted by armed groups. Doctors and medical personnel have also been killed or abducted for ransom by ISIS in northern Syrian Arab Republic. For instance, the whereabouts of two doctors reportedly arrested by ISIS in mid-December 2013 remained unknown at the time of reporting. As at March 2014, 68 of 118 UNRWA schools have been closed owing to conflict. Of 67,000 Palestine refugee children registered in UNRWA schools, 41,500 are currently attending classes. Fourteen UNRWA schools operated as shelters for displaced Palestine refugees and Syrians.

151. The abduction of civilians, including children, became an increasingly prevalent feature of the Syrian conflict, mainly committed by ISIS, Jabhat al-Nusra or Ahrar al-Sham. Allegations of mass abductions, sometimes followed by summary executions, including against minority communities, were also received. For instance, a 16-year-old boy was reportedly executed after a month and a half in the custody of Ahrar al-Sham. Approximately 50 children were also reportedly among the 200 persons abducted by several armed groups during the "Barouda" offensive, in August 2013 in Latakia governorate.

152. Active denial or intentional restriction of humanitarian access by all parties to the conflict remained a serious concern. As at 9 January 2014, 242,000 people were estimated to be living in besieged areas. Homs Old City, Darayya, al-Yarmouk Palestinian camp, Moadamiya al-Sham, Eastern Ghouta, including Douma, Arbin, Zamalka and Kafr Batna, were besieged by Government forces. Other localities, like Zahra and Nubul, were besieged by a coalition of Liwa al Tawhid, Ahrar al-Sham, ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra. All besieged areas were cut off from all humanitarian assistance for months in 2013. Increasing reports were received of civilians, including children, dying in areas under siege. In addition, humanitarian access to areas controlled by extremist groups, in particular by ISIS in northern Syrian Arab Republic, was severely impeded and the seizure of goods, as well as abduction and killing of humanitarian personnel was a repeated concern.

153. My Special Representative visited the Syrian Arab Republic and neighbouring countries to assess the conflict's impact on children and discuss the strengthening of the monitoring of grave violations and measures to end and prevent violations by all parties. In 2013, the Government criminalized the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups, and on 23 September announced the establishment of the Inter-ministerial Committee on Children and Armed Conflict. My Special Representative also engaged with representatives of the Syrian National Coalition on their commitments in relation to the protection of children in armed conflict. I

also note the command order issued by General Command for YPG on 4 October 2013 condemning and prohibiting the recruitment of children.

## **Yemen**

154. The reporting period was marked by the beginning of the National Dialogue Conference and by a decrease in hostilities between the Government and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)/Ansar al-Sharia. The security situation remained volatile in the South, due to the activities of the secession movement led by Al-Hirak, opposing the Transitional Government and the Conference. In August 2013, tensions resurfaced between the Salafists and the Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah in the North, resulting in the siege of Dammaj, Sa'ada governorate, by Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah.

155. The United Nations verified the recruitment of 106 children, all boys between 6 and 17 years of age. The Salafists recruited 57 boys to fight against the Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah in Dammaj, Sa'ada governorate. Children were mainly recruited during recruitment drives in mosques and marketplaces in the southern governorates of Abyan, Aden, Al Dhale, Amran, and Lahj and, in a few cases, received military training. While 22 of the 57 boys were pulled out by family members and returned home, at least 2 were killed in combat and 2 remained in Dammaj at the time of reporting. Thirty-two boys were observed manning Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah checkpoints, carrying firearms and inspecting vehicles in Sa'ada and Amran governorates. One boy, 11 years old, reported having received two months of military and ideological training. Reluctance of victims' families to expose themselves by reporting on violations by the Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah remained a challenge to monitoring. Finally, 14 children were recruited by AQAP/Ansar al-Sharia in Abyan governorate and three boys were used by the Al-Islah party and the Popular Committee, a locally rooted resistance group, which aligned with the Government to fight AQAP/Ansar al-Sharia in Abyan. In addition, 10 children recruited prior to the reporting period, including due to falsified identity documents, continued to be used in support roles by the Yemeni Armed Forces in 2013.

156. Nine boys were arbitrarily detained by the Popular Committee for alleged association with AQAP/Ansar al-Sharia in 2013. After the Government regained control over Abyan in June 2012, the Popular Committee served as a de facto police force, "arresting" and "rehabilitating" suspected AQAP/Ansar al-Sharia elements, including children.

157. At least 36 children were killed and 154 others maimed. Child casualties occurred mainly in the governorate of Sa'ada, but also in 12 other governorates throughout Yemen. Most child casualties resulted from gunshots (17 killed and 63 injured) and shelling (10 killed and 56 injured) during clashes between armed groups and between armed groups and Government forces. For example, since August, the clashes in Dammaj between Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah and the Salafists resulted in at least 20 child casualties. At least five children were injured in attacks using terror tactics, including incidents involving improvised explosive devices and one suicide attack. Another 20 child casualties were attributed to the "civil disobedience movement" initiated by Al-Hirak in southern Yemen and at least 10 children were injured in clashes between armed tribes. Explosive remnants of war continued to pose a threat to children, killing and maiming at least 28 in 2013, including in Abyan, Sa'ada, and Aden governorates. Finally, on 9 June, one boy was killed in a drone attack in Al-Jawf.

158. Thirty-five attacks on schools, on protected personnel, or threats against protected personnel were documented in 2013. For example, on 27 December, the national armed forces shelled a school where a funeral was held, resulting in more than 30 casualties, including 2 boys killed and 10 boys injured. Four attacks on schools in Amran, for example the damage to Aisha primary school in crossfire, resulted from clashes between Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah and the Salafists. Al-Hirak was responsible for the majority of documented incidents, in particular threats against protected personnel. For instance, Shamsan school, in Aden governorate, was forcibly entered by Al-Hirak youth groups, destroying the gate, and demanding closure of the school and support for the civil disobedience movement. In a separate incident, in Sa'ada governorate, a timed improvised explosive device was detected inside a school and detonated safely.

159. The United Nations documented the military use of four schools by both Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah and the Salafists, including as military barracks and during clashes in Sa'ada, Amran and Aden governorates, resulting in the closure of the schools since October 2013. One school in Amran was used by the national armed forces as barracks from 19 January to 1 March 2013. Also in Amran, four schools were used and destroyed by armed elements of the Al-Osimat and Qaflat Uthar tribes.

160. Six attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were documented, including the partial destruction of four hospitals during a complex attack by AQAP/Ansar al-Sharia on 5 December in Sana'a, resulting in the death of 57 people and injury to 186 others. Two hospitals were partially destroyed in crossfire between Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah and the Salafists. Government forces were responsible for damage to a hospital and attacks on protected personnel in the context of dispersing Al-Hirak elements in Al Dhale'e and Hadramaut governorates.

161. Twenty-two incidents of denial of humanitarian access and attacks on humanitarian personnel were verified, mainly attributed to unknown armed groups and, in some cases, to Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah and Government forces. Of particular concern was the abduction of 11 humanitarian personnel in seven incidents. Two United Nations staff remained abducted at the time of reporting. From October to November, humanitarian access to Dammaj and three IDP camps was denied by Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah during clashes with the Salafists.

162. Following the visit of my Special Representative in November 2012 and the Government's commitment to address grave violations against children in Yemen, dialogue on an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children by the national armed forces continued in 2013. On 1 January, the Government established an interministerial committee, which, by July, had developed and endorsed a draft action plan. At the time of reporting, despite its adoption by the Cabinet on 4 September 2013, the action plan was pending signature owing to ongoing discussions regarding monitoring access. Meanwhile, the United Nations continued to promote relevant legal reforms and advocated, in the context of the National Dialogue Conference, for 18 as the minimum age for recruitment. In October, an implementation plan to accelerate birth registration was launched by the Government, addressing an existing loophole in recruitment mechanisms. Furthermore, the United Nations continued to engage in dialogue with Al-Houthi/Ansar Allah at the time of reporting based on a draft action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Colombia**

163. Following the signing of the “General Agreement for the end of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace” in August 2012, ongoing talks between the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) and the Government of Colombia achieved important progress on the issues of rural development and political participation. While the issue of children and armed conflict was not included in the agenda, both the third item, on “End of the conflict”, and the fifth item, on “Victims”, constitute opportunities to take into account child protection concerns. This is a positive development, I commend the ongoing efforts in the context of the peace talks and encourage the parties to continue to work in this direction towards a political solution. Furthermore, in the context of the peace talks, the Colombian Vice-President has specifically called on FARC-EP to respect minimum humanitarian standards, including by releasing children associated with them and by ending recruitment and use.

164. Hostilities between FARC-EP, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Colombian Armed Forces intensified in particular in the departments of Cauca, Choco, Nariño, Antioquia, Arauca, Santander and Putumayo. Extensive displacement triggered by such hostilities continued to increase children’s vulnerability, especially those of Afro-Colombian and indigenous origin. At least 110,000 people suffered from severe mobility restrictions in 2013, mostly as a result of hostilities but also confinement, contamination by explosive remnants of war, and security restrictions imposed by armed groups having an impact on access to humanitarian assistance and basic services. By the end of December, at least 24,862 people remained confined in 10 departments, with indigenous and Afro-Colombian people affected disproportionately.

165. Although the recruitment and use of children remained underreported in Colombia, the United Nations verified 81 cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups in 25 departments and in Bogotá, including 58 children by FARC-EP and 17 by ELN. In July 2013, eight cases of recruitment of indigenous children by FARC-EP were documented in the department of Cauca. In December, in Antioquia, a 15-year-old boy was recruited by FARC-EP during a declared ceasefire. Furthermore, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute documented 342 children (114 girls and 228 boys) separated from armed groups in 2013, marking a significant increase, compared with 264 children separated in 2012. Among these children, 261 had been recruited by FARC-EP, 65 by ELN, 15 by armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia, and 1 by the Ejército Popular de Liberación.

166. At least 43 children were killed and 83 maimed during attacks by armed groups. Four children were killed and 10 maimed in clashes between armed groups or between the national armed forces and armed groups. For example, in August, a 14-year-old boy was killed in crossfire when FARC-EP attacked a police station in Putumayo. Furthermore, 11 children were killed and 28 maimed by anti-personnel mines or explosive remnants of war.

167. While underreported, girls and boys continued to be victims of sexual violence attributed to members of armed groups and in some cases by the national armed

forces. Between January and October 2013, five cases of sexual violence against children by armed groups and 17 cases (two boys and 15 girls) by the national armed forces were referred to the National Institute of Forensics. Furthermore, information gathered by the United Nations and the Colombian Ombudsman Office indicate a pattern of sexual exploitation and abuse of girls and women in mining zones where armed groups are operating. Sexual violence also continued to be perpetrated by armed groups that emerged after the demobilization of the paramilitary groups. Since these groups are not considered actors of the armed conflict by the Government, and although children may also benefit from support by the State's Family Defenders as victims of violence, they continue to face obstacles in exercising their rights as protected under the Victims Law.

168. During 2013, the United Nations identified 26 education-related incidents resulting in damage to schools or suspension of classes. For example, in April 2013, a school in Arauca used as shelter by FARC-EP was damaged during clashes between the armed group and the national armed forces. In February 2013, the national armed forces used a school for military purposes while fighting against FARC-EP in Putumayo, putting school premises and children at risk often resulting in the suspension of classes. In November, during an armed lockdown by FARC-EP in Antioquia, at least six schools were closed, affecting approximately 3,000 children. Teachers continued to be targeted, with five teachers reportedly killed by unidentified armed groups and others subject to threats by armed groups in six different departments. The involvement of children in several civic-military activities by the Ministry of Defense and the national armed forces, prohibited by the Child Protection Code (Law 1098 of 2006), was reported in several departments.

169. The Government of Colombia has voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) on the condition that any dialogue between the United Nations and armed groups would take place with its consent. Constructive dialogue between the Government and the United Nations system, both at the political and technical levels, is ongoing. The establishment and implementation of policies to protect children from recruitment such as the Presidential Human Rights Programme is an encouraging development to ensure the protection of children affected by the conflict in Colombia.

170. A total of 342 children who had been separated from armed groups were referred to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. Some children, in particular those separated from the armed groups formed after the demobilization of paramilitary organizations, were referred to the Attorney General's Office for prosecution in accordance with the Law on Childhood and Adolescence (8 November 2006) (Codigo de la Infancia y Adolescencia, Ley 1098). However, the children continued to face difficulties in benefitting from the same rights and protection as children recruited by other armed groups. All children, as victims, should be accorded the same benefits and protection, regardless of the group that recruited or used them.

171. The number of prosecutions for violations against children and information on cases taken up by the Office of the Attorney General remained limited. While the Colombian Family Welfare Institute attended to at least 5,417 children separated since 1999 from armed groups, to date there have been 69 convictions for child recruitment, including 5 under the Justice and Peace Law of 2005 (of which 2 in 2013), and 64 by the Human Rights Unit of the Office of the Attorney General (of which 14 in 2013). Additionally, there have been convictions by regional offices of

the Attorney General. Despite such efforts, children continued to face difficulties in gaining access to justice, and impunity for violations against children remains a concern.

## India

172. The recruitment and use of children, as young as 6 years of age, by Maoist armed groups in India, also known as Naxalites, continued in 2013. Although no disaggregated data on the number of children associated with armed groups in India was available to the United Nations, independent estimates indicate that at least 2,500 children are associated with armed groups in Naxal-affected areas. Notably, Naxalite recruitment also continued to affect girls and women. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, boys and girls between 6 and 12 years of age were recruited into specific children's units (called *bal dasta* and *bal sangham*) in Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha States. The children were used as spies and for fighting with crude weapons, such as sticks. At the age of 12, children associated with Naxalites are reportedly transferred to age-specific units and receive military training in weapons handling and the use of improvised explosive devices. According to Government sources, children also continued to be placed in front of combat units as human shields. In Naxalite recruitment campaigns, targeting poor communities, parents are forced to offer boys and girls to the armed groups under the threat of violence, including killing and torture. Similarly, children are reportedly threatened with the killing of family members should they escape or surrender to security forces.

173. The recruitment and use of children remains to be criminalized by law. Of particular concern were several reports on the treatment of children allegedly associated with armed groups. As the Indian National Commission for Protection of Child Rights stated in its "Protocols for police and armed forces in contact with children in areas of civil unrest", children arrested under security legislation are often detained with adults, not tried through the juvenile justice system and deprived of their right to due process of law.

174. Although no disaggregated data on children killed or maimed in clashes between Maoist armed groups and Government security forces were available, at least 257 civilians, 101 security forces elements and 97 Naxalite members were killed in 2013 in 998 incidents. Taking into account the use of children as human shields by the Naxalites, the United Nations is concerned about the killing and maiming of children in hostilities.

175. The reported presence of girls within Naxalite ranks also raises concerns regarding sexual violence against children. According to the Government, based on statements of several women formerly associated with Naxalite groups, sexual violence, including rape and other forms of abuse, is a practice in some Naxalite camps.

176. Attacks on schools by Naxalites have continued to affect access by children to education in affected areas. Three schools were reportedly attacked by Naxalites in 2013. For example, on 15 June, up to 50 Naxalite fighters attacked and blew up a middle school in Bhulsumia village, Bihar. In that regard, continued reports on the military use of schools as barracks and bases or the deployment of Government security forces in the vicinity of schools remained a concern. For example, in an incident in Latehar district, Jharkhand, on 16 March, approximately 20 Naxalite

fighters reportedly attacked a school, beat up teachers and destroyed a boundary wall under construction. Last, according to some reports, schools in Chhattisgarh were also used for the recruitment of schoolchildren by armed groups.

## **Nigeria**

177. Conflict in the north-eastern region of Nigeria has resulted in serious violations against children. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram,<sup>2</sup> was created in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of the north-eastern Borno State. Its objective is to overthrow the Government and create an Islamic State governed by sharia law. Since July 2009, the extremist group has been carrying out targeted attacks against police, religious leaders, politicians, and public and international institutions, including a suicide attack on a United Nations building in Abuja in 2011, and indiscriminately killing civilians, including children.

178. The security and humanitarian situation in the north-eastern region deteriorated throughout 2013. The activities of Boko Haram and the military response have led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people within Nigeria and to neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and the Niger. A joint humanitarian assessment mission in September by the Nigerian authorities (National Emergency Management Agency), the United Nations and the Nigerian Red Cross, estimates that about 5.9 of the 11 million Nigerians who live in the north-eastern states have been affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, including 4 million in Borno State.

179. Humanitarian access to affected communities and for monitoring and verifying incidents of grave violations against children has become increasingly difficult, in particular since the closure of Maiduguri airport following an attack by Boko Haram in December 2013. Between May and December 2013 alone, at least 1,200 people were killed in 48 Boko Haram-related attacks in the States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe.

180. The United Nations received reports of the recruitment and use of children as young as 12 by Boko Haram. Children are allegedly used for intelligence purposes, tracking movements of the security forces, transporting guns and taking part in attacks, including the burning of schools and churches.

181. Hundreds of children were killed or maimed by Boko Haram in bomb and gun attacks against anyone who supported democracy or so-called Western values. In September alone, 491 persons were killed in nine attacks, including an unknown number of children. For example, on 17 September 2013, Boko Haram attacked Benisheikh, killing at least 161 people, mainly civilians.

182. Of particular concern were the targeted attacks on schools by Boko Haram, which were on the increase in Yobe and Borno States since October 2012 and throughout 2013, resulting in the killing of at least 100 children and 70 teachers. For example, in March 2013, at least 11 schools in Borno State were attacked resulting in the killing of at least seven teachers and three children. In June, two secondary schools were attacked in Yobe and Borno States, resulting in the killing of seven schoolchildren and two teachers in Yobe and eight boys and two girls in Borno. In July, a Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, publicly stated that they would burn

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<sup>2</sup> *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad* in Arabic means "people committed to propagating the Prophet's teachings and jihad". It is also known as Boko Haram, which means "Western education is a sin" in local Hausa language.

schools and kill teachers and the group claimed responsibility for an attack on 6 July on a secondary school in Mamudo, Yobe State, killing at least 29 children and one teacher, some of them burned alive. Also in July, a government secondary school in Yobe State was attacked by armed elements at night while the schoolchildren were sleeping. Sections of the school and dormitory were set ablaze and escaping students were shot. The reported number of casualties ranged between 18 and 42. In the most fatal attack on children in 2013, on 29 September, Boko Haram elements entered and opened fire in the male dormitory at the College of Agriculture in Gujba, Yobe State, killing 65 students and wounding 18 others.

183. Boko Haram also targeted and killed education and medical personnel. For example, on 9 April, suspected Boko Haram members killed four officials of the Borno State Feeding Committee, which runs a primary and secondary school feeding programme, while they were on an inspection tour of schools in Dikwa town, Borno State. In February, three foreign doctors were reportedly killed in Potiskum and 10 female health workers were killed in attacks on polio vaccination centres in Kano.

184. The escalating violence and recurrent attacks on schools severely disrupted the right of children to education, with 15,000 children in Borno State reportedly having to stop attending schools between February and May 2013. The health-care system in Borno State has also reportedly collapsed, with most medical personnel fleeing in fear of being attacked by Boko Haram. These trends of attacks on schools and the killing and maiming of children continued in early 2014. For instance, on 25 February 2014, 59 schoolchildren in the College of Buni Yadi, a secondary school in Yobe State in north-east Nigeria, were reportedly shot or burned alive.

185. The Government of Nigeria responded to the threat posed by Boko Haram with the deployment of a joint task force comprising military, police, immigration and intelligence officers in June 2011. In May 2013, the Government declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States, following which armed clashes between the joint task force and Boko Haram escalated in the context of the joint task force counter-insurgency operations. The United Nations received reports of 14 children in Borno State, between 9 and 13 years of age, and 21 children in Yobe State who had been reportedly arrested in the context of such operations. The United Nations welcomes their release in May 2013 as part of the amnesty programme announced by the Government and calls on the Government to do its utmost to uphold its obligations to prevent the arbitrary arrest and detention of children and to ensure respect for the fundamental principles of the right to a fair trial, including in the context of a State emergency and of the ongoing counter-insurgency operations.

186. Furthermore, vigilante groups, commonly referred to as the “Civilian joint task force”, which emerged to protect their communities from Boko Haram, progressively armed themselves with machetes and guns, and were observed manning checkpoints in support of the joint task force. According to the Government, the “Civilian joint task force” is not part of the Government forces and the activities of the groups are of concern since they operate outside of the rule of law, chain of command and accountability of the security forces.

187. The United Nations has denounced the attacks in north-eastern Nigeria and has called upon the authorities to launch prompt and thorough investigations to hold perpetrators accountable. The United Nations also takes note of the commitment of Nigeria to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law, to protect the



rights of children and to protect children from conflict-related violence, including through its existing national legislation and policies. I urge the Nigerian authorities to continue to support the independent National Human Rights Commission to implement its far-reaching and robust mandate to monitor and report on grave violations in the affected areas. I welcome the Government's commitment to help to facilitate access for human rights monitors and humanitarian actors to the north-east.

### **Pakistan**

188. The recruitment of children by armed groups in Pakistan, including reportedly for use as suicide bombers and bomb planters, remained a grave concern in 2013. For example, in March, the police arrested 11 children, between 10 and 17 years of age, who were allegedly used by the United Baloch Army to plant improvised explosive devices. All the children were held in the government of Balochistan security facility awaiting trial at the time of reporting. No exact figures could be established on the number of children used by armed groups, in particular in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. However, on 24 October, 21 children, between 7 and 12 years of age, allegedly proceeding to Pakistan for military training by the Taliban were detained by Afghan security forces in Nuristan Province. The Taliban rejected those allegations.

189. Although exact figures of child casualties were not always available in 2013, improvised explosive device blasts were reported to have killed at least 18 children and injured 76 others, particularly in the Provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For example, a twin suicide attack on 22 September at the All Saints Church in Peshawar city, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killed 81 people, including an unknown number of children. A splinter group of the Tehrik-i-Taliban, the Tehrik-i-Taliban-Jandullah, claimed responsibility. In another attack, on 20 June 2013, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a Shia mosque in Quetta, Balochistan, followed by a remote-controlled improvised explosive device explosion after civilians and rescue workers had reached the site, killing at least 28 persons, including 3 children, and injuring 65 others. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi claimed responsibility. On 16 February, in a suicide attack by an unknown group in a marketplace near the Hazara town of Quetta, 92 people were killed and 254 injured, including at least 45 women and 28 children. In addition, attacks by armed assailants, mainly in Balochistan and the city of Karachi, caused the death of 7 children and injured 16. Armed clashes between the security forces and armed groups and between armed groups themselves in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas resulted in the death of one child and the injury of four.

190. Targeted attacks on schools, teachers and schoolchildren have continued, mainly carried out by the Tehrik-i-Taliban and aligned local groups, with 78 attacks reported to the United Nations. The highest number of attacks on schools occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (51), followed by the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (19). In one incident, on 30 March, a school principal was killed and eight students, between 5 and 10 years of age, were injured when two men on a motorcycle hurled hand grenades and opened fire in a primary school in Karachi. Twenty-six attacks targeted female educational institutions. In January 2013, armed elements reportedly killed five female teachers and two health workers returning by bus from a community project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. On 26 March, a female teacher was executed in the presence of her 13-year-old son on her way to

school by two unidentified armed elements in Khyber Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Areas. On 5 September, a bomb blast outside the Government Girls' Primary School in Bannu district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, allegedly carried out by the local Taliban, injured 13 female students below the age of 10. Several schools, in particular girls' schools, also received threats by armed groups resulting in closures. For example, on 15 April, a Taliban faction led by Hafiz Gul Bahadur threatened boys and girls if they violated his ban on five schools in Miranshah, North Waziristan. The United Nations also received reports that Pakistan security forces were using Government school buildings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas to launch operations against armed groups.

191. Attacks on polio workers continued, resulting in the killing of several polio workers and eight police workers providing escort. On 21 November, 11 teachers and local volunteers were abducted from a private school in Khyber Agency after polio vaccinations had taken place in the school. The abduction was allegedly carried out by the Lashkar-e-Islam group, and the victims were released after a few days unharmed. Hospitals and medical clinics were also targeted. At least four people were killed, including at least one hospital staff, and five injured in a suicide bomb attack on a hospital in Bajaur tribal area on 20 April. On 15 June, at least 25 civilians were killed and many others wounded in a coordinated attack claimed by Lashkar-e-Jhangvi on a bus with female university students and, subsequently, the Medical Complex in Quetta, where casualties of the first attack received treatment.

192. The Government took steps towards strengthening its child protection policy and legislative framework, including the approval of a Balochistan child protection policy and the vetting and submission to the Cabinet of a child protection act for Balochistan; formulation of rules of business for the Child Protection and Welfare Commission in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and for the Child Protection Authority in Sindh; and the appointment of a Child Rights Commissioner at the federal level and in all provinces of Pakistan. I encourage the Government of Pakistan to continue its efforts to better protect children. My country team in Pakistan stands ready to support the Government in this regard.

### **Philippines**

193. Children continued to be used by all armed groups, including by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which signed an action plan with the United Nations in 2009, the New People's Party (NPA), the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), Abu Sayyaf and the independent MILF splinter group Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). The latter two increasingly engaged in fighting in 2013 in opposition to the peace process between the Government and MILF. For instance, at least seven boys between 14 and 17 years of age were used as combatants and porters by MNLF in their attack on Zamboanga City in September, resulting in the death of two boys. At least 150 civilians, including 13 girls and 19 boys were used as human shields in the operation. With regard to Government forces, one case of the use of a 12-year-old boy as an informant for the police was verified.

194. The United Nations remained concerned regarding the continued reports of arrest, detention and public exposure of children by the Armed Forces of the Philippines for alleged association with armed groups. In June, three internally

displaced boys from Maguindanao Province, between 16 and 17 years of age, were arrested, detained and ill-treated by elements of the national armed forces for alleged membership with BIFF. The interrogation and reported abuse took place in a nearby school building. In another case, a 14-year-old boy was arrested in Zamboanga, detained and handcuffed for almost two weeks under the allegation of being an MNLF member. Another two boys were arrested on 22 July by the national armed forces in Loreto town of Agusan del Sur Province for alleged association with NPA. Medical reports support that they were ill-treated in military custody.

195. At least 20 children (4 girls and 16 boys) were killed and 22 others injured (6 girls and 16 boys) in 33 separate incidents. Most child casualties resulted from clashes between the national armed forces and armed groups, including with MNLF in Zamboanga City in September, as well as in factional fighting within armed groups. For instance, in February and April, a series of clashes between two MILF factions in North Cotabato and Maguindanao resulted in the death of at least three boys and the injury of a 12-year-old girl. In another incident, on 3 April, an 8-year-old boy died and two more boys, between 12 and 13 years of age, were wounded in Compostela Valley Province in AFP gunfire. While the national armed forces alleged that the casualties resulted from a clash with NPA, their families denied such an incident and filed a murder case against the elements of the national armed forces.

196. Armed clashes also continued to have an impact on access by children to education in affected areas. For instance, in July, clashes between BIFF and the national armed forces resulted in the suspension of classes for 5,883 children in three municipalities of Maguindanao Province. Owing to tensions between MILF and MNLF in June, schools were closed in two villages in Matalam municipality of North Cotabato Province, affecting 398 students. In September, when MNLF clashed with the AFP in Zamboanga City, three schools were completely destroyed in fires.

197. Education and health-care personnel were also targeted by armed groups. For instance, on 23 September in Midsayap Municipality of North Cotabato Province, BIFF used the Malingao Elementary School as a defence posture, holding approximately 1,500 adults and children hostage, and abducted nine teachers in the course of their retreat. On 18 May, Abu Sayyaf abducted a medical worker from the health centre in Jolo municipality, Sulu Province.

198. On 15 July, the national armed forces issued guidelines on the conduct of activities in schools and hospitals. I am encouraged by the reported removal of some national armed forces units from schools upon advocacy by the United Nations in regular meetings with the Government's monitoring, reporting and response mechanism, and encourage continued implementation of the guidelines. Military camps in or in the vicinity of schools and health clinics affect the right of children to education and health care and put them at risk of attacks.

199. Peace talks between the Government and MILF were ongoing throughout 2013. A comprehensive peace pact towards the new Bangsamoro entity, including provisions on the demobilization of MILF forces, was signed on 27 March 2014. The United Nations continued to engage with MILF on the action plan, to which MILF signed an addendum on extension on 29 April 2013. A technical support mission conducted by the Office of my Special Representative and UNICEF in May resulted in the development of an operational plan outlining practical steps towards

action plan implementation. However, MILF had not formally responded to communications by the United Nations in the Philippines at the time of reporting. I again urge MILF to continue its collaboration with the United Nations and encourage the Government of the Philippines to continue to provide support in that regard.

### **Southern border provinces of Thailand**

200. Despite the unprecedented announcement of a “general consensus on the peace dialogue process” between the Government of Thailand and “people who have different opinions and ideologies from the State”, including the National Revolutionary Front (BRN), on 28 February 2013, armed violence continued to affect the southern border provinces of Thailand.

201. The United Nations received reports of the recruitment and use of both girls and boys as young as 14 years of age by armed groups, including BRN. The children are allegedly used mainly as informants and lookouts to track movement of the Thai security forces. Concerns also persist over the informal association of children with village defence groups (Chor Ror Bor). According to the Government, local Government officers in relevant provinces were instructed to raise awareness and monitor the implementation of regulations issued by the Government to address the concern of the informal association of children with the Chor Ror Bor. The involvement of children in armed forces and armed groups remains to be explicitly criminalized by law. Furthermore, the United Nations continued to receive worrisome information regarding the administrative detention of children for alleged association with armed groups. According to the Government, the Criminal Procedural Code and the Juvenile and Family Court and Juvenile and Family Procedure Act of 2010 are applied to child suspects in order to protect their rights and to assure orderly separation, reintegration and assistance. The United Nations looks forward to an update on the implementation of those commitments.

202. Credible sources indicate that at least 316 improvised explosive device attacks were reportedly carried out in Narathiwat, Pattani, Songkhla, and Yala Provinces, including 35 improvised explosive device attacks during the last two weeks of Ramadan. In April 2013 alone, 45 people were reportedly killed and 79 others injured in 298 incidents, including bombings and drive-by shootings. Although exact figures on child casualties were not always available, the United Nations received reports of 7 children killed and 37 injured in such incidents. For example, on 21 March 2013, a 9-year-old boy was killed and 14 people wounded when a bomb was reportedly detonated in an ice cream shop in Pattani Province. Among several reported child casualties resulting from drive-by shootings, a 2-year-old boy was severely wounded when his father was killed on 11 December 2013.

203. Armed groups continued to target schools and teachers, although the United Nations was not able to attribute them to specific parties. At least seven teachers and three education-related personnel were killed, as confirmed by the Thailand Ministry of Education. On 23 January, a teacher was executed by two gunmen in a school cafeteria in front of dozens of children, including his 7-year-old daughter, in Narathiwat Province. Classes were suspended for several days in 12 schools in Pattani Province, after the killing of a teacher in a targeted drive-by shooting in August. Schools were also affected by attacks, including by at least three improvised explosive device attacks on Government security forces deployed to

protect schools, putting schoolchildren and protected personnel further at risk. In one attack in Yala Province, on 10 September, two soldiers were killed and a 12-year-old schoolboy injured on school premises.

204. In my previous annual report, I welcomed the fact that the Government and the United Nations country team were engaging in dialogue on access to the southern border provinces to conduct independent verification and report on alleged violations against children, including through minimum operating modalities. While the Government has continued to facilitate programmatic visits, I regret that no progress has been achieved on the issue of access for monitoring and verification, and I strongly urge the Government to move forward with the country team to facilitate independent access in that regard.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

205. I am deeply concerned about the grave violations outlined in the present report and call upon all parties to immediately cease to commit, and take all measures to prevent, all grave violations against children, and to take all necessary measures to make violators accountable.

206. I strongly urge all parties listed in the annexes to the present report engaged in the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, sexual violence against children and/or attacks on schools and hospitals or protected personnel to immediately cease all grave violations against children and to enter into dialogue with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans.

207. I welcome the positive engagement of Member States within the scope of the campaign “Children, Not Soldiers”, to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in conflict by 2016 and call on them to continue with determined and tangible steps with a view to finalizing the development and implementation of action plans. In that regard, I call upon the donor community to assist in addressing funding gaps for the implementation of action plans and associated activities.

208. I welcome the progress made by some non-State armed groups in releasing children or issuing commitments to better protect children, including the prohibition of child recruitment in command orders and declarations.

209. 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 and to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State armed groups for dialogue, conclusion and follow-up on action plans in order to bring an end to violations, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. Such contact does not prejudice the political or legal status of those non-State armed groups.

210. I note with deep concern the continued attacks on and the military use of schools and the impact on children in that regard. In line with applicable international humanitarian law, and in accordance with Security Council resolution [2143 \(2014\)](#), I encourage Member States to consider adopting, as a priority, additional concrete measures to deter the military use of schools.

211. I am also concerned about the detention of children in situations of armed conflict, in particular in the context of counter-terrorism activities, and call for urgent measures to address this growing and worrisome trend.

212. I welcome the leadership and important contribution of regional and subregional organizations to conflict prevention, mediation and peace support operations. I call on them to further mainstream child protection considerations in their guidance and policy development, mission planning, training of personnel and conduct of peace support operations.

213. I 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, including the deployment of child protection advisers.

214. I call upon 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. I also call upon all States parties to these instruments to fully implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

## **V. Lists in the annexes to the present report**

215. Compared with the past year, eight new parties are included in the annexes to the present report. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ADF, NDC/Cheka and the Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga are listed for the recruitment and use of children. NDC/Cheka are also listed for the killing and maiming of children and ADF for recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals. In South Sudan, SPLA in Opposition and the White Army are identified as perpetrators of the recruitment and use of children and the killing and maiming of children. Furthermore, SPLA has additionally been listed for the killing and maiming of children. Nigeria was introduced as a situation of concern in the present report owing to the continued, systematic attacks on schools and the killing and maiming of children by Boko Haram, which is listed for those violations. In the Central African Republic, local self-defence militias known as the anti-Balaka are listed for their widespread involvement in the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children. In addition to the new parties on the lists, FRPI in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, already listed for the recruitment and use of, and sexual violence against, children, is also listed for recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals. The Mayi Mayi Simba “Morgan”, already listed for sexual violence against children, are also listed for their recruitment and use.

216. 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. The following are separately listed in the present report for the recruitment and use of children: BIFF, formerly part of MILF in the Philippines; pro-Government militias in Yemen, including the Salafists and the popular committees; and ASWJ in Somalia, whose factions continued to have varying degrees of relationships with the Government forces. In the Syrian Arab Republic, armed opposition groups were treated under the FSA umbrella in previous annual reports. Owing to continuously shifting alliances, the emergence of new structures and strengthened reporting, Jhabat al-Nusra, ISIS, Ahrar al-Sahm and YPG were identified as separate perpetrators of the recruitment and use of children in 2013. Jhabat al-Nusra and ISIS are also listed for the killing and maiming of children. In the Central African

Republic, the ex-Séléka, already mentioned in the annexes of my previous report, are now listed separately with associated armed groups for all four violations.

217. The Chadian armed forces were delisted from the annexes in the present report in view of full compliance with the action plan. I am looking forward to reporting on the sustainable efforts made by the Government in my report on children and armed conflict in Chad and in my next annual report. Finally, armed groups that were no longer active in 2013 and were removed from the annexes include the SLA-Historical Leadership, SLA-Mother Wing (Abu Gasim), and SLA-Unity in the Sudan; as the Mayi Mayi Tawimbi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and, the Convention patriotique pour le salut du Kodro, the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricain pour la justice and the Union des forces républicaines in the Central African Republic.

## 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<sup>a,\*</sup>
2. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d</sup>

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

Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Ex-Séléka coalition and associated armed groups<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
  - a. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP)<sup>\*</sup>
  - b. Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix fondamentale (CPJP fondamentale)
  - c. Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC)
  - d. Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR)<sup>\*</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-Balaka<sup>a,b</sup>

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)<sup>a,d</sup>
2. Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)<sup>a,c,\*</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)<sup>a,c,d</sup>
4. Front de résistance patriotique en Ituri (FRPI)<sup>a,c,d</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

<sup>\*</sup> This party has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



5. Mayi Mayi Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) “Colonel Janvier”<sup>a</sup>
6. Mayi Mayi “Lafontaine” and former elements of the Patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO)<sup>a</sup>
7. Mayi Mayi Simba “Morgan”<sup>a,c</sup>
8. Mouvement du 23 mars (M23)<sup>a,c</sup>
9. Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga<sup>a</sup>
10. Nduma Defence Coalition (NDC)/Cheka<sup>a,b</sup>
11. Mayi Mayi Nyatura<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Iraq**

Islamic State of Iraq (ISI)/Al-Qaida in Iraq (AQ-I)<sup>a,b,d</sup>

#### **Parties in Mali**

1. Mouvement national de liberation de l’Azawad (MNLA)<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l’unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest (MUJAO)<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Ansar Dine<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

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

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al Shabaab<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>
3. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,\*</sup>

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

1. Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA)<sup>a,b,\*</sup>
2. Opposition armed groups, including former SPLA in opposition<sup>a,b</sup>
3. White Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Sudan**

1. Government forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) and the Sudan police forces (Border Intelligence Forces and Central Reserve Police)<sup>a</sup>
2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>
4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
5. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

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

### **Parties in Yemen**

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

## 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. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

1. Boko Haram<sup>b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)<sup>a</sup>
  2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)<sup>a</sup>
  3. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)<sup>a,\*</sup>
  4. New People's Army (NPA)<sup>a</sup>
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\* The parties underlined have been in the annexes for at least five years and are therefore considered persistent perpetrators.

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that engage in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

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



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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

## 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.

\* Reissued for technical reasons on 4 August 2015.



## **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. Forty-nine 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**

##### **Afghanistan**

26. The Government of Afghanistan faced sustained security challenges in the reporting period, most notably following the presidential elections. In my previous annual report, I highlighted the significant spike in the killing and maiming of children in Afghanistan. In 2014, the reported number increased by 48 per cent, to 2,502 child casualties.



27. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 68 children (65 boys, 3 girls) of which 22 were verified (all boys), one each by the Afghan National Police and the Afghan local police and 20 associated with the Taliban and other armed groups. This marks a decrease in child recruitment and use in Afghanistan compared with 2013, when 97 children were reportedly recruited and used. However, owing to widespread underreporting, these figures do not accurately reflect the situation. In a worrisome trend, the Taliban continued to recruit children to carry out suicide attacks and to plant improvised explosive devices, and used them in active combat and as spies. For example, on 9 February, a 14-year-old suicide bomber detonated explosives near an Afghan National Security Forces checkpoint in Sharan district, injuring six civilians and five national police officers. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

28. The pilot child protection units in the national police in four provinces reportedly prevented 156 children from enlisting, indicating a potential for a large and beneficial impact if such units are replicated across the country. In addition, the local police reported 55 cases of rejected underage applicants.

29. As at December, according to the Ministry of Justice, 258 boys were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres across the country on national security-related charges, including association with armed groups. Of 105 child detainees interviewed by the United Nations between February 2013 and December 2014, 44 reported having been subjected to ill-treatment or torture.

30. The increase in child casualties included at least 710 children killed and 1,792 injured in 1,091 separate incidents. Armed groups, including the Taliban and the Hizb-e-Islami, were responsible for 1,343 child casualties (392 killed, 951 injured), Afghan national security forces for 396 (126 killed, 270 injured), and international military forces for 38 (24 killed, 14 injured). Cross-border shelling from Pakistan resulted in 57 child casualties (5 killed, 52 injured). The United Nations was unable to attribute 668 child casualties (163 killed, 505 injured), particularly in incidents of crossfire.

31. Ground engagements were the leading cause of child casualties, resulting in the killing of 311 children and injury to 920 others, nearly double the number in 2013. Attacks with improvised explosive devices by armed groups caused 664 child casualties. Suicide attacks resulted in 214 child casualties, up by 80 per cent compared to the previous year. Explosive remnants of war killed or maimed 328 children. Air strikes by international military forces resulted in 38 child casualties, including eight from drone strikes.

32. In nine incidents, eight boys and six girls reportedly were victims of sexual violence. Of these, five cases, affecting four girls and two boys, were verified. Four verified incidents were attributed to the national police, and one incident to a pro-Government militia commander. On a positive note, regarding accountability, a local police member from Laghman Province was sentenced in March to 10 years of imprisonment for sexual assault and attempted rape of a seven-year-old boy.

33. Schools were attacked in 163 verified incidents, including 29 attacks or threats of attack against protected personnel and 28 incidents of placement of improvised explosive devices inside school premises. Several attacks were related to the use of schools as polling stations. A total of 94 incidents were attributed to the Taliban and other armed groups, 1 to international forces and 68 incidents that could not be

attributed. Girls' education was particularly targeted by the Taliban, including the distribution of leaflets with serious threats against students, intimidation of female teachers, attacks on school personnel for not complying with the Taliban's demand to close schools, and attacks on students on their way to school. At least 469 Afghan schools remained closed because of insecurity.

34. At least 10 health-care personnel were killed and 14 were abducted. Health facilities continued to be attacked directly or as collateral damage. A total of 38 verified incidents were attributed to armed groups, including 13 to the Taliban, and 4 to the Afghan national security forces, including forced entries into health facilities in search of alleged armed group elements.

35. The United Nations verified 11 cases of military use of schools by the Taliban (3), Afghan National Army (3), the local police (3), the national police (1), and other Afghan national security forces units (1), as well as 3 incidents of military use of hospitals by the national police and the Taliban.

36. Twenty-four boys and two girls were abducted in 17 separate incidents, resulting in the killing of at least four boys by the Taliban, the rape of two girls by the local police, and the rape of a boy by a pro-Government militia. Overall, the Taliban abducted 15 boys, accusing them of being Government spies.

37. The United Nations verified 72 of 83 reported incidents affecting humanitarian access to children. There were 125 abductions of humanitarian personnel, the killing and injuring of 41, and 9 attacks on humanitarian convoys, including 2 United Nations convoys. Armed groups, notably the Taliban, were responsible for 85 per cent of all verified incidents, including intimidation of humanitarian personnel.

38. In a welcome development, in July, the Government officially endorsed a road map for compliance with the action plan to end and prevent child recruitment into its security forces. Significant progress was made on three of five priority actions, in particular the adoption of a presidential decree criminalizing child recruitment by Government security forces, which came into effect on 2 February 2015. Furthermore, the Ministry of the Interior issued and disseminated a directive prohibiting the use of children at national police and local police checkpoints, including in support roles, stating that the perpetrators would be sanctioned. Efforts also continued to strengthen age assessment procedures and disseminate guidance to recruitment units.

39. Despite the progress achieved, significant efforts are needed by all actors to fully implement the action plan. The lack of services for children rejected from recruitment or released from active service remained a significant concern. Moreover, I urge the Government of Afghanistan to address widespread impunity for violations of children's rights, particularly within the national police and local police, and investigate the allegations of torture. I condemn the grave violations committed against children by armed groups, including the Taliban, the Haqqani Network and Hezb-i-Islami and urge them to immediately end all grave violations against children.

### **Central African Republic**

40. The situation of children in the Central African Republic worsened as fighting between armed groups, including anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka, and attacks targeting civilians continued. In line with its mandate, the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) supported consultations to revitalize an inclusive reconciliation and political dialogue which resulted in the cessation of hostilities agreement, including commitments to end violations against children, signed in Brazzaville in July.

41. The United Nations verified 464 cases of new recruitment, including 446 by anti-Balaka (86 girls, 360 boys) and 18 boys by ex-Séléka. However, violations are thought to be largely underreported because of lack of access and limited monitoring capacity on the ground.

42. The period was characterized by a sharp increase in the number of documented cases of killing and maiming of children as young as three months old, with 146 killed (109 boys, 37 girls) and 289 injured (182 boys, 107 girls). A total of 58 of the killings were attributed to ex-Séléka, 49 to anti-Balaka, and 20 to unidentified armed men. Children were caught in crossfire, hacked to death with machetes and killed or injured by bullets. For example, in January, four boys between 9 and 10 years of age were beheaded by ex-Séléka in retaliation for an attack against Muslim community members in Bangui. Between January and February, 22 children, including 9 girls, were killed during attacks by anti-Balaka against ex-Séléka and Muslim communities. In August, Muslim youths associated with ex-Séléka attacked the Saint Joseph Cathedral in Bambari, killing 20 children and injuring 4.

43. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against children continue to be of great concern. The rape of 405 girls and 1 boy, between the ages of 7 and 17, were documented throughout the country; 205 by ex-Séléka, 187 by anti-Balaka, 12 by unidentified persons and 2 by the national police. Sexual violence incidents remained largely underreported. Also of concern is the fact that the leadership of both anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka did not take action against identified alleged perpetrators of rape against children when cases were reported to them.

44. The United Nations interviewed several boys following allegations of repeated acts of sexual violence by elements of “Operation Sangaris” in and around the M’Poko camp for displaced persons in Bangui between December 2013 and May 2014. Their national authorities have opened an investigation that is ongoing. The victims have been provided with necessary assistance by the United Nations and local partners. It is of the utmost importance that the perpetrators be held responsible.

45. Both anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka looted schools and hospitals and threatened health personnel, students and teachers. The United Nations documented nine attacks on schools, including four attributed to anti-Balaka, four to ex-Séléka.

46. Five other schools were temporarily used by the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic and “Operation Sangaris” and later vacated. The United Nations also verified nine attacks against hospitals. In addition, many schools and hospitals that were looted, destroyed or damaged in 2013 remained closed.

47. Thirty-four abductions of children (22 boys, 12 girls), some as young as 3 years of age, were verified, marking a decrease compared with 2013, in particular because of the decline of LRA attacks in the Central African Republic. Sixteen abductions were attributed to anti-Balaka, eight to LRA and two to ex-Séléka. In some cases, children were specifically targeted for ransom or as retaliation against communities.

48. A total of 80 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified in Bangui and the east of the country, including 42 attributed to anti-Balaka, 18 to ex-Séléka, and 20 to unidentified armed men. Incidents included shooting and stone-throwing at vehicles, carjacking, attacks on staff at their residences and looting of offices.

49. The United Nations engaged with the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka leadership to identify and separate children associated with those groups. Efforts resulted in the separation of 2,807 children (2,161 boys, 646 girls) between the ages of 8 and 17, including 2,347 from anti-Balaka and 446 from ex-Séléka.

50. Dialogue was also initiated with the military chains of command of two ex-Séléka factions: the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de Centrafrique (RPRC) and Union pour la paix en la Centrafrique (UPC), resulting in the issuance of command orders by the military leadership of both factions to end the recruitment and use of children. In follow-up to this development, UNICEF provided training to over 400 combatants and officers from both factions. In addition, sensitization workshops were organized for anti-Balaka in Bangui and other south-eastern localities.

51. The collapse of the judicial system and other core functions of the State resulted in widespread impunity allowing grave violations against children to be committed on a large scale. To address the situation, MINUSCA was mandated under Security Council resolution 2149 (2014) to assist the transitional authorities to arrest and bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Ministry of Justice and MINUSCA signed a memorandum of understanding establishing urgent temporary measures to restore law and order and fight impunity. In this context, two anti-Balaka members who allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl in November in Bangui were arrested by MINUSCA police and handed over to the national gendarmerie for investigation. As at April 2015, the two individuals were awaiting trial.

## **Chad**

52. The Chadian National Army was delisted from the annex of the previous report ([A/66/782-S/2012/61](#)) following the full implementation of the action plan to end the recruitment and use of children, signed with the United Nations in 2011. During the reporting period, no recruitment or use of children by the national army was reported. The United Nations continued to provide support to the Government of Chad, with a particular focus on training, age assessment mechanisms and birth registration.

53. As part of ongoing follow-up, the Government signed a protocol agreement in September with the United Nations regarding the handover of children associated with armed forces or groups. The protocol includes provisions that secure the handover of children to child protection actors, regardless of their country of origin, and ensures adequate protection of children held in detention. Prior to the development of the protocol, 44 children associated with ex-Séléka in the Central African Republic had entered Chad and been arrested. Following joint collaboration among the United Nations, the Government of Chad and a national non-governmental organization (NGO), the children were released and handed over to child protection actors for family reunification and social reintegration. The

protocol is also a valuable tool for the handover of children detained in the context of operations against Boko Haram.

54. A total of 346 national army troops attended child protection sessions and completed the training of trainers. Predeployment training of Chadian peacekeepers continued and a total of 864 soldiers took part before their deployment to the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Mali. An additional 1,500 troops were trained in Lumina prior to their departure for Mali.

55. Instability in the surrounding countries of the Central African Republic, Libya and the Sudan, as well the threat posed by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin area, continued to have an impact on Chad. More than 150,000 people fled the Central African Republic and thousands of Nigerians, the majority of whom were children, arrived in Chad to escape the conflict. The children, often separated from their families, had experienced distress and were in need of special care. This spillover also affected border communities where child protection services are scarce and the risk of recruitment by armed groups is high. I call upon all stakeholders and the donor community to put in place adequate monitoring and protection mechanisms in southern Chad and in the Lake Chad Basin region to prevent and end violations.

56. I welcome the sustained efforts of the Government of Chad to enhance the protection of children and prevent new violations. The adoption of a Child Protection Code and the Criminal Code would further strengthen the legislative framework. In the context of the Government's participation in peacekeeping operations and in military operations against Boko Haram, I encourage the Government to continue to play a pivotal role in ensuring respect and compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. In the of the progress made in the implementation of the action plan, the situation of Chad will be removed from the report as of 2016.

#### **Côte d'Ivoire**

57. More than three years after the post-electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, the security situation continued to improve, although marked with sporadic incidents of armed attacks, banditry and other violent crimes, particularly along the border with Liberia. The United Nations verified 18 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed by Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire elements against girls aged 2 to 17, mostly in the western part of the country. Since 2007, when the last parties to the conflict were delisted from the annex to my report, the protection of children has continued to improve. In the light of that development, the situation of Côte d'Ivoire will be removed from the report as of 2016.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

58. The situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remained volatile and witnessed major political and security developments, including a series of military operations against armed groups. Since October, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) increased their attacks against civilians in Beni Territory and committed a series of massacres.

59. The United Nations documented 241 new cases of recruitment (223 boys, 18 girls), while a large backlog of children separated by national partners is still

under verification. Recruitment was carried out by Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (63), Nyatura (32), Rayia Mutomboki (19), Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (UPCP) (17), Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri (FRPI) (16), LRA (13), Nduma Defence Coalition/Cheka (NDC/Cheka) (13), Mayi Mayi Alliance pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (7) and other Mayi Mayi groups (61). Seventy-five per cent of those cases occurred in North Kivu. At least 57 children were used as combatants. Of the 18 girls, 8 were victims of sexual violence. One 17-year-old boy was recruited and used in combat by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in Rutshuru Territory. He was separated during a screening by the United Nations in a FARDC training camp in Bas-Congo in April.

60. Despite two Government directives, children continued to be arrested and detained for their association with armed groups. The United Nations secured the release of 121 children (110 boys, 11 girls) from FARDC, police and military prosecutor detention centres. Forty per cent of the children reported being subjected to ill-treatment during detention.

61. A total of 80 children (52 boys, 28 girls) were killed and 92 maimed (48 boys, 44 girls), mostly during violent attacks by armed groups targeting civilians. Thirty-eight per cent of child casualties occurred during brutal attacks by ADF in Beni Territory, in which at least 250 persons, including 35 children, were massacred with machetes, knives, hammers or axes. In another significant incident, inter-ethnic violence between the Bafuliru and Barundi/Banyamulenge in June claimed the lives of at least 12 children, including two babies, in Mutarule. Forty children (16 boys, 24 girls) were respectively killed and maimed by explosive remnants of war.

62. The United Nations documented 334 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence (332 girls, 2 boys), a significant increase compared with 2013. State agents perpetrated 30 per cent of the documented violations (99). The remaining cases were perpetrated by Mayi-Mayi Simba (50), FDLR (39), Nyatura (24), Rayia Mutomboki (23), FRPI (22), APCLS (14), and other armed groups (63).

63. Twenty-two schools were attacked and twelve were used for military purposes, affecting over 31,000 children. In Shabunda Territory, ten schools militarily used by the FARDC (four) and Rayia Mutomboki (six) were destroyed or looted and their materials burned during clashes in April. Other schools were attacked by ADF, FDLR, UPCP and other armed groups. Nineteen hospitals were also attacked or looted by the FARDC (8), Rayia Mutomboki (2), and ADF (2), NDC/Cheka (2), APCLS (2) and unidentified armed groups (3). Following advocacy by the United Nations, two schools used by FARDC to host FDLR surrenders were vacated in September.

64. Armed groups abducted 108 children (65 boys, 43 girls), 55 per cent out of whom were below the age of 15, mostly in Orientale (59) and North Kivu (30). The main perpetrators were LRA (34), ADF (20), Mayi Mayi Simba (18), Rayia Mutomboki (17) and other armed groups (19). At least 11 abductees were used as combatants and 22 girls were subjected to sexual slavery.

65. Seven incidents of denial of humanitarian access were documented in North and South Kivu, perpetrated by ADF (3), FARDC (1) and other armed groups (3). Three NGO staff members and one United Nations staff member were killed and two humanitarian workers abducted by ADF. Challenges to humanitarian access

persist, owing mainly to a volatile security situation, increased criminal activities and ongoing military operations.

66. At least 1,030 children were separated from armed groups (973 boys, 57 girls). Most of them children had been recruited in 2013 (441) and 2012 (220), and 31 per cent were below the age of 15 at the time of their recruitment. A total of 166 children were separated from FDLR, 140 from Nyatura, 124 from Rayia Mutomboki, 97 from FRPI and other armed groups (503). In relation to the response on sexual violence, UNICEF partners assisted 863 child survivors of sexual violence, a major decrease from 2013, owing largely to lack of funding.

67. In August and September, FARDC, with support from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, conducted “Opération sauvetage” to provide medical evacuation and assistance to ADF dependants abandoned following military operations. A total of 71 persons, including 60 children, were rescued. Forty per cent of them had been used as combatants and are receiving reintegration support. Some had sustained bullet wounds and all were severely malnourished.

68. Despite security challenges and instability, the Government consistently demonstrated its commitment and ownership with regard to the implementation of the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012 to end the recruitment and use of children, by funding and chairing joint coordination mechanisms and ensuring their decentralization to conflict-affected provinces. The Vice-Prime Minister/Minister of Defence also submitted to the United Nations two progress reports on the implementation of the action plan. In July, the President, Joseph Kabila appointed Jeannine Mabunda Liyoko as his Personal Adviser on sexual violence and child recruitment. With United Nations support, the Government also conducted awareness-raising activities. From 30 November to 4 December, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and travelled to Kinshasa and Goma. The Working Group welcomed the progress made by the Government in implementing the action plan and encouraged it to sustain its efforts, particularly aspects related to the fight against impunity and sexual violence.

69. Progress was made in the fight against impunity with the arrest and prosecution of 61 individuals (46 FARDC, 10 Police nationale congolais, 5 leaders of armed groups). Thirty-five were convicted and received sentences ranging from two years to life imprisonment, including Lieutenant Colonel Bedi Mobuli Engangela, alias “106” and General Jerome Kakwavu, two of the five high-ranking FARDC officers. All but one were convicted for the crime of sexual violence against children. Four armed group leaders are currently awaiting trial, including on charges of child recruitment. FARDC Brigadier General Goda Supka Emery was indicted by the High Military Court in Kinshasa with crimes against humanity and war crimes, including the recruitment of children. The President also promulgated an Amnesty Law in February, excluding the crimes of recruitment of children and sexual violence from amnesty.

70. I welcome these positive developments and encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sustain its efforts to end and prevent all violations against children.

## Iraq

71. The deadliest year in Iraq since 2007 was 2014. The United Nations received reports of systematic and widespread violations of international law, including executions and targeted killings, abductions, sexual violence and forced recruitment of children in the large swaths of territory in the country controlled by ISIL and associated armed groups. Beginning in June, an international coalition led by the United States of America conducted airstrikes on ISIL positions in support of the Government. Fighting between the Iraqi Security Forces, including its associated militias and Peshmerga forces, and ISIL and its associated armed groups, included the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas by all parties, resulting in a sharp increase in the killing and maiming of children. Notwithstanding significant underreporting, 880 incidents of grave violations against children were reported, of which 711 were verified, marking a significant increase compared to 2013.

72. The United Nations verified the recruitment of at least 67 boys by ISIL in nine incidents. Children reportedly continued to patrol alongside adults and to man checkpoints in Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and Diyala governorates. On 5 September, in Salah al-Din, ISIL forcibly recruited 40 boys during Friday prayers. An unknown number of children were recruited by the pro-Government Popular Mobilization Forces in all conflict areas, as well as in Baghdad and Basra. Children wearing military uniforms and carrying weapons were spotted daily alongside those groups. For example, the United Nations witnessed children in the Hurriya area of Baghdad patrolling with militia convoys in July. Boys as young as 10 years old were recruited and used by self-defence groups supporting Iraqi security forces in the town of Amerli, Salah al-Din. Children, including girls, were reportedly associated with Yezidi self-defence groups fighting alongside Kurdish Peshmerga and Turkmen-based self-defence groups in Ninewa and Kirkuk, and with Sunni tribal-based militias supporting ISF in Ramadi. The lack of clear recruitment procedures, including age verification and disciplinary measures by Iraqi authorities remains a cause of grave concern. It is of concern that the draft National Guard law that was presented to the Council of Representatives in early March includes exceptions related to the age of recruitment, which would allow children associated with the pro-Government militias to join the National Guard.

73. As at December, at least 391 children, including 16 girls, held in detention facilities, were indicted or convicted of terrorism-related charges for their alleged association with armed groups under the Anti-Terrorism Act (2005). At least eight children, including two girls, were detained by Kurdistan Regional Government authorities under the Anti-Terrorism Law 3 (2006). Detention periods ranged from two months to more than three years.

74. The United Nations recorded the killing of 679 children (121 girls, 304 boys, 254 of unknown gender) and injury to 505 others (111 girls, 282 boys, 112 of unknown gender) in 498 incidents (of which 356 could be verified), representing the highest number of documented child casualties since the establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in 2008. At least 87 children were killed and 211 injured in improvised explosive device and suicide attacks. On 2 September in Salah al-Din, 16 children (5 girls, 11 boys), between 8 and 16 years of age, were killed and 8 children (3 boys, 5 girls) were injured in an Iraqi security forces airstrike targeting ISIL. On 17 June, in Ba'qouba district, Diyala, the Shi'ite militia Al Asa'ib Ahl Al-Haq raided Al-Mafraq police station, killing 52 detainees,



including 4 boys. On 22 August, in Sa'diya district, Diyala, 16 boys, as young as 8 years of age, were killed by armed elements, allegedly from the Popular Mobilization Forces, during Friday prayers in the Musaba Bin Umeir mosque. In June, the advance of ISIL increased constraints on the delivery of humanitarian assistance, often with devastating effects on children. For example, sources indicated that, in August, at least 45 Yezidi children besieged on Sinjar Mountain by ISIL died from shortages of food and water.

75. A total of 67 attacks on schools and protected personnel and 51 attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were reported, of which 84 were verified, resulting in the killing of 56 children and injury of 42. Twenty-eight schools were the targets of improvised explosive devices, including when they were being used as polling stations during parliamentary elections in April. In addition, 10 incidents of attacks or threats of attacks on teachers by ISIL were reported. Another 23 schools in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din and Diyala were affected by military use by ISF and ISIL and by the fighting between the two sides and supporting militias. Three schools were militarily used by ISIL in the Anbar and Diyala governorates, two by ISF in Salah al-Din and one by Peshmerga forces in Mosul. For example, on 11 November, in Beiji, Salah al-Din, the vacated Industrial High School was demolished by improvised explosive devices allegedly planted by ISIL since it had been previously used as a military base by the Iraqi security forces.

76. Al-Fallujah General Hospital in Anbar governorate alone was subjected to shelling in 17 separate attacks. In four incidents, hospitals were targeted by improvised explosive devices. In the Ninewa and Kirkuk governorates, at least two doctors were targeted by ISIL for refusing to treat injured fighters. For example, on 3 March, in Kirkuk, an improvised explosive device targeted the home of a physician previously threatened by ISIL, injuring his two children and 13 other civilians. At least seven hospitals in Salah al-Din, Ninewa, and Kirkuk were used by ISIL and pro-Government militias to treat their injured.

77. At least 1,297 children (685 girls, 612 boys) were abducted in 320 incidents, marking the highest number since 2008 and despite significant underreporting. Almost all incidents were perpetrated in August by ISIL against the Yezidi community in Sinjar. Children were taken in groups with their families and detained in schools, prisons and airports. Girls above the age of 12 were separated from their families and either sold in ISIL-controlled areas in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, or retained, including for sexual slavery. The men and boys were allegedly forced to convert to Islam and join ISIL. Multiple sources in the Syrian Arab Republic reported in December that Yezidi girls had been moved to Raqqa to be sold as sex slaves. The number of Yezidi children abducted is indicative of targeting by ISIL of minority communities, with Turkmen, Shabak and Christian children also reportedly abducted in large numbers. Lack of access to conflict-affected areas or the fear of families in reporting abductions of children seriously impeded the documentation of cases.

78. United Nations interactions with national and local authorities on child protection continued despite the deterioration in the security situation and political instability. However, it remains a serious source of concern that the Government of Iraq is not responding to the disproportionate effect of armed conflict on children. Urgent measures are required in relation to the detention of children under terrorism charges, legislative reform, including the criminalization of the recruitment and use

of children, the association of children with the Popular Mobilization Forces, as well as the implementation of policies and programmes for the rehabilitation of children affected by conflict. The United Nations stands ready to support the Government and encourages the establishment of a formal interministerial committee to facilitate regular information-sharing on and the response to grave violations against children.

### **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 Hanegev 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.

### **Lebanon**

112. Lebanon was heavily affected by insecurity and the existing trends of improvised explosive device attacks, urban clashes and cross-border shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic continued. Direct attacks by armed groups on the Lebanese Armed Forces resulted in violent clashes, particularly in the Aarsal, Bekaa

governorate and in the Tripoli, North governorate. The United Nations collected credible information on children as young as 14 years of age who had joined armed factions in Palestinian camps and armed parties operating in the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly in border areas. The United Nations also received verified reports of at least 25 boys arrested by the Lebanese armed forces during anti-terrorism raids, mostly conducted in Aرسال and Tripoli between August and December, and kept in pretrial detention together with adults under military jurisdiction for national security offences. In mid-January 2015, the children were transferred to the area of the prison hosting children.

113. According to consistent reports from different sources, at least 17 boys and three girls were killed and four boys injured, mostly by gunshots or stray bullets, during armed clashes in urban areas. Six of them, three Lebanese and three Syrian, were reportedly killed during shelling by the Syrian Air Force on Aرسال on 17 January. A 15-year-old Syrian refugee boy was summarily executed by al-Nusra elements in Aرسال in June.

114. School facilities and learning activities were affected by armed violence, particularly in Tripoli surrounding areas, where 97 schools were used as shelters, depriving at least 20,000 students of education. Sporadic incidents of armed violence also affected the provision of humanitarian assistance.

115. As a result of an increase in the identification of children associated with armed groups, relevant authorities, civil society and the United Nations carried out advocacy to ensure that the children received support, including access to protection and reintegration programmes. In that context, I welcome the signing by the Government of a workplan to prevent and respond to the association of children with armed violence and encourage that the provisions be fully implemented. Finally, I urge Lebanon to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict which it signed in 2002.

## **Libya**

116. The security situation in Libya deteriorated sharply in 2014, particularly in the fourth quarter of the year. Internal armed conflicts erupted in various parts of the country, including in its two largest cities, Tripoli and Benghazi. Humanitarian and monitoring access remained severely limited owing to security reasons and relief operations were suspended almost entirely following the relocation of United Nations international staff out of the country.

117. Although no verified information on the recruitment and use of children was available, concerns persisted over the association of children with armed militias. Furthermore, in May, during “Operation Dignity” in eastern Libya, forces loyal to General Khalifa Haftar allegedly detained dozens of males, possibly also children, based on their nationality, political or religious affiliation. This reportedly included a 17-year-old boy, who had allegedly been detained with three other youths, and who was tortured and died in custody in Benghazi.

118. The United Nations received numerous reports of indiscriminate shelling by all parties to the conflict, as well as of the deliberate destruction of homes in Warshafana and Benghazi. Following the escalation of the conflict in May, the

United Nations received reports of about 30 children killed across the country, but the actual number is likely to be underreported.

119. The shelling of hospitals in Tripoli and Benghazi severely affected children's access to health care. Both the Al-Afya Hospital and the Tripoli Medical Centre were hit by shells in July and August, respectively. In November, four medical staff were reportedly abducted from the Hawari General Hospital but managed to escape, while another was shot dead, resulting in the resignation of many staff.

120. Reports of the use of schools and hospitals by armed groups were also a cause for concern. For instance, in Benghazi, Ansar al-Shari'a reportedly took control of the General Hospital and placed snipers on the roof. Many schools in eastern Libya had been closed since May due to the security situation, including those hosting internally displaced persons.

121. In the West, armed groups, either affiliated with the Libya Dawn coalition or rival armed groups from Warshafana or Zintan, abducted children in the aftermath of the fighting in Tripoli, as well as during the fighting in Warshafana. In addition, human rights defenders reportedly received threats from armed groups that their children would be abducted and killed if they did not stop their work.

#### **Lord's Resistance Army (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan)**

122. During the reporting period, LRA was in survival mode but continued to engage in attacks on civilians, looting and kidnapping. A total of 13 children were recruited, mostly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Abduction of children in LRA-affected countries remained the most significant violation. A total of 42 cases were reported in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, many of those children were released immediately after being used to carry looted items. Others were held in captivity by LRA for three to four days before either being released or escaping. The United Nations continued to provide psychosocial assistance and support to family reunification in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Uganda for the 180 children and young mothers who escaped or were released by LRA. The absence of long-term reintegration programmes for child returnees remained a challenge to the sustainability of those efforts. Owing to the decrease in LRA activity, the present section will be removed from the 2016 report if the current trends continue, and the violations will be reported in the relevant country sections.

#### **Mali**

123. Owing to repeated violations of the ceasefire agreement signed by the Government of Mali and the two coalitions of armed groups — the Coordination and the Platform — the security situation deteriorated considerably in northern Mali, especially after the resumption of hostilities in Kidal in May. In that context, the monitoring and verification of violations against children remained difficult and, therefore, violations are estimated to be underreported.

124. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 84 children within the ranks of Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA), Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA)-Sidati, MAA-Ould Sidi Mohamed and Groupe d'autodéfense Touaregs Imghad et alliés



(GATIA) in the regions of Kidal, Timbuktu, Gao and Mopti. In addition, allegations were received indicating that hundreds of children are currently associated with armed groups and engaged in hostilities, but the information could not be verified.

125. In accordance with the protocol on the release and reintegration of children associated with the armed forces and armed groups of 1 July 2013, four children detained under security charges were released. However, nine children remained in detention in Bamako for alleged association with armed groups, some for as long as two years. In June, the Ministry of Justice appointed a focal point to work with the United Nations on this issue.

126. The killing of nine children and the injuring of 23 were verified. Explosive remnants of war claimed all but one life and injured 21 children in the Mopti, Gao and Kidal regions. The widespread use of explosive remnants of war is of great concern since armed groups have left behind many remnants that have contaminated areas, mostly around Gao.

127. Thirty-eight incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls were perpetrated by MNLA (6), Malian Defence and Security Forces (4) and unidentified armed elements (28) in Gao and Timbuktu regions. Reporting on sexual violence remained challenging, owing to fear of reprisals, lack of medical and judicial capacity and services in certain areas and preference for settlements outside judicial proceedings.

128. The United Nations verified one attack against a school in the Gao region in May. There were 20 cases of military use of schools, mainly attributed to MNLA and to joint troops of MNLA, HCUA, MAA-Coordination, and Coalition du peuple de l'Azawad. Nearly 60 per cent of the schools militarily used are located in Gao, while the others are in Kidal, Timbuktu, and Mopti. In the region of Kidal, almost all schools remained closed. Peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali used three schools in Gao city, Ansongo Cercle and Tabankort. In December, the Gao vocational school was vacated and the United Nations is currently refurbishing it. The use of one health centre by MNLA since March was documented in Ménaka, in the Gao region.

129. Reports of abduction of girls aged 12 to 16 years by unidentified individuals were also received, mostly in the context of clashes between the Peulh and Dogon communities.

130. Twenty-four incidents of denial of humanitarian access severely affecting the delivery of humanitarian assistance were verified but the perpetrators could not be identified.

131. Despite some initial progress made to address impunity for violations against children, slow restoration of state authority, including the reestablishment of a functioning judiciary in northern Mali, remained of great concern. Moreover, at least two suspected perpetrators of sexual violence were released from detention without being charged, as part of confidence-building measures within the framework of the peace negotiations.

132. The United Nations engaged with armed groups, such as MAA-Ould Sidi Mohamed and GATIA in Tabankort, MNLA and HCUA in Kidal, the leadership of the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance II (CMFPR-II) in Timbuktu, and the joint troops of MNLA and MAA-Sidati in Ber. The latter

engagement resulted in the signing of local command orders that prohibit all six grave violations against children. In September, the United Nations also conducted a screening of the MAA-Sidati and MNLA joint troops stationed in Ber, and identified five children aged between 15 and 17 years and two young adults who had been recruited as children. In line with advocacy efforts by my Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict, I call upon all parties involved in the inter-Malian peace process to take into consideration specific provisions to end and prevent violations against children in the peace agreement and its implementation.

### **Myanmar**

133. Armed clashes between Government armed forces (Tatmadaw) and ethnic armed groups continued in Kachin, Northern Shan and, to a lesser extent, in Kayin State. By December, growing tensions between the Government and armed groups were negatively affecting progress towards a national ceasefire agreement. In October, four Karen armed groups, including the Karen National Liberation Army and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army formed the Kawthoolei Armed Forces Alliance, allegedly in response to increased Tatmadaw operations.

134. A total of 357 cases of child recruitment and use by the Tatmadaw were reported through the Country Task Force-operated phone line, the forced labour complaint mechanism of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and community monitoring. At least 27 of the children, as young as 14 years of age, were newly recruited in 2014. Children were either enlisted owing to economic circumstances and family problems, or were deliberately tricked or forced into joining. The Government-led awareness campaign launched in November 2013 resulted in an increase in reports to the United Nations of child recruitment.

135. The United Nations received reports that children were deployed to the front line as combatants and in support roles and reported 15 such cases to the Tatmadaw, after which nine children were discharged and the others removed from the front line. A total of 389 boys and young males recruited as children were released from the Tatmadaw. Those released received reintegration assistance from the United Nations and its partners in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare.

136. Detention of children as “deserters” remained a concern. Of the 53 documented cases of children escaping from the Tatmadaw, 13 were arrested on charges of desertion, with cases increasing towards the end of the year. The United Nations also received a worrisome report of a 16-year-old boy who had allegedly committed suicide while associated with the Tatmadaw in a battalion in Kayah State.

137. In addition to children recruited into the formal ranks of the Tatmadaw, several incidences of informal association of children were recorded, including as porters and scouts. For example, a 12-year-old boy from Chin State was approached by a soldier and taken to eastern Shan State where he was forced to carry out camp management tasks for five months. In Rakhine State, two battalions have been using a 16-year-old boy for support duties one day per week under abusive work conditions since he was 11. Up to 50 children were used by the same battalions.

138. Children also continued to be recruited by armed groups, including through abductions. For example, the United Nations verified five reports of children associated with the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). On 12 March, two girls, aged 15 and 16 years, were abducted by two KIA elements in Mansi Township.

After four days in captivity, they were asked to join KIA in support roles. In another incident, a 12-year-old boy was allegedly used as a combatant by KIA and was injured during a firefight with the Tatmadaw in Namkhan. Owing to access issues and limited capacity, the United Nations was largely unable to monitor the presence of children in armed groups.

139. Three children were injured in Kachin and northern Shan States and one child was reportedly killed in crossfire. For example, on 29 July, two boys, aged 16 and 17 years, were injured in shelling during clashes between the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Tatmadaw. According to a credible report, on 28 July, a 16-year-old boy was allegedly killed by the Tatmadaw because of his perceived association with the KIA in northern Shan State.

140. In the absence of a peace agreement, demining and marking explosive remnants of war remained impossible and children continued to be maimed and killed. For example, a 17-year-old boy stepped on a landmine in Kayin State and lost his right leg and injured his left leg seriously. In Mansi township, the KIA allegedly used civilians and internally displaced persons to clear areas of landmines. Of particular concern are landmines laid by the Tatmadaw and KIA in close proximity to schools in Kachin and northern Shan States.

141. The United Nations verified the rape of a 14-year-old mentally challenged girl in northern Shan State by a Tatmadaw private who was initially convicted by a military tribunal for neglecting his duty. Following pressure from civil society, the case was transferred to a civilian court, which sentenced the soldier to 13 years in prison for raping a minor.

142. The Tatmadaw continued to use a vacated school building in Bhamo, Kachin State. Also in Kachin, the Alen Bum boys' dormitory in Laiza was used by KIA-affiliated militia elements as a training facility during summer. After advocacy by the United Nations, KIA instructed the militia to vacate the school and committed itself in writing to prohibit its military use.

143. Humanitarian access to areas outside of Government control in Kachin and northern Shan States improved compared to the previous reporting period, but remained severely restricted, owing also to administrative delays. Twenty-eight cross-line missions provided assistance to approximately 30,000 persons.

144. Positive steps have been taken by the Government to advance the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. This included the regular discharge of children from the Tatmadaw, regular review meetings with the United Nations to expedite discharges, strengthened training efforts to sensitize Tatmadaw troops and, in September, the endorsement of a workplan for full implementation of the action plan. In January, the United Nations was granted monitoring access with 72-hour notice to the Border Guard Forces and experienced increased access to Tatmadaw facilities in 11 monitoring visits. The Government and ILO have also been actively cooperating to eliminate forced labour, including recruitment and use, by 2015. Despite progress made, children continue to be present in the Tatmadaw ranks. I urge the Government to take action to prevent recruitment and to exercise due diligence to ensure that children escaping from the Tatmadaw are not arrested as "deserters". Prevention of child recruitment, as well as oversight mechanisms at all stages of the recruitment process, need to be strengthened urgently.

## Somalia

145. The security situation remained extremely volatile, particularly in south-central Somalia, leading to displacement of more than 80,000 persons. The reporting period witnessed a gradual build-up of joint operations by the Somalia National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), driving Al-Shabaab out of key towns in southern and central regions.

146. A total of 1,870 violations against children were documented, affecting 1,482 boys and 250 girls, with 806 out of 893 incidents verified. While the numbers represent a substantial reduction compared with 2013, the decline is largely attributable to the reduced capacity and access to verify incidents.

147. The recruitment and use of 819 children (779 boys, 40 girls) by Al-Shabaab (437), national army and allied militia (197), Ahl Al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (109) and other armed elements (76) was documented. Of particular concern was the ongoing recruitment and use of children by clan militias. Al-Shabaab sustained a campaign of recruitment targeting children and youth in mosques and schools, for example, recruiting 82 children in mosques or during religious events. Reports were also received of five boys used by AMISOM in support functions.

148. The detention of children in Somalia remained a concern, with 286 children (277 boys, nine girls) detained by the national army and other security forces (229), Al-Shabaab (44) and other armed groups (4). Seven of the nine girls were kept in Al-Shabaab custody. Of the children detained by government security forces, many were arrested following house searches and security operations and most were released a few days after the arrest. Of concern is the situation of children held at the Serendi rehabilitation centre in Mogadishu, whom my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict met during her visit in August. The children have been deprived of their liberty, as they are not free to leave the centre. The Government must ensure that any child deprived of his or her liberty for alleged association with armed groups is treated primarily as a victim and handed over to child protection actors.

149. Some 340 incidents of killing and maiming were documented affecting 520 children (393 boys, 127 girls) perpetrated by the national army and allied militia (193), Al-Shabaab (96), and other armed elements (231). Children have been killed in crossfire, sometimes during joint national army/AMISOM operations and in suicide attacks. Targeted attacks against the national army, AMISOM and prominent Federal Government of Somalia officials also led to large numbers of civilian casualties, including children. Al-Shabaab carried out public executions, including of children, as punitive measures and to instil fear. One boy and one girl were executed on suspicion of being spies for the Federal Government or AMISOM. Seventeen children were reported killed and maimed during military operations by AMISOM.

150. The monitoring and reporting of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children remained a challenge, among other things, because of the victims' fear of stigmatization. A total of 70 incidents affecting 76 girls were reportedly committed by the national army and allied militia (24), Al-Shabaab (19) and other armed groups (33). Girls in internally displaced persons camps were particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and forced marriage. At least 13 documented incidents of abduction resulted in rape and forced marriage. In one particularly tragic incident

in April, a 14-year-old female internally displaced person was abducted, raped and then killed by unknown armed men.

151. Seventeen schools were subjected to attacks by Al-Shabaab (eight), the national army and allied militia (six), and unknown armed elements (three). One school was also severely damaged in shelling by AMISOM. Al-Shabaab continued to use schools for recruitment and disrupted learning for hundreds of children including by distributing jihadist booklets for teachers and conducting indoctrination lectures. Incidents targeting protected personnel were also documented such as the detention of two teachers by Al-Shabaab for declining to refer their students to religious classes. Four schools were used for military purposes by the national army (three), later vacated, and Al-Shabaab (one). It was also reported that AMISOM used a school for military purposes during a few days in December.

152. Four hospitals were attacked by unknown armed groups (3) and Al-Shabaab (1) and incidents affecting related-personnel were documented. In one incident, Al-Shabaab abducted a health worker to provide medical care to its wounded fighters. Other incidents included improvised explosive device attacks against two hospitals resulting in the deaths of two doctors and two boys.

153. A total of 133 children were abducted, by Al-Shabaab (97), the national army and allied militia (25), and unknown armed groups (11). More than half of the children abducted by Al-Shabaab were used to increase its numbers ahead of joint national army/AMISOM operations.

154. Fifteen incidents of denial of humanitarian access were reported, the majority by unknown armed groups, and 3 each by Al-Shabaab and the national army.

155. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited Somalia in August to assess the situation of children affected by conflict, engage with the Federal Government of Somalia on the implementation of the two action plans signed in 2012 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and advocate for the strengthening of the legal framework for the protection of children.

156. Coordination mechanisms between the United Nations, the Federal Government of Somalia, AMISOM and other partners were established to facilitate the implementation of the action plans. Significant steps were also taken with the signature of standard operating procedures for the handover of children separated from armed groups in February and the establishment of a child protection unit at the national army headquarters. Moreover, a mobile national army/United Nations team screened over 1,000 soldiers and the Barre Aden Shire “Hirale” militia that surrendered in anticipation of integration into the national army. No children were found during the screening exercises. The United Nations provided training on child protection to more than 8,000 national army soldiers, in collaboration with the European Union Training Mission in Somalia and AMISOM. In addition, following United Nations advocacy, the AMISOM Force Commander issued a directive to reinforce accountability and compliance with children’s rights during operations.

157. Following the listing of Ahl Al-Sunna wal-Jama’a for the recruitment and use of children, the United Nations initiated dialogue with the group and discussed steps towards the formulation of a commitment to halt and prevent continuation of the practice.

158. The United Nations also supported the reintegration of 500 children (375 boys, 125 girls) through community-based programmes. Reintegration activities included provision of psychosocial assistance, “back-to-school” support programmes and vocational training.

159. In December, in a positive legislative development, the Federal Parliament adopted a law ratifying the Convention of the Rights of the Child. The law was signed by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on 20 January 2015. I welcome the progress made by the Federal Government of Somalia and I encourage it to sustain all its efforts to better protect children in Somalia, including by finalizing the ratification process of the Convention and to take steps to ratify its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

### **South Sudan**

160. The political landscape in South Sudan changed dramatically in the wake of heavy fighting that broke out in Juba on 15 December 2013. Although the onset of the conflict was sparked by political issues, an ethnic dimension quickly evolved and had devastating effects for children. There was a large increase in the number of violations in 2014, with a total of 514 verified incidents affecting 16,307 children. A detailed account of the effects of the armed conflict on children in South Sudan is available in my recent report to the Security Council, covering the period from 1 March 2011 to 30 September 2014 ([S/2014/884](#)).

161. Eighty-one incidents of recruitment and use of children were verified, affecting 617 children (612 boys, 5 girls). The majority were associated with the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) (310) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) (108), but also with the South Sudan National Police Service, the South Sudan Wildlife Service, the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army-Cobra Faction (SSDM/A-CF), the White Army and armed groups allied to Gabriel Tanginye. Unverified large numbers of children have also been observed with the Johnson Olonyi armed group, whose troop integration into SPLA was pending completion as at April 2015, and with other unidentified armed actors. Children were at risk of recruitment in refugee and internally displaced persons camps, protection of civilian sites and in their own communities. Given the challenging security situation and safety concerns for children, it has not always been possible to verify information. Last, as reported in the section of the present on the Sudan, in January and February, 64 boys, aged 14 to 17 years, were reportedly recruited by the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Unity State, South Sudan. Fifty-five of those cases were verified.

162. Ninety children were verified killed and 220 injured. There was also a disturbing increase in the incidents of killing and maiming of children reported to the United Nations that could not be verified. One report identified up to 490 bodies of children in mass graves found around Bor following heavy fighting at the start of the conflict. Some of the reported incidents suggest that children were summarily executed. For instance, following the fighting in Rubkona and Bentiu towns in April, two boys were found dead with their hands tied behind their back outside a mosque that was used by civilians seeking protection. The affiliation of the perpetrators is unknown but the incident occurred during an exchange of fire between SPLA and SPLA-IO.

163. In another incident, the United Nations received testimonies from boys aged 14 to 17 years in Juba who had been detained by security forces and subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment, such as beatings and being urinated upon, during interrogations about ethnic affiliation and involvement in the conflict.

164. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were reported, with a total of 22 incidents verified affecting 36 children (4 boys and 32 girls) by SPLA (24), JEM (4), SPLA-IO (1) and unknown perpetrators (7). In April, when SPLA-IO took control of Bentiu, hate speech calling upon persons to kill and commit sexual violence against non-Nuers and foreigners was broadcast on local radio.

165. There were seven incidents of attacks on schools, including looting, and 60 involving military use. Thirty-four schools in use, some before the reporting period, were vacated following United Nations advocacy; as at December, 33 reportedly remained in use by numerous armed actors, affecting access to education for approximately 11,000 children. A total of 22 incidents of attacks on medical clinics and health centres were also verified. In one incident in April, Bentiu Hospital was attacked by SPLA-IO, and medical staff, patients and civilians seeking protection inside the hospital, were killed.

166. Thirty-four incidents of abduction were verified affecting 147 children (52 boys, 95 girls). The United Nations received worrisome reports of large-scale abductions, including up to 105 children (29 boys, 76 girls) by SPLA-IO in Malakal in February. As at April 2015, abductions continued in large numbers.

167. One hundred and ninety-nine incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, representing a large increase from 2013. Incidents included forceful entry into compounds, looting, seizure of assets and harassment of humanitarian workers.

168. No incidents of LRA attacks involving children were reported in South Sudan. However, a total of 43 children either escaped or were rescued from the group. Twenty-eight of them have since been reunified with their families, while the rest remain in the interim care centre in Yambio, Western Equatoria State, pending family tracing and reunification.

169. Family tracing and reunification remained a challenge, owing partly to limited access or no access for child protection actors to some areas. Rapid response missions were occasionally conducted to provide basic, life-saving assistance to children in hard-to-reach areas. During a meeting with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the leader of the South Sudan Democratic Army — Cobra Faction (SSDM/A-CF), David Yau Yau, acknowledged that he had recruited children and declared himself ready to release them. As at April 2015, over 750 children had been released to the United Nations and were receiving interim care, psychosocial support and education service.

170. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited South Sudan in June to assess the impact of the conflict on children and engage with national authorities. During her visit, the President committed to issuing a decree criminalizing the recruitment and use of children and to issuing command orders to stop the military use of schools. My Special Representative also witnessed the signature of the recommitment by the Minister of Defence and Veteran Affairs to the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. The recommitment also included stopping and preventing sexual violence, the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. In August, a

workplan to implement the agreement was endorsed. In October, the Government and the United Nations launched the campaign entitled “Children, Not Soldiers” at the national level. Following extensive advocacy, the Government and the United Nations also established a joint high-level committee on children affected by armed conflict. In May, the leader of SPLA-IO also signed a commitment agreement with my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to end violations against children.

171. As at the end of 2014, neither the Government nor SPLA-IO had made any progress in implementing their commitments. On the contrary, reports of violations, particularly recruitment and use and abduction of children, continue unabated. I call upon all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to stop all violations against children and to take all necessary measures, including through prompt and thorough investigations and prosecution, to hold perpetrators to account. I urge the Government of South Sudan to take concrete measures and fully implement the action plan and the recommitment agreement signed in June. I also urge SPLA-IO to implement the commitment that its Chair signed with my Special Representative in May.

## **Sudan**

### *Three areas*

172. Conflict continued in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where large areas remained inaccessible, especially those under the control of armed groups. After several months of political deadlock, fighting intensified during the first quarter of 2014. The Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) resumed talks in November in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel, but negotiations were suspended indefinitely by early December.

173. In April and December, the Government launched two phases of its “Decisive Summer” campaign to regain control of areas controlled by SPLM-N. This resulted in new waves of mass displacement. Tribal fighting was also observed, particularly in West Kordofan, with one verified incident in November of clashes breaking out among members of two Misseryia sub-clans in which at least 40 children were reportedly killed or injured. The disputed area of Abyei also witnessed continuing tensions.

174. The United Nations verified the recruitment of 60 boys aged 14 to 17 years by the JEM (55) and SPLM-N (5). All but 3 of them occurred during a forced recruitment campaign in refugee settlements in Unity State in South Sudan. Unverified information was received about an additional 9 boys recruited by JEM in that same period. Although no new recruitment cases by Sudanese Armed Forces were verified, the United Nations received credible information of recruitment and use of children by the Popular Defence Forces. Large areas of those states were inaccessible, which limited United Nations ability to monitor allegations in order to reflect the full extent of violations.

175. At least 12 incidents (2 verified) were reported, in which 62 children, aged 5 to 17 years, were killed or maimed. A boy was killed in the SPLM-N shelling of Kadugli in May and another boy died in an explosive remnants of war incident. Twenty-eight children (9 girls, 19 boys) were reportedly killed and 32 injured



(7 girls, 25 boys) in the shelling by the armed forces of SPLM-N-controlled areas. A further 42 children were reportedly killed or maimed as a result of tribal clashes.

176. Four boys, all South Sudanese refugees, were abducted by Arab men in El Muglad locality, West Kordofan, and kept in captivity for approximately six months. They were released and reunified with their families in August following negotiations by the Sudan Police Family and Child Protection Unit.

177. One school and two hospitals run by NGOs were severely damaged in aerial bombardments by the armed forces on SPLM-N-held territories, affecting access to education and medical care for over 75,000 children. In one instance, six persons were injured and the hospital's emergency room and pharmacy were destroyed. The United Nations also received credible information regarding the military use of three schools by the armed forces in South Kordofan.

178. Access to Government and SPLM-N-controlled areas remained very challenging, even though there was a slight improvement compared with 2013. For the first time, the United Nations was granted limited access to Kurmuk and Bau localities in Blue Nile. Access to Abyei through Kadugli continued to be difficult.

#### *Darfur*

179. Darfur continued to experience intermittent fighting between Government forces and non-signatory armed groups, with a spike from January to May and in December, following the launch of the Government's "Decisive Summer" military offensive using the rapid support forces. Intertribal and intratribal clashes in which children were involved intensified. In that context, the verification of violations against children remained difficult.

180. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified three boys recruited and used by the armed forces and three by unidentified militias, a marked decrease compared with 2013. However, allegations of the recruitment of children continued to be received. In March, eyewitnesses reported the presence of boys between 15 and 17 years of age during a rapid support forces parade in Nyala, South Darfur. Another report mentioned that an estimated 37 children were seen carrying machine guns in El Daein, East Darfur.

181. Moreover, 197 children (135 boys, 62 girls) were killed (65) and maimed (132), by cross-fire during fighting between government forces and armed groups and in aerial bombardments by the armed forces. In addition, 15 children were killed and 29 injured by explosive remnants of war.

182. Forty-eight incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 60 girls were verified and attributed to the armed forces (15), the rapid support forces (10) and unidentified armed men (35). In most cases, girls were raped during attacks on their villages or when performing daily activities. Verifying cases of sexual violence remains a challenge due to fear of reprisals, mistrust in law enforcement and judicial authorities, and social stigma. In addition, the requirement by law to prove rape as a crime before the provision of medical care deters survivors and families from seeking help. When they do so, criminal law provisions may be interpreted in such a way that the survivor is accused of adultery. In cases where perpetrators are identified, families of victims often settle cases outside judicial proceedings.

183. Furthermore, the United Nations received allegations of the rape of 200 women, including children, by the armed forces in Thabit, North Darfur, in October. On 9 November, UNAMID conducted a mission to investigate the allegations, which could not be verified, as security personnel were present during UNAMID interactions with the community. UNAMID has since continued to face restrictions in its effort to access Thabit.

184. Ten schools were severely damaged, destroyed or looted during fighting between Government security forces and armed groups and in aerial bombardments by the armed forces. Eight incidents of attacks, looting and destruction of hospitals were reported. One school used militarily by the armed forces in South Darfur was also verified.

185. Eight incidents of abduction of 13 children (10 boys, 3) were reported and attributed to the rapid support forces (4), border guards (3), armed forces (1) and unidentified militias (5). Children were used in support functions or labour and sometimes were sexually abused.

186. Denial of humanitarian access and the imposition of restrictions on movements continued to impede efforts to reach affected communities, including children.

187. On 6 August, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi established an operational mechanism to end recruitment and use of children, following a command order issued in December 2013. UNAMID engaged in dialogue with tribal leaders and communities, which resulted in the adoption of a community-based strategic plan to end use of children in intercommunal violence in October. It followed the issuance of a command order by the leader of the Mahameed clan of the Northern Rezeigat. On 26 November, UNAMID, UNICEF and the Sudan commission on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration launched the Darfur-wide campaign entitled “No Child Soldiers — Protect Darfur” in Masseriah, North Darfur. Training and awareness-raising activities on child protection were also conducted with civil society, religious and tribal leaders, state-level government personnel and the armed forces.

188. Limited progress was observed in holding the perpetrators of violations against children accountable. Twelve cases of arrest were documented by the country task force on monitoring and reporting, of which 4 resulted in prosecution and 1 in a sentence of 20 years’ imprisonment for rape.

189. I urge the Government of the Sudan to finalize and sign the action plan to address recruitment and use of children by its security forces.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

190. Conflict continued at unprecedented levels across the Syrian Arab Republic, resulting in massive violations against children. The United Nations verified 2,107 grave violations by all parties to the conflict in major urban and rural areas. ISIL has taken over large parts of the country and used public brutality and indoctrination to ensure the submission of communities; children were specifically targeted. The United Nations had limited capacity to verify information in the areas under the control of ISIL. Sieges and bombardments of civilian areas continued, particularly by Syrian Government Forces, which also hampered the verification of incidents.

191. The recruitment and use of children in combat has become commonplace in the Syrian Arab Republic. While actual numbers are expected to be higher, the United Nations verified that 271 boys and 7 girls had been recruited and used by groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (142), Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (24), ISIL (69) and al-Nusra Front (ANF) (25). In 77 per cent of the cases, children were armed or used in combat and almost one fifth were under 15 years of age. Boys associated with armed groups were commonly between 14 and 17 years of age, with 17 verified cases under the age of 15. In many cases, children were paid to fight for salaries of up to \$400 per month. The payment of relatively large salaries by ANF, FSA, and in particular ISIL, created an incentive for children and their parents under difficult economic circumstances.

192. Fragmentation of FSA resulted in localized and variable recruitment, training and salary practices. During armed battles, children were used for fighting, attending to the wounded or for recording events for propaganda purposes.

193. YPG/YPJ continued to recruit and use boys and girls, including children younger than 15 years, reportedly taking them to indoctrination and training camps. For example, in March, a 13-year-old girl was taken to Ras al-Ayn for military training and the requests by her parents to see her were refused. In most cases, children were used in combat roles, and repeated allegations of "conscription" policies targeting children were levelled against YPG/YPJ.

194. Reports of the recruitment and use of boys by ISIL and ANF increased significantly. In 25 per cent of verified cases, boys were under the age of 15, including some as young as 8 years of age. ISIL reportedly established at least three child training camps in Raqqa, and hundreds of boys as young as 10 years of age were imprisoned in Aleppo, forced to attend indoctrination seminars and promised salaries, mobile phones, weapons, a martyr's place in paradise and the "gift" of a wife upon joining ISIL. In training and using children for combat roles, ISIL has violated international humanitarian law and perpetrated war crimes on a mass scale. Children were also recruited as suicide bombers and used to perpetrate extreme violence. For example, in July, four boys fighting with ANF in Dar'a participated in the beheading of four Syrian Government Forces soldiers.

195. A number of pro-Government groups, including Hizbullah, also reportedly recruited children in small numbers. Five boys joined the Popular Committee to support Syrian Government forces in al-Midan, Damascus. Children were also used as human shields and for forced labour. In November, children were among the civilians reportedly forced at gunpoint to be in front of the Syrian Government forces tanks entering the town of al-Sheikh Meskin to secure the Dar'a-Damascus highway.

196. Detention of children by Syrian authorities continued, with 38 verified cases (31 boys, 7 girls), including 15 who were subjected to torture. Children were arrested at checkpoints and schools. For example, in a verified incident in July, a 14-year-old boy from Homs, who had been detained in the State Security Centre, confessed under torture to carrying weapons and attacking checkpoints.

197. Indiscriminate attacks launched in civilian populated areas continued to cause widespread killing and maiming. The United Nations verified the killing of 368 children (184 boys, 66 girls, 118 gender unknown) by Syrian Government forces (221), ISIL/ANF (44), FSA-affiliated groups (24), international coalition

airstrikes (4) and unknown parties (75). There were 771 cases of children maimed (420 boys, 142 girls, 209 gender unknown) by Syrian Government forces and pro-Government groups (336), FSA-affiliated groups (296), ISIL and ANF (19), YPG/YPJ (1) and unknown parties (119) across the country. Actual numbers are believed to be much higher.

198. Armed groups killed and maimed children by firing mortars mainly in Government-controlled areas. For example, a 7-year-old boy and a teacher were killed and 56 children injured in a mortar attack on the Al-Manar Armenian Catholic School in Damascus in April. Vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and suicide attacks by armed groups accounted for almost one fifth of child casualties. In April, 69 children were killed and injured in a double vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack in a Government-controlled neighbourhood of Homs.

199. The public brutality and extreme violence perpetrated by ISIL also targeted children. For example, in July, a 15-year-old boy accused of adultery was publicly executed in Manbij, with his parents forced to watch and his corpse left on display for three days. In November, civilians were forced to participate in the stoning of a 14-year-old girl in Dei-ez-Zor. ISIL reportedly encouraged children to participate in public brutality, including holding decapitated heads for public display or playing “football” with them.

200. Aerial bombardment of civilian areas accounted for over 90 per cent of children documented killed and maimed by Syrian Government forces. In an attack in April by Syrian Government forces on the Ein Jalout primary school in Aleppo, 33 children were killed and 40 injured. Barrel bombs accounted for almost one third of child casualties inflicted by Syrian Government forces, including 6 children killed in June in al-Shajara internally displaced persons camp, Dar’a. Children continued to be killed during ground operations by pro-Government groups. For instance, in July, three children, aged 10 to 14 years, fleeing Suweida were killed by Popular Committee fighters. Children also continued to fall victim to explosive remnants of war.

201. The United Nations received 18 reports of sexual violence against children by ISIL (9), Syrian Government forces (5), Popular Committees (2), FSA (1) and the Kurdish police (1), of which 11 were verified. Forced marriage of girls to foreign fighters became common in ISIL-controlled territory. In July, the father of a 14-year-old girl in Aleppo was tortured for three days until he agreed to have his daughter marry an Egyptian ISIL “Emir”. ISIL issued guidance on the treatment of sex slaves, including children, and Yazidi girls abducted in Iraq were moved to and sold in Raqqa. Allegations of sexual violence against children by Syrian Government forces and pro-Government groups continued, with doctors reporting treating raped girls requesting abortions. In January, a 13-year-old boy was “arrested” at a checkpoint by the Popular Committee in Suweida and repeatedly raped over the course of three days.

202. According to the Ministry of Education, 889 schools had been fully (379) or partially (510) damaged by end-2014. The United Nations verified 60 attacks on education facilities by Syrian Government forces (39), ISIL (9), FSA (1), and unidentified parties (11). For example, in October two explosions near the Al Makhzomi and Al Mouhdeth primary schools in Akrama, Homs City, killed 29 children and maimed 27. Families repeatedly reported being too scared to send their children to school. The military use of schools also continued, with nine

verified cases: YPG/YPJ (4), FSA (3) and ISIL (2). ISIL appropriated schools for child indoctrination, and in late 2014 all schools in ISIL-controlled Aleppo, Dei-ez-Zor and Raqqa were closed pending adoption of a “modified” curriculum.

203. By December, 413 medical facilities tracked by the United Nations were partially or fully damaged, while 823 were only partially functioning or not functioning due to shortage of staffing, equipment or use for other purposes. Eighty-six attacks on health facilities and 178 medical personnel killed were reported. The United Nations verified 28 attacks on health facilities and personnel by: Syrian Government forces (17), ISIL (9) and unidentified parties (2). For example, in May, a rocket attack on an FSA field hospital in an abandoned school in Jasem, Dar’a resulted in the death of two children and four medical personnel.

204. Abductions became a prominent tool used by ISIL. The United Nations verified that ISIL abducted and/or imprisoned 463 children, including for use in prisoner exchanges and for recruitment purposes, a number of whom were tortured. In May, 153 Kurdish boys aged 13 to 17 years were abducted in Manbij, Aleppo, while returning home from their school exams. Armed groups also arbitrarily detained children for alleged “criminal” offenses.

205. By January 2015, 212,000 persons remained under siege, 163,500 of them by Syrian Government forces and 26,500 by armed groups, and subjected to starvation. Children attempting to escape besieged areas were killed by snipers or in minefields. In January, an 11-year-old boy was killed by a sniper while attempting to leave al-Nashabiya, Rural Damascus. Attacks by armed groups on civilian infrastructure left millions of persons, including children, without access to water and electricity. Administrative blockages and refusals to allow certain items on inter-agency convoys, including surgical supplies, were common and threats and attacks on humanitarian personnel and facilities continued.

206. There were several meetings between the United Nations and the Government’s Interministerial Committee on Child Protection, and an expert level group of government and United Nations officials was established to strengthen engagement. In May, the United Nations provided training materials to support the Commission for Family Affairs in conducting child rights orientation for Syrian Government forces; however, this has yet to be implemented. Legislative Decree 22, adopted in June, granted an amnesty for children associated with armed groups, and the Government committed to diverting those children to rehabilitation programmes. However, cases of children detained by Syrian Government forces were verified by the United Nations throughout the year. In all circumstances, children are entitled to benefit from the special status of juveniles in conflict with the law, in conformity with international humanitarian and human rights law.

207. The political and military leadership of both YPG/YPJ and the FSA Supreme Military Council publicly committed to ending child recruitment and use, enforcing disciplinary measures and issuing command orders to that effect. However, the recruitment and use of children by both groups following these commitments continued and was verified by the United Nations.

## **Yemen**

208. During the reporting period, the security situation deteriorated significantly in the northern governorates where Al Houthi/Ansar Allah (hereinafter Ansar Allah)

expanded its presence. Armed clashes took place between the Yemeni Armed Forces and Islah-backed pro-Government tribal militias and tribal armed groups, against Ansar Allah and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). The situation in the southern governorates also remained tense and armed clashes took place in Al Dhale'e. A mass offensive was conducted by YAF against AQAP and Ansar Al Sharia', and clashes continued in Aden between Al Hirak (a southern cessation movement) supporters and the security forces. As at April 2015, an international coalition had launched airstrikes against Ansar Allah, which reportedly resulted in a significant number of child casualties.

209. The United Nations verified a significant increase from 2013 of recruitment and use of children, with a total of 156 boys recruited and used between the ages of 9 and 17. The majority (140) of cases were perpetrated by Ansar Allah with a highly visible presence. The United Nations observed and documented armed children manning checkpoints, being present on armed vehicles and guarding buildings. Following Ansar Allah's expansion into the capital in September, distinguishing between members of YAF and Ansar Allah became increasingly challenging, particularly at checkpoints. Eleven boys between the ages of 16 and 17 were recruited and used by Islah-backed tribal militias aligned with the Government or Salafists, all except two of them in the frontlines. An additional four boys were verified as joining tribal armed groups in Al Bayda governorate.

210. The numbers of child casualties increased significantly from the previous reporting period, with 74 children (56 boys, 18 girls) killed and 244 (176 boys, 68 girls) maimed. Child casualties due to mines and other explosive devices more than doubled, with 10 children killed and 54 maimed. Ansar Allah was targeted and attacked, including by two suicide bombings that killed 14 and injured 25 boys. A total of 14 children were killed and 30 maimed by six improvised explosive devices, including an attack on an Ansar Allah checkpoint. Another 10 children were killed and 37 injured due to shelling, and 2 boys and 3 girls were maimed as a result of aerial bombings, including one drone strike on 29 September in Al Jawf, which maimed 1 boy and 2 girls.

211. Nine boys were detained by Ansar Allah as they reportedly conducted "law enforcement operations". Six other incidents of detention by Ansar Allah were also verified involving six boys, four of whom were detained for their alleged association with Islah, and one because of his father's association with Islah.

212. The United Nations verified 35 attacks against schools. For example, all 10 schools attacked in Amanah Al Asimah governorate were destroyed during clashes that took place in September between Ansar Allah and YAF and pro-Government tribal militias. Nine attacks were attributed to YAF and eight to Ansar Allah. In many cases schools were forced to close completely.

213. The United Nations verified 13 attacks against hospitals by Ansar Allah and YAF, which severely hampered the provision of medical services. For example, on 21 January, a hospital in Al Dhale'e district was shelled by YAF, resulting in the death of a 45-day-old boy and injury to his 2-year-old sister while they were trying to escape the shelling with their father.

214. Ninety-two schools were verified as being used for military purposes by armed forces and groups with the majority of schools being used by Ansar Allah for providing accommodation or as weapons' storage. In response to that trend, the

Ministry of Education and Governorate Education Offices, supported by the United Nations, established task forces on education in emergency, which vacated at least 25 schools used by Ansar Allah.

215. In total, 43 denials of humanitarian access were verified. In a positive development, a United Nations staff member kidnapped by an unknown armed group was released in November after 13 months in captivity.

216. On 14 May, in a ceremony attended by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Government of Yemen signed an action plan with the United Nations to end and further prevent the recruitment and use of children by YAF. Within a month after the signing ceremony, follow-up mechanisms were established in accordance with the action plan. In a welcome development, following engagement by the United Nations with the Constitutional Drafting Committee, the draft constitution issued in January 2015 includes the prohibition of voluntary recruitment of all persons under the age of 18. The final version of a draft action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by Ansar Allah was endorsed by their Human Rights and Civil Society Office, which was reportedly shared with the office of Abdul Malik Badrealdeen Al Houthi. Since the eruption of violence in early 2015 all progress on actions plans and on ending violations has been put on hold.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Colombia**

217. In 2014, peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) continued in Havana. The conclusions on the three first items of the agenda, “Rural development”, “Political participation” and “Illicit drugs”, were shared publicly and discussions began on item five, “Victims”. The latter opened up the opportunity to raise specific concerns on child protection, in particular with regard to the recognition of the rights of child victims. At the request of the negotiating parties, the United Nations and the National University of Colombia organized regional and national forums to collect the views of victims and proposals. On those occasions, many national and international actors advocated for child protection concerns to be raised at the negotiating table. In December, the FARC-EP and the Government started talks about de-escalating the conflict, including issues related to child recruitment and a ceasefire. I commend the sustained efforts to put an end to the conflict and encourage all parties to take further concrete steps to protect children and guarantee lasting improvements for children’s rights, including under item three, “End of conflict”.

218. Despite the ongoing peace process, hostilities between FARC-EP, the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the Colombian Armed Forces continued and intensified in some parts of the country, causing displacement and often putting children at risk of recruitment and sexual violence. As at December 2014, there were some six million persons registered as internally displaced persons, approximately 35 per cent of whom were children. Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities were particularly affected. Violence committed by post-demobilization groups and other local armed groups was an important trigger of displacement, both

in urban and rural areas. In addition, about 500,000 persons suffered from severe mobility restrictions to access basic services and assistance, as a result of the sharp increase in attacks against civilian infrastructure committed throughout 2014, mostly by ELN (52 per cent) and FARC-EP (22 per cent).

219. The United Nations verified 343 cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups in 22 departments and in Bogotá. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute documented the separation of 277 children, the majority of whom had escaped from armed groups. A total of 198 children had been recruited by FARC-EP, 52 by ELN, and the remaining by post-demobilization groups and other armed groups. In addition, the Ombudsman Office issued at least 36 risk reports on recruitment in 20 departments.

220. On 12 February 2015, FARC-EP announced that it had raised the recruitment age to 17 years. While I take note of that positive development, I wish to recall that the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by Colombia in 1991 stipulates that a child means every human being below the age of 18, and that its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, ratified in 2005, prohibits armed groups from recruiting children under the age of 18 and provides that the State party should prevent such recruitment and use.

221. At least nine children were killed and 60 were maimed, mostly in landmine incidents. Children, predominantly girls, were also victims of sexual violence attributed to armed groups, including post-demobilization groups, and in some cases to members of national armed forces. Furthermore, sexual exploitation and abuse of girls by members of armed groups in mining zones continued. The United Nations received reports of the detention in Bolívar of three persons charged with selling girls for sexual purposes to armed groups and to mine workers.

222. There were 12 reported cases of schools damaged in crossfire, anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as 11 cases of military use by parties to the conflict. In May, the armed forces found 76 gas cylinders stored by FARC-EP in a school in Cauca, ready to be used in combat, thereby putting schoolchildren at risk. In addition, the presence of units of the armed forces near or in front of schools during class hours put school premises and children at risk. Within the reporting period, teachers were also subject to threats by FARC-EP, ELN, Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia/Los Urabeños and Los Rastrojos and three teachers were killed by unidentified armed groups.

223. Despite its prohibition by the National Child Protection Code (Art. 41, para. 29, of Law 1098 of 2006), the involvement of children in civic-military activities organized by the armed forces continued in several parts of the country. For example, in July, in Cauca, the armed forces carried out a civic-military activity, inviting more than 500 persons; the recreational activity for children was carried out by the armed forces psychological operations team. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has previously shared its concerns with regard to civic-military activities organized by the armed forces inside schools and in the community. In its recent report on prevention of the recruitment of children and adolescents, issued in December 2014, the Ombudsman Office also requested the Ministry of Defence, the armed forces and the police to refrain from carrying out the campaigns with children. I echo those concerns and call upon the armed forces to refrain from involving children in any military activities that may place them at risk of being targeted by armed groups.



224. Since 1999, at least 5,694 children have been separated from armed groups and benefitted from the Colombian Family Welfare Institute programme. With regard to protection and assistance provided to children separated from armed groups as stipulated in the National Child Protection Code and the Victims Law, all children, as victims, should be accorded equal protection, regardless of the group that recruited or used them. In some cases, however, children who had been separated from armed groups, mostly those associated with post-demobilization groups, were referred to the Office of the Attorney General for prosecution without benefitting from the Institute's programmes for protection and assistance.

225. Since 1999, there have been 193 convictions for child recruitment, including under the Justice and Peace Law of 2005 and by the Human Rights Unit of the Office of the Attorney General, as well as by regional and local courts. In June, a new bill for the protection of victims of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict was approved. I welcome that major step, which was taken to harmonize the national legislation with international standards.

### **India**

226. The recruitment and use of children as young as six years of age by armed groups, including the Naxalites, continued. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Naxalites in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha States recruited boys and girls between 6 and 12 years of age into specific children's units. They were used as informers and taught to fight with crude weapons, such as sticks. At the age of 12, children associated with Naxalites are reportedly transferred to specific units, where they receive training in weapon handling and the use of improvised explosive devices.

227. In Naxalite recruitment campaigns targeting poor communities, parents are forced to offer children under the threat of violence. Similarly, children are reportedly threatened with the killing of family members should they escape or surrender to security forces. In August, in Lakhisarai district, Naxalites reportedly made demands of children from families, resulting in up to 100 girls and boys, between 10 and 15 years of age, joining the group. In West Singhbhum, government security forces reportedly arrested an armed group element for the recruitment of 11 children aged 9 to 13 years, including 5 girls, on their way to a training camp. The recruiter allegedly stated that his commander had specifically asked for girls. According to the Government, based on the statements of several women formerly associated with Naxalite groups, sexual violence is common in the camps. Violence and the use of schools as recruitment grounds affected access to education for children in Naxalite areas.

228. The United Nations also received reports of the recruitment and use of children in Assam and Manipur States. Children were reportedly lured into joining armed groups in the face of the lack of livelihood alternatives, but were also abducted and forcibly recruited, including through coercion of family members and the threat of violence. Concerns persist over allegations of detention of children in violence-affected states, including for alleged association with armed groups.

229. I am concerned by the Government reports of the use of children as human shields and in combat roles by the Naxalites. The period under review reportedly saw an increase in Naxalite violence, resulting in the killing of 89 civilians and 48 security personnel in 429 incidents in the first quarter alone. Concerns also

persisted over the killing and maiming of children in north-eastern states. For example, in Assam, on 23 December, in four seemingly coordinated attacks, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland allegedly killed around 75 civilians, including at least 18 children.

## **Nigeria**

230. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), commonly known as Boko Haram, continued and intensified its attacks on the civilian population in the three north-eastern states of Nigeria (Borno, Adamawa and Yobe). High-profile attacks were also conducted in other parts of the country: Kano, Gombe and Bauchi States, and the Federal Capital Territory. The group's tactics began with hit-and-run attacks targeting government officials, security forces, detention centres, religious figures and, increasingly, schools and children, and have evolved into take-and-hold attacks, controlling large swaths of territory. The pace and intensity of attacks resulted in the displacement of over 1 million persons, the majority being women and children. Since June, Nigerian security forces increased their operations against Boko Haram, in conjunction with the Civilian Joint Task Force and other pro-Government vigilante groups. Boko Haram activities have progressively expanded beyond Nigeria's borders into Cameroon, Chad and the Niger and have prompted a regional response to address the threat posed by the group.

231. In December, the United Nations in Nigeria formally established a country task force on children affected by armed conflict to monitor and report on violations against children following the listing of Boko Haram in my previous annual report ([A/68/878-S/2014/339](#)). The verification of incidents remained challenging, due to a severe lack of access to affected areas.

232. Increased reports were received on the recruitment and use of boys and girls by Boko Haram in support roles and in combat. Children were also used as human shields to protect Boko Haram elements. Another alarming trend observed since July was the growing number of girls used as suicide bombers in populated urban centres. For example, in July, four teenage girls were reported to have carried out a series of suicide attacks attributed to Boko Haram in Kano. A 13-year-old girl from Adamawa State was reportedly rescued at a checkpoint in Katsina State while carrying a belt with explosives. The United Nations also received reports of children joining CJTF and other vigilante groups, voluntarily or forcibly, and being used to man checkpoints, gather intelligence and participate in armed patrols. It was reported that some of the civilians, including children, who had voluntarily joined a particular side sometimes had done so in order to avoid the suspicion that they were associated with, or sympathetic to, the other side.

233. The killing of civilians, including children, by Boko Haram continued and sharply increased during the period under review. It is estimated that at least 7,380 persons were killed in 255 incidents (5,083 in Borno, 893 in Adamawa, 517 in Yobe and 887 in other states). Data on the age and status of the victims is not available and therefore, the exact number of children killed and injured remains unknown. Children were killed and maimed during Boko Haram raids on villages, in targeted attacks in public places, in clashes between Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces and as a result of suicide bombings. Children were also killed by Boko Haram in their schools. Education authorities in the north-east recorded the killing of 314 school children between January 2012 and December

2014. In February, 59 secondary schoolboys were shot or burned to death in their dormitory during a night-time attack in Buni Yadi, Yobe. In November, a suicide bomber disguised in a school uniform killed at least 47 school children and injured 117 others in Potiskum, Yobe. In addition, 26 incidents of suicide attacks were reported, in the states of Borno (nine), Kano (eight), Yobe (five), Gombe (two), Bauchi (one), and in the Federal Capital Territory (one). The suicide attacks reportedly involved 45 suicide bombers and claimed the lives of at least 688 persons, including over 200 persons at the Grand Mosque in Kano.

234. Worrisome allegations were received of other violations against civilians, including children, by Government armed forces, CJTF and vigilante groups, including extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture.

235. Boko Haram targeted schools and teachers perceived to provide a “Western” curriculum. School facilities were attacked, looted and destroyed, teachers and students were killed, threatened and abducted. According to education authorities, a total of 338 schools were destroyed and damaged, and at least 196 teachers killed between 2012 and 2014. A number of specific incidents where children were targeted and killed are outlined in paragraph 230 above. Continuing threats in all three north-eastern states led to reduced access to education, closure of schools, teachers leaving and the withdrawal of children from schools. The United Nations received reports of health centres also looted and destroyed. Access for polio health workers was increasingly reduced, due to growing insecurity.

236. Since 2009, Boko Haram has reportedly been responsible for the abduction of at least 500 young women and girls from their homes or schools and while travelling on roads in the affected States. The abduction of 276 girls from their school in Chibok, Borno, in April 2014, represented the largest single incident of abduction attributed to the group. Of the 276 abductees, 57 managed to escape. Incidents continued to be reported and, in September, over 100 young women and girls were abducted from villages during attacks in Adamawa State. The whereabouts of the Chibok girls and the other abductees remain unknown. According to accounts from escapees, they were subjected to forcible religious conversion, physical and psychological abuse, forced labour and forced marriage to Boko Haram fighters. The group’s stated motives for abductions include retaliation against the Government for detention of relatives and punishment of schoolchildren for attending Western-style schools.

237. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict visited Nigeria in January 2015 to assess the impact of the conflict on children, support the roll-out of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and engage with the Government, including sharing her concerns regarding the allegations on violations committed by government forces, CJTF and vigilante groups. During the visit, the Special Representative met with civilian and military authorities at the highest level, who expressed readiness to cooperate with the monitoring and reporting mechanism through the establishment of a Federal-level interministerial committee and state-level committees on children in the three affected states. In January 2015, the Minister of Justice issued an advisory reiterating the prohibition of recruitment and use of children. In response to the number of schools affected by the conflict and following the abduction of the Chibok girls, the Government also launched the “Safe Schools Initiative” aimed at providing remedial education and piloting 10 safe education facilities in the three affected states.

238. The threat of Boko Haram to regional stability prompted neighbouring countries to react by conducting joint operations and coordinating efforts through a Multinational Joint Task Force composed of troops from Lake Chad Basin countries and Benin, and whose deployment was authorized by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 3 March 2015. Given the high numbers of children recruited or abducted by Boko Haram, it is of great concern that abductees or children associated with the group will be heavily affected in the course of military operations. In December, Cameroonian security forces reported the dismantling of an *almajiri* school near the border with Nigeria, where 84 boys aged between 4 and 17 years were found in the presence of instructors allegedly affiliated with Boko Haram. In April 2015, the boys were reportedly placed in a facility run by the Ministry of Social Welfare in northern Cameroon.

239. I urge the Government of Nigeria to take all necessary measures to protect children affected by the security situation and investigate the allegations of violations by its security forces as part of the military operations against Boko Haram and bring the perpetrators to justice. I also call upon regional countries participating in military operations against Boko Haram to carry out their operations against the group in compliance with international humanitarian, refugee and human rights law and to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of children and minimize the impact of the conflict on them. I welcome the fact that child protection provisions have been included in the Multinational Joint Task Force concept of operations. I reiterate that depriving children of their liberty should only be a measure of last resort and that children who are detained should be treated primarily as victims and handed over to child protection actors as soon as possible.

### **Pakistan**

240. Pakistan continued to face significant security challenges, posed in particular by armed groups and extremist groups, with schools being particularly targeted. Hundreds of civilians were killed or injured in dozens of attacks. In response, the Government launched a major offensive in North Waziristan in June to reduce the capacity of armed groups to strike within the country. In one of the most alarming incidents of the reporting period, on 16 December, nine gunmen stormed the Army Public School in Peshawar, firing on pupils and staff indiscriminately, and utilizing improvised explosive devices and hand grenades to maximize casualties. At least 132 boys, as young as 8 years of age, and several teachers and other staff members were killed. At least 133 persons were injured, the vast majority of them children. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the assault, stating that it was an act of revenge for the ongoing offensive in North Waziristan.

241. Although exact figures of child casualties were not always available, sectarian violence and hundreds of indiscriminate attacks, including by improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers, continued to affect children in several areas, with Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces most affected. In February, for example, in Peshawar, a suicide bomb in the crowded Koocha Risaldar area near Qissa Khawani bazaar reportedly killed 10 persons, the majority of whom were women and children, and injured 48 others.

242. Armed groups continued to regularly attack educational institutions. At least 40 secular schools were reportedly attacked, mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and in Balochistan Province. In

January, for example, a suicide bomber reportedly blew himself up outside the gates of a school in Hangu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing a 14-year-old boy who was trying to prevent the attacker from entering the school. In February, an improvised explosive device exploded outside school gates in Karak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, reportedly injuring 13 children and the school principal. In the wake of the December 16 attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar, all educational institutions across Pakistan were closed for a period of three to four weeks, thereby disrupting education.

243. Attacks on polio workers by TTP-affiliated and other armed elements continued unabated in 2014, resulting in the killing of at least nine such workers and several police and security personnel providing escorts for the conduct of polio campaigns. For example, in January, three persons were reportedly killed and two others injured by four armed elements in Karachi. In Balochistan, on 26 November, four polio workers, including three women, were reportedly shot dead and three other members of the polio vaccination team were wounded by two gunmen on a motorcycle. On 9 December, in Faisalabad, Punjab, a schoolteacher volunteering in a polio vaccination campaign was reportedly shot by armed elements on a motorcycle. The Taliban splinter faction Jundullah claimed responsibility for the attack.

244. Interaction on child protection between the United Nations and the Pakistani authorities continued throughout 2014. For example, with United Nations support, the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan approved a comparatively substantial budgetary allocation for the establishment of child protection services. One area of concern is the reports of detention of children for alleged association with armed groups and on national security charges. In January 2015, the Parliament of Pakistan passed a constitutional amendment on the establishment of military courts for a duration of 24 months, wherein civilian suspects accused of acts of terrorism will be tried. Military courts are inappropriate forums for hearing cases involving children since they do not fully recognize the special status of juveniles in conflict with the law. I urge the Government to ensure that any children arrested for their alleged association with armed groups or under security charges are treated primarily as victims. In all circumstances children are entitled to benefit from the special status of juvenile in conflict with the law in conformity with international human rights law.

### **Philippines**

245. In March, the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) signed a comprehensive agreement on the Bangsamoro that includes a transition plan on normalization towards the eventual decommissioning of the MILF Bangsamoro Islamic Armed Forces (BIAF). The Government also continued to enhance the monitoring, reporting and response system to institutionalize the response to child rights violations. Meanwhile, the emergence of breakaway armed factions and localized community feuds involving armed elements continued to affect children. As at March 2015, intensive fighting was continuing between the Government and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

246. Noting that child recruitment is mostly likely underreported since communities are apprehensive about sharing information for fear of reprisals, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of seven boys, as young as 9 years of age, by the

New People's Army (NPA) and ASG, marking a decrease from the 20 verified cases in 2013. For example, among the five boys recruited and used by ASG was a 9-year-old boy who was used as a weapons porter for approximately 18 months. After escaping, he was shot dead. ASG had previously told his family that the boy would be killed if he left. The recruitment of two boys by NPA, aged 15 and 16 years, was reported by their parents. The municipal police launched an investigation but the recruiter remained at large and an arrest warrant was issued.

247. Local communities continued to note that armed groups, including NPA and reportedly ASG, approached civilians including children, for recruitment purposes, offering them shelter, food, access to education or offering to support communities. In response, parents reportedly sent their children to urban centres for their protection.

248. On 3 July, a 14-year-old boy and his father were arrested by members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Maguindanao, allegedly on suspicion of the father being affiliated with BIFF. The whereabouts of the father and the boy were unknown at the end of 2014, although an investigation was launched by the Regional Human Rights Commission of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao.

249. The United Nations verified the killing of 13 children and the injury of 26 others in 22 separate incidents. In one incident, on 28 July, seven children were killed and six others, as young as 3 years of age, were wounded by ASG when their vehicle was ambushed. Ten incidents resulted from armed forces operations against BIFF and retaliatory attacks. One boy was killed and four children (two girls, two boys) were injured in armed clashes in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao resulting from conflicts involving MILF or Moro National Liberation Front commanders.

250. In five separate incidents, clashes between the armed forces and BIFF and between national police and NPA resulted in damage to schools, followed by suspension of classes. On 2 January, BIFF used a primary school in North Cotabato in operations against the armed forces and set the school on fire upon withdrawal. Concerns also persisted over threats made against teachers by ASG. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of six schools and one hospital by the armed forces, mainly during operations against BIFF.

251. In June, the MILF leadership reappointed a panel to engage with the United Nations on a roadmap to expedite implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and took a number of important steps, notably that of appointing focal points in all of its base and front commands, displaying command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, including sanctions against perpetrators, facilitating orientations on the roles and responsibilities of BIAF members vis-à-vis the action plan, and submitting progress reports to the United Nations every two months. MILF has also guaranteed unhindered access for action plan-related activities, including verification exercises.

252. In partnership with the Bangsamoro Development Agency, the United Nations has established 16 community-based child protection networks in conflict-affected communities in Mindanao to strengthen their capacity to prevent and respond to all forms of child rights violations.

253. The armed forces, through their Human Rights Office, and in line with my recommendations to better protect children affected by the armed conflict in the Philippines (S/2013/419), continued to finalize a strategic framework to protect children during military operations. Some of these have already been implemented, including the guidelines on the conduct of activities in schools and hospitals.

254. I commend the progress made by MILF and urge it to identify all children associated with BIAF to ensure their separation in line with the action plan. I encourage both the Government of the Philippines and MILF to continue their sustained engagement to ensure the success of the peace process, which the United Nations stands ready to support.

### **Thailand**

255. Armed violence in southern Thailand continued, with armed groups launching attacks against civilian targets and engaging in sporadic fighting with Government security forces. Peace talks between the Government and armed groups, facilitated by Malaysia, began in 2014.

256. The United Nations continued to receive reports on the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. Children reportedly received military training and were used as lookouts, informers and combatants. For instance, a 14-year-old boy allegedly associated with an armed group was reportedly killed in a gunfight with civil defence forces in Narathiwat Province in August. Concerns persist over the informal association of children with civil defence groups providing security for transportation routes, teachers and schools. Reports also continue regarding the administrative detention of children for alleged association with armed groups.

257. The United Nations received reports of 57 incidents in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat that resulted in the killing of 23 children and maiming of 65. The incidents included shootings and improvised explosive device attacks. For example, on 3 February, three boys, between 6 and 11 years of age, were reportedly killed by gunshots during a targeted attack on their family by armed elements.

258. Armed groups continued to target teachers and education personnel, often using brutal threats and acts. According to the Ministry of Education, six teachers, one education personnel and 10 students were killed in 2014, while three teachers, one education personnel and 15 students were injured. In a worrisome example, in March, insurgents shot a teacher while she was riding a motorcycle to work at Tabing Tingi Community School. The assailants reportedly then poured gasoline on her body and set it on fire. A leaflet, with the words “This attack is in revenge for the killing of innocent people,” was found nearby.

259. In line with that trend, in November, banners threatening teachers were found in several parts of Yala. Soldiers and police who have been providing security escorts for teachers in the affected region have also come under fire. In November, 18 members of an armed group launched an attack on a security escort, killing four soldiers and injuring two others. In October, eight schools in the provinces of Pattani and Narathiwat were burned at night. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks. However, according to some reports, it was retaliation by a National Revolutionary Front-led armed group for attacks by the Royal Thai Army. The Government arrested eight persons in October, who reportedly confessed to carrying out the attack.

260. In May and August, for the first time since the escalation of violence in 2014, three hospitals were attacked in Pattani and Songkhla. In one attack, a parked motorcycle exploded and set fire to adjacent areas in the bombing at the Khok Pho hospital, resulting in serious injury to a 3-year-old girl.

261. In my previous two annual reports, I welcomed the fact that the Government and the United Nations country team were engaging in dialogue on access to the southern border provinces to conduct independent verification and report on alleged violations against children. I am concerned that progress has still not been achieved on the issue of access for monitoring and verification, and again strongly urge the Government to facilitate independent access.

#### **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)/Al-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-Séléka coalition and associated armed groups” disappeared, while others emerged. For the current listing, the umbrella “ex-Séléka 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<sup>a,\*</sup>
2. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-e-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, the Jamat Sunat al-Dawa Salafia and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d</sup>

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

1. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)<sup>a,b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Ex-Séléka coalition and associated armed groups<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-Balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

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

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

• This 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<sup>a,b</sup>
10. Mayi Mayi Nyatura<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Iraq**

1. Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

#### **Parties in Mali**

1. Mouvement national de liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA)<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO)<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Ansar Dine<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

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

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al Shabaab<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>
3. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,\*</sup>

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)<sup>a,b,\*</sup>
2. SPLA in Opposition<sup>a,b</sup>
3. White Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Sudan**

1. Government security forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), the Popular Defense Forces (PDF) and the Sudan Police Forces<sup>a</sup>
2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>
4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>

5. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement North (SPLM-N)<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

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

**Parties in Yemen**

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

## 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. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP)<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

1. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,d</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF)<sup>a</sup>
3. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)<sup>a,\*</sup>
4. New People's Army (NPA)<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

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



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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**  
**Seventy-first year**

## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2015, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2225 (2015). It highlights recent global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on grave violations committed against children in 2015. The main activities with regard to the implementation of relevant Council resolutions and the conclusions of the Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are outlined. In line with the resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the report include 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,<sup>1</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. All the information provided in the present report and its annexes has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations in which 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.

3. 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 has adopted a pragmatic approach on the issue, with an emphasis on humanitarian principles aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status.

<sup>1</sup> Under Security Council resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



## II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children

### A. Trends and developments

4. Serious challenges for the protection of children affected by armed conflict continued throughout 2015. The impact on children of our collective failure to prevent and end conflict is severe, and the present report highlights the increased intensity of grave violations in a number of situations of armed conflict. Those violations are directly related to the denigration of the respect for international humanitarian and human rights law by parties to conflict.

5. Protracted conflicts had a substantial impact on children. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the five-year conflict has caused the deaths of more than 250,000 people, including thousands of children. In Afghanistan in 2015, the highest number of child casualties was recorded since the United Nations began systematically documenting civilian casualties in 2009. In Somalia, the situation continued to be perilous, with an increase of 50 per cent in the number of recorded violations against children compared with 2014, with many hundreds of children recruited, used, killed and maimed. In a most troubling example, in South Sudan, children were victims of all six grave violations, in particular during brutal military offensives against opposition forces.

6. In Yemen, a particularly worrisome escalation of conflict has been seen. The United Nations verified a fivefold increase in the number of children recruited in 2015 compared with the previous year. This compounded a sixfold increase in the number of children killed and maimed in the same period. These alarming trends continued into early 2016.

7. Attacks on schools and hospitals were prevalent in 2015, linked to the increasing use of air strikes and explosive weapons in populated areas. Armed groups particularly targeted girls' access to education, although attacks on schools and hospitals were also carried out by government forces. Member States should consider, where necessary, changes in policies, military procedures and legislation to protect schools and hospitals.

8. The proliferation of actors involved in armed conflicts was a particular concern. Cross-border aerial operations conducted by international coalitions or individual Member States, especially in populated areas, resulted in highly complex environments for the protection of children. Indiscriminate aerial bombardments have hit medical and education facilities and crowded markets, causing child casualties. The many actors involved in hostilities posed challenges for monitoring and reporting and to the efforts of the United Nations to engage with parties to conflict to prevent child casualties.

9. In its resolution 2225 (2015), the Security Council expressed grave concern regarding the abduction of children in situations of armed conflict and requested those parties to armed conflict that engaged in patterns of abduction of children to be listed in the present report. Abductions continued to be perpetrated on a wide scale by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), with the number significantly increasing in Afghanistan and South Sudan.



10. The reporting period was marked by most disturbing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers and civilians and non-United Nations international forces. Sexual exploitation and abuse by those entrusted to protect civilians is particularly egregious. I have initiated a robust response to allegations against United Nations personnel, following the recommendations of the external independent review panel on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic. I am pleased that the Security Council, through its resolution 2272 (2016), endorsed my decision to repatriate military or police units when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation or abuse by those units and asked the United Nations to gather and preserve evidence of incidents in peacekeeping operations. The measures represent important steps in ensuring that there is accountability for those who commit these atrocious acts.

11. Notwithstanding the significant concerns relating to the protection of children affected by armed conflict, progress has been made. The momentum generated by the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign remained strong. In particular, continued commitment by Governments towards their action plans was demonstrated in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Myanmar. The Sudan, the only campaign country without a written commitment, in March 2016 signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its security forces. Information on progress is included in the country-specific sections of the present report. In the light of the upcoming final year of the campaign, my Special Representative, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and other stakeholders will increase their efforts to support the implementation of actions plans in place with government forces.

12. There was also strong engagement with a number of listed non-State armed groups. Engaging the plethora of non-State armed groups in existence is complex, and a multifaceted approach is necessary, taking into consideration the operational environments. Political dialogue and peace and ceasefire negotiations represent opportunities to reach out to parties to conflict regarding the protection of children. The early consideration of children’s protection needs in negotiations is vital, and engagement with parties to conflict on issues such as the release and separation of children can also provide a starting point for discussions. The United Nations engaged strongly during the reporting period with non-State armed groups, both inside and outside peace processes, from the Central African Republic, Colombia, Mali, Myanmar, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Sudan. Progress in this regard is also reflected in the country sections of the present report.

## **B. Reducing the impact of violent extremism on children**

13. Children have been significantly affected by violent extremism in recent years and were often the direct targets of acts intended to cause maximum civilian casualties and terrorize communities, including by depicting children as “executioners” or forcing them to be suicide bombers. The distribution of violent images and videos on social media placed the plight of children caught in the middle of these conflicts at the forefront of the world’s collective consciousness. Acts of violent extremism are abhorrent and Member States have obligations to ensure that their responses comply with international law to ensure that civilians are protected from these groups. The Security Council has emphasized that efforts to

counter extreme violence must be carried out in full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law.

14. It is noted herein that some military responses against non-State armed groups perpetrating violent extremism raised challenges for the protection of children. In some cases, State-allied militia and vigilante groups have been mobilized and used children in support roles or even as combatants. Children caught in the middle of operations have been killed and maimed and their homes and schools destroyed, raising concerns about compliance with international law. When responding to violent extremism, Member States should ensure that their rules of engagement take into account that children may be living in areas under the control of armed groups or may be used on front lines following their abduction or recruitment.

15. As noted in my Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism (see A/70/674), dated 24 December 2015, purely military and security approaches have not proved effective in addressing violent extremism. Violent extremism does not occur in a vacuum. It is necessary to identify and address its root causes and catalysts, such as protracted conflict without hope of resolution, political grievances, the alienation of communities, the lack of good governance, poverty and the lack of education and socioeconomic opportunities. Action is required by individual Member States, regional organizations and the broader international community, including by mobilizing resources, building resilience and strengthening protective environments for children. A new and compounding challenge is the regular use of propaganda on social media to recruit children and young people. I urge Member States to strengthen programmes to prevent the recruitment of children through social media.

16. The effective reintegration of children formerly associated with groups perpetrating violent extremism should be a priority. However, in Member States' response to violent extremism, children are often systematically treated as security threats rather than as victims, and are administratively detained or prosecuted for their alleged association. Depriving children of liberty following their separation is contrary not only to the best interests of the child, but also to the best interests of society as a whole. This approach further complicates efforts to reintegrate children, given that it separates them from their families and can also lead to the creation of community grievances.

### **C. Children displaced by armed conflict**

17. Armed conflict has resulted in forced displacement, with an ever-growing number of people fleeing in search of protection. In the Syrian Arab Republic, more than 4.8 million people have fled the country and 6.5 million have been internally displaced since the beginning of the conflict; nearly half of them are children. In Nigeria, as at the end of December, more than 1.8 million people had been internally displaced, including in excess of 1 million children, and more than 200,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries. In South Sudan, some 200,000 civilians, mainly women and children, remained in United Nations sites for the protections of civilians at the end of 2015. In Gaza, 44,479 children remain displaced as a result of the escalation of hostilities in 2014.

18. Those figures represent a very small fraction of the total number of children displaced by conflict, many of whom are unaccompanied or separated from their

families and caregivers during displacement. Those children are at a high risk and were victims of grave violations inside and around camps or other areas where they sought refuge. It is noted herein that, in contexts such as South Sudan, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic, parties to conflict took advantage of the vulnerability of displaced and refugee populations to recruit children and commit other crimes, including sexual violence and abduction.

19. States of origin, transit and destination have a responsibility to ensure appropriate protection for displaced children and to avoid aggravating their vulnerability, including through equal access to health care, high-quality education and psychosocial support. The failure to accord priority to the rights and needs of children affected by armed conflict will only increase the cost of rebuilding society once peace has been achieved.

20. Conflict prevention must be the goal of the international community. Sustainable peace is the only way to reduce conflict-related displacement, and increased efforts should be made to identify long-term solutions that will reduce and mitigate the root causes of conflict. In the short term, action is urgently required to alleviate the plight of the many children currently displaced by armed conflict. I encourage Member States to respect the rights of displaced and refugee children and to provide them with the necessary support services, keeping in mind the best interests of the child.

### **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**

##### **Afghanistan**

21. Children were disproportionately affected by the intensifying conflict in Afghanistan. The number of child casualties verified by the United Nations has risen by 14 per cent since 2014 and reached the highest number ever recorded. One in four civilian casualties in 2015 was a child.

22. The number of verified cases of recruitment and use of children more than doubled compared with 2014. A total of 116 cases (115 boys, 1 girl) were documented during the reporting period, of which 48 were verified. Thirteen verified recruitment cases were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces: five to the Afghan Local Police; five to the Afghan National Police; and three to the Afghan National Army. The majority of verified cases were attributed to the Taliban (20) and other armed groups (15). The Taliban continued to recruit children for combat and suicide attacks. There is continuing concern about allegations of cross-border recruitment of children and of use of religious schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan for child recruitment and military training by the Taliban and other armed groups (see S/2015/336, para. 21).

23. As at 31 December, the Ministry of Justice reported that 214 boys had been detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres on charges relating to national security,

including association with armed groups. In addition, 166 detainees arrested as children were being held at the Parwan detention facility for security-related offences; 53 of those were under 18 years of age. I am concerned about children being held in a high-security facility for adults for extended periods without due process, and about reports of the consistent use of solitary confinement for children.

24. The United Nations verified 1,306 incidents resulting in 2,829 child casualties (733 killed, 2,096 injured) — an average of 53 children were killed or injured every week. Of the casualties, 42 per cent (339 killed, 850 injured) were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, groups affiliated with ISIL and Hezb-i-Islami, and 23 per cent (177 killed, 471 injured) to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias. A total of 55 child casualties were attributed to international forces, the majority of which were caused by air strikes (21 killed, 20 injured), and cross-border shelling (3 killed, 9 injured). A third of child casualties (937) could not be attributed to a specific party. The leading causes of child casualties remained ground engagements (55 per cent), improvised explosive device attacks (19 per cent) and explosive remnants of war (13 per cent). The number of casualties relating to air strikes by Afghan and international forces almost doubled in 2015.

25. The United Nations received 11 reports of sexual violence, affecting nine boys and six girls. One incident involving a boy recruited and sexually abused by the Taliban in the northern region was verified. Concerns remain regarding the cultural practice of *bachah-bazi* (“dancing boys”), which involves the sexual exploitation of boys by men in power, including Afghan National Defence and Security Forces commanders.

26. Attacks on schools and protected personnel continued to be verified, including the killing, injury and abduction of education personnel. Of 132 verified incidents, 82 were attributed to the Taliban, 13 to ISIL-affiliated groups, 11 to undetermined armed groups, 1 to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and 23 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias; 2 incidents could not be attributed to any party. The emergence of ISIL-affiliated groups in the east had an impact on access to education and led to the closure of 68 schools, affecting more than 48,751 children in Nangarhar Province.

27. Verified attacks on hospitals and health personnel (125) significantly increased compared with 2014. In the attacks, at least 63 health-care personnel, including vaccinators, were killed or injured, 66 abducted and 64 intimidated and assaulted. A total of 75 incidents were attributed to the Taliban; 14 to ISIL-affiliated groups; 1 to TTP; 19 to undetermined armed groups; 14 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias; and 1 to international forces. For example, 49 medical staff were killed or injured in an air strike by international forces on the Médecins sans frontières hospital in Kunduz on 3 October.

28. In a positive development, in May, the Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration, aimed at protecting education facilities from military use during conflict. The use of schools by parties to the conflict continued, however, with 24 cases attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and 11 to armed groups (Taliban (4), ISIL-affiliated group (7)). The United Nations also verified 10 incidents of military use of hospitals.

29. The verified number of children abducted more than tripled compared with 2014. A total of 92 children (74 boys, 4 girls and 14 of unknown sex) were abducted in 23 incidents, including incidents linked to the killing of seven children and sexual violence against a child. The abductions of 69 children were attributed to the Taliban (two killed), 3 to ISIL-affiliated groups (all killed) and 12 to undetermined armed groups. An incident involving eight children remains unattributed.

30. The United Nations received reports of 93 incidents of denial of humanitarian access (75 verified). Humanitarian personnel were abducted (100), killed (9) and threatened and intimidated (14 incidents), while five humanitarian convoys were attacked. Of the verified incidents, 76 (78 per cent) were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban, and 10 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and pro-Government militias, while 7 cases could not be attributed.

31. The United Nations welcomes the measures taken by the Government in meeting its obligations under the action plan, including criminalizing underage recruitment by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, the endorsement of national age assessment guidelines and the inauguration of three new child protection units within Afghan National Police recruitment centres, bringing the total to seven. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice granted the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan unimpeded access to all juvenile rehabilitation centres.

32. In February 2016, my Special Representative visited Afghanistan. She commended the strong commitment of the Government and the important progress made to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, and discussed gaps and challenges to be addressed. Critical elements are the nationwide expansion of child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, the implementation of national age assessment guidelines in all Afghan National Defence and Security Forces recruitment and a general prohibition on child recruitment and use in the Child Law. I am concerned, however, about the lack of oversight mechanisms for Afghan Local Police recruitment, especially in the light of allegations of informal recruitment of children. Reintegration programmes and alternatives for children are also important, given that poverty is a driver of recruitment. Regarding the deprivation of liberty of children on charges relating to national security, I urge the Government to consider alternatives to detention and ensure that children are always treated in accordance with their best interests and juvenile justice standards.

33. Further analysis of the six grave violations is provided in my country report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan, issued on 15 May 2015 (S/2015/336). The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict adopted its conclusions on Afghanistan in February 2016, and I urge all parties to take action to address the recommendations set out therein.

### **Central African Republic**

34. There were significant political developments in the Central African Republic in 2015, including the holding of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in May, a constitutional referendum in November and the first round of presidential elections in December. A new outbreak of violence erupted in September between former Séléka elements, anti-balaka elements and members of the former Central African military, which critically affected children. A detailed account of the effects

of armed conflict in the country is available in my recent report to the Security Council, which covers the period from January 2011 to December 2015 (S/2016/133).

35. The United Nations documented 40 cases of child recruitment and use, more than half of which were by LRA (21) and over a quarter by the former Séléka faction, Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (13). Children were used as combatants, messengers, informants and cooks. Girls were also used as sex slaves. In addition, the United Nations documented the presence of an undetermined number of children manning checkpoints and barricades alongside armed individuals reportedly sympathetic or affiliated to anti-balaka and former Séléka elements, when violence erupted in Bangui in September. On several occasions, suspected anti-balaka elements used children as shields as they fired at United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) forces. Furthermore, the military leader of a former Séléka faction, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique, acknowledged having 43 children in his group. The United Nations engaged with him for their release, but without further cooperation.

36. There was a fall in the number of documented child casualties compared with 2014, with 62 children killed and 185 maimed, mostly during the violence in September sparked by the beheading of a 16-year-old boy. The ensuing violence claimed the lives of 28 children and injured 31. Anti-balaka elements were responsible for killing 28 children and former Séléka factions for 8, while 26 children died in crossfire or in incidents involving explosive remnants of war.

37. Sexual violence remained prevalent, with 70 cases documented, although the number of verified cases significantly decreased compared with 2014. Incidents were mainly attributed to former Séléka factions, in particular UPC, but also to anti-balaka elements and armed individuals of Fulani origin. A small number of incidents were reported to the police, but did not result in investigation or prosecution.

38. In the context of already fragile education and health-care systems, 19 attacks on schools and 12 on hospitals were verified, the majority by anti-balaka and former Séléka elements (UPC and Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique factions). A nurse was killed in Bambari in March by anti-balaka elements who had accused her of spying. Two suspects were arrested and handed over to the police, but no action had been taken as at the time of writing (March 2016). Furthermore, 16 schools were used for military purposes, 14 of them by former Séléka factions. In a positive development, the Government signed the Safe Schools Declaration.

39. A total of 52 children were verified as having been abducted: 25 by LRA, 15 by anti-balaka elements and the remainder by unidentified armed men. More allegations involving LRA were received but could not be verified. While the children abducted by LRA were used as porters or looters or for sexual purposes, abductions by anti-balaka elements were mainly for ransom.

40. Humanitarian access remained a major concern, with 140 verified incidents affecting humanitarians. Unidentified armed individuals or alleged affiliates of anti-balaka and former Séléka elements, often for financial gain, systematically impeded the provision of humanitarian assistance.

41. The United Nations continued to engage with some former Séléka factions, local anti-balaka commanders and other armed groups. That interaction culminated

with the signing of an agreement by 10 armed groups on 5 May, on the margins of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation, to end and prevent the recruitment and use of, and other grave violations against, children. Since the agreement was signed, 1,446 children have been separated from armed groups and space has opened for the United Nations to discuss commitments to end grave violations, especially with a number of the former Séléka factions. With regard to the anti-balaka, the United Nations engaged with local commanders, which led to the separation of children.

42. In total, 2,679 children were separated from armed groups: almost 89 per cent from anti-balaka elements and 10 per cent from former Séléka elements. UNICEF and its partners developed community-based approaches to reintegrate the children.

43. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against children by MINUSCA military and police personnel were recorded, including four from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, one each from Burundi, the Congo, Gabon and Morocco and two by unknown perpetrators. As at December, investigations were continuing regarding seven allegations, with one involving personnel from Morocco and one involving personnel from the Democratic Republic of the Congo found to be unsubstantiated. Three allegations were also reported against members of the Sangaris force and contingents of the European Union-led peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic. Furthermore, many new allegations involving personnel of the Sangaris force and MINUSCA were received in 2016 and were being investigated at the time of writing (March 2016).

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

44. The security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (Ituri, North Kivu and Tanganyika) remained volatile in 2015 and was marked by military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — FARDC) against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri (FRPI) and other armed groups. The situation also deteriorated owing to the activities of armed groups and intercommunal clashes. The United Nations verified 2,549 violations against children, a significant increase compared with 2014. Nearly 40 per cent were attributed to FDLR. Children took the opportunity of military operations to escape from armed groups, resulting in a spike in the number of separated children.

45. The United Nations verified the new recruitment of 488 children (26 girls), of whom 30 per cent were under 15 years of age when recruited. This is more than twice the number of documented cases in 2014. Of the recruitment and use, 89 per cent occurred in North Kivu, and almost half of the children were recruited by FDLR (219), followed by Raia Mutomboki (89), Nyatura (69) and other groups (111). In July, 10 boys who had been recruited in 2013 and 2014 were separated from FARDC and reported that they had participated in military operations in North Kivu in the year of their recruitment. The United Nations engaged with FARDC, which indicated that it had suspended the suspected commanding officers and initiated an investigation, which was continuing at the time of writing (March 2016).

46. FARDC handed over 139, and the Congolese National Police 8, children formerly associated with armed groups to the United Nations. Ten other children were handed over after they had been detained by FARDC, notwithstanding the two government directives prohibiting the holding of children for alleged association

with armed groups. Some had been detained for a few months, but one boy had allegedly been detained for more than a year. At the time of writing (March 2016), the United Nations had identified at least 22 children who were being held without charge in Angenga prison after being encountered in military operations.

47. At least 80 children were killed and 56 maimed, with most incidents occurring in North Kivu and Ituri. ADF (20), FRPI (19) and FDLR (14) were the main perpetrators among armed groups. A total of 29 children were killed and maimed by FARDC and 9 by the Congolese National Police. Fourteen casualties were attributed to military operations or clashes among armed groups and nine were the result of explosive remnants of war.

48. The United Nations verified 254 child victims of sexual violence. Armed groups were responsible for the majority of incidents, in particular FRPI (67), Raia Mutomboki (33) and Mayi Mayi Simba (27). FARDC was responsible for 68 cases, the Congolese National Police for 19 and the National Intelligence Agency for 2. A total of 42 FARDC and 11 Congolese National Police elements were arrested following the incidents.

49. Twenty-six attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (4) were verified. The Twa self-defence group destroyed 10 schools in Tanganyika Province in clashes with the Luba. The remaining attacks were perpetrated by Nyatura (4), FDLR (2) and other armed groups (5). Regarding hospitals, ADF was responsible for two attacks and LRA and FDLR for one each. Most notably, an attack by ADF on Eringeti hospital in Beni territory on 29 November resulted in at least 31 casualties.

50. Notwithstanding a directive issued in 2013 by the Ministry of Defence prohibiting the practice of military use of schools, 20 schools were used by FARDC. Following advocacy by the United Nations, however, 13 were vacated. Ten schools were also used by armed groups.

51. A total of 195 reports of abductions were received. Sixty-eight verified cases were attributed mainly to Raia Mutomboki, FRPI and ADF. Girls were reported to have been raped while in captivity, and some 40 per cent of the children are still missing. LRA continued to abduct children; 102 new reports were received in 2015.

52. Two cases of denial of humanitarian access by Raia Mutomboki were documented in Shabunda territory (South Kivu). In addition, at least 127 incidents of intimidation of and direct attacks on humanitarian organizations and staff were recorded in North Kivu.

53. Military pressure and radio messages encouraging children to escape contributed to 2,045 children being separated from armed groups, which is twice the number separated in the previous year. Children were separated from FDLR (891), but also from Raia Mutomboki, Nyatura, FRPI, Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka and other armed groups. Ten boys were also separated from FARDC in 2015. Six Burundian boys allegedly recruited in a refugee camp in Rwanda were separated. A report released by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in November<sup>2</sup> demonstrated the plight of girls associated with armed groups. In 257 cases, children associated with armed groups were separated from FARDC bases (Kitona and Kamina) far from

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<sup>2</sup> MONUSCO, "Invisible survivors: girls in armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2009 to 2015", 25 November 2015.



where they had been encountered, which delayed and complicated family reunification. In response, the United Nations advocated adherence to agreed principles to separate children where they are encountered by FARDC.

54. Throughout 2015, the Government maintained its commitment to implementing the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012, including through the work of the President's personal adviser on sexual violence and child recruitment. In September, the Minister of Defence endorsed a road map outlining pending activities for the full implementation of the action plan. To accelerate the process, three new provincial joint technical working groups were established. The United Nations provided technical support and screened more than 17,000 FARDC troops. However, it remains a concern that FARDC may not be able to identify minors without assistance, as was the case with the children identified by the United Nations in 2015. It is important that, as part of the implementation of the road map, the standard operating procedure on age assessment, drafted in August, be adopted and implemented country-wide.

55. Efforts continued by the Government to hold the perpetrators of grave violations accountable. At least 68 individuals, including high-ranking officers of FARDC and the Congolese National Police, were arrested, with 37 receiving sentences of up to 20 years' imprisonment for sexual violence against girls. Moreover, in August, an FARDC officer was arrested for the alleged recruitment and use of children. Seven leaders of armed groups were arrested on similar charges, including the former FRPI leader, Justin Matata Wanaloki, alias "Cobra Matata".

56. I encourage the Government to continue its efforts to implement the action plan by institutionalizing procedures, adopting and disseminating the standard operating procedure on age verification assessment and sustaining its commitment to combating impunity.

57. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of children involving members of MONUSCO military contingents from South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania were being investigated at the time of writing (March 2016). Two other incidents involving military personnel from Benin and South Africa were substantiated.

## **Iraq**

58. Military operations against ISIL intensified, especially in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Ninawa and Salah al-Din. The governorates of Baghdad and Diyala witnessed the main concentration of ISIL attacks. The impact on civilians and civilian infrastructure was devastating. My report on children and armed conflict in Iraq (S/2015/852) provides information on the period from January 2011 to June 2015. Limited access, especially with the intensification of conflict, and fear of retaliation impeded the monitoring and reporting of grave violations. The figures presented below are considered to be underreported.

59. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 37 children (36 boys and 1 girl). Of the cases, 19 were attributed to ISIL (including 18 boys from Halabjah, Sulaymaniyah governorate), 6 to the Kurdish Workers Party and other Kurdish armed groups and 12 to groups under the umbrella of the popular mobilization forces. Cases of child recruitment by the popular mobilization forces, which since April 2015 have been under the authority of the Prime Minister, included the coercion of eight boys to

go to a military training camp and the recruitment of four boys who were killed while fighting ISIL in Bayji, Salah al-Din governorate. Another 174 incidents of child recruitment (169 by ISIL, 3 by the Kurdish Workers Party and 2 by the popular mobilization forces) were reported but could not be verified. Recruitment by ISIL was reported in the Anbar and Ninawa governorates, and child soldiers were portrayed in social media, including as executioners.

60. As at December, at least 314 children (256 boys and 58 girls), including 23 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, remained in detention on charges under the Anti-Terrorism Law (2005), including for alleged association with armed groups.

61. The killing and maiming of children remained the most reported violation. The United Nations recorded 268 incidents, resulting in 809 child casualties (338 killed and 471 injured). Of those incidents, 152 were verified, including the killing of 203 children (125 boys, 32 girls and 46 of unknown sex) and injury of 314 (182 boys, 96 girls and 36 of unknown sex). The majority (74 per cent) of child casualties were recorded in the second half of 2015, as military operations intensified in the Anbar, Ninawa and Salah al-Din governorates. A total of 63 per cent of casualties occurred during military operations and engagements involving ISIL, the Iraqi security forces, including the popular mobilization forces and the Peshmerga, tribal elements and the international coalition against ISIL. There were 76 recorded improvised explosive device attacks targeting public areas and Iraqi security personnel.

62. The United Nations received reports of sexual violence against girls, in particular against members of the Yezidi community and other minority groups, in ISIL-controlled areas. Specific cases of rape and sexual violence remained difficult to verify, however.

63. The United Nations documented 90 incidents of attacks on schools and education personnel (68 verified). The majority (62) resulted from continuing fighting in Anbar, and schools were targeted by improvised explosive devices in three incidents in Baghdad and Diyala. Teachers and students were directly targeted in 24 incidents. On 9 December, ISIL tortured and killed a female teacher in Ninawa for refusing to use the ISIL curriculum. Three schools in the governorates of Anbar and Salah al-Din were used for military purposes (two by ISIL and one by Iraqi security forces).

64. Ten attacks on health facilities were reported, of which seven were attributed to air strikes in Anbar. In addition, 26 attacks on medical personnel were recorded, with 18 staff killed, 10 abducted and 2 injured in the governorates of Baghdad, Diyala, Ninawa and Salah al-Din.

65. The United Nations received many reports of abduction of children, primarily by ISIL. In two incidents in June and September, more than 1,000 children were reportedly abducted by ISIL from Mosul district. In another nine incidents, 12 children (10 boys and 2 girls) were allegedly abducted by unknown perpetrators owing to family affiliations.

66. Incidents were documented of internally displaced persons being prevented from fleeing conflict to access safety and basic services. For example, in December, 1,600 internally displaced persons from Anbar were stopped from crossing the Bzeibiz bridge between Anbar and Baghdad and some were abducted, reportedly by elements of the popular mobilization forces.

67. In collaboration with the United Nations, the Kurdistan Regional Government established a task force on justice for children to follow up on children in conflict with the law, including those detained on charges relating to national security. I welcome the efforts by the Government to identify preventive measures to counter child recruitment by ISIL, but am concerned about continued reports of recruitment and use of children by the popular mobilization forces, which now fall under the Government's responsibility. I urge the Government to put in place age verification and screening, and to criminalize and ensure accountability for child recruitment and use.

#### **Israel and State of Palestine**

68. In 2015, the situation was marked by heightened tensions that translated into widespread violence, especially in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the second half of the year. The detrimental impact of grave violations and an increasingly violent and oppressive environment continued to mark the lives of children. Palestinian and Israeli children were affected by the prevailing situation of military occupation, conflict and the blockade.

69. In 2015, 30 Palestinian children (25 boys and 5 girls) were killed and at least 1,735 injured (1,687 boys and 48 girls), predominantly in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

70. A total of 27 Palestinian children (23 boys and 4 girls) were killed in the West Bank, almost double the number killed in 2014. Most of the killings took place in the fourth quarter of 2015. Twenty-five deaths were attributed to Israeli forces, one to Israeli settlers and one to both Israeli forces and settlers. The number of Palestinian children injured also increased, predominantly as a result of clashes with Israeli forces and military-led operations. In the fourth quarter of 2015, 121 stabbing attacks against Israelis were carried out by Palestinians, including minors. From October to December, 14 Palestinian children involved in or suspected of stabbing attacks were shot dead by Israeli forces. I have repeatedly condemned the stabbings and other attacks. In addition, a number of the incidents raise concerns about the excessive use of force and unlawful killing, given that there are indications that the children posed no imminent or immediate threat to life that would justify the use of lethal force. For example, on 25 October, a 17-year-old girl was stopped at a checkpoint in Hebron, searched and shot at least five times. The Israeli authorities alleged that she had attempted to stab a police officer, yet an eyewitness stated that she had held her hands in the air and had posed no threat.

71. Violence by Israeli settlers and related incidents involving Israeli forces resulted in the injury of 54 Palestinian children (45 boys and 9 girls), with 20 cases of direct injury by settlers. An 18-month-old Palestinian boy was killed by Israeli settlers in an arson attack on 31 July that also claimed the lives of his parents and seriously injured his 4-year-old brother. Two Israelis, including a minor, were charged in relation to the crime.

72. A total of 13 Israeli children (9 boys and 4 girls) were injured by Palestinians. An Israeli girl who had sustained critical injuries in 2013 in a car accident involving stone-throwing by Palestinians died of complications. Furthermore, it was reported that a 17-year-old Israeli male had been shot dead in November.

73. In Gaza, three Palestinian children were killed by Israeli forces. Two boys were killed near the fence with Israel and one girl was killed in an air strike. In addition, 65 boys were injured, predominantly in the access-restricted areas along the fence with Israel and at sea.

74. Limited information is available about the recruitment or use of children. The Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades reportedly ran a military camp for 25,000 children and young people between 15 and 21 years of age in Gaza from 25 July to 5 August. On 30 August, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine reportedly held a graduation ceremony during a camp for girls, which included training in weapons.

75. An increased number of Palestinian children were arrested and detained by Israeli forces and prosecuted by juvenile military courts in the West Bank. In East Jerusalem, 860 Palestinian children were arrested, including 136 between 7 and 11 years of age, under the age of criminal responsibility. The monthly average number of children held in Israeli custody, according to the Israel Prison Service, increased by 15 per cent compared with 2014. A worrisome development was the recommencement of administrative detention of children, which had not been used in East Jerusalem since 2000 and elsewhere in the West Bank since 2011. Between October and December, six children were placed in administrative detention by the Israeli authorities. The United Nations and partners continued to document cases of ill-treatment of children by Israeli forces during their arrest and detention in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

76. In the West Bank, attacks on schools and protected personnel, and a pervasive environment of violence, harassment and intimidation, continued to have an impact on children's access to education. The United Nations documented 283 incidents relating to education, including 96 cases of schools coming under fire during military-led operations and clashes, 46 attacks and threats of violence against students and teachers by Israeli security forces and settlers, and 62 instances of interference with education owing to the closure of schools or the arrest and detention of staff and students. In Gaza, of the 262 schools and 274 kindergartens damaged or destroyed during the hostilities in 2014, 96 per cent of non-United Nations schools, all United Nations schools and 65 per cent of kindergartens have been repaired or rebuilt through the assistance of humanitarian organizations and donors.

77. Ten incidents of interference with health care were documented in the West Bank, with half involving the Makassed hospital in East Jerusalem. Incidents included the forced closure of clinics, search-and-arrest operations and Israeli security forces entering hospitals to obtain files and interrogate medical staff, resulting in the disruption of medical services. In addition, the Palestine Red Crescent Society reported that more than 131 paramedics and volunteers had been wounded and 76 ambulances damaged while undertaking their work in the West Bank and that access by medical teams to sick and wounded persons had been denied or delayed by Israeli security forces on 70 occasions.

78. In my previous report (A/69/926-S/2015/409), I urged Israel to take concrete and immediate steps to protect children, schools and hospitals, in particular by ensuring accountability for alleged violations. Of the 190 cases of alleged violations of international humanitarian law during the hostilities in Gaza in 2014 referred to the Israeli Defense Forces Fact-Finding Assessments Mechanism, the Israeli Military Advocate General has indicted three soldiers for looting and theft. Investigations into

numerous incidents, including the killing of four children on a beach in Gaza City on 16 July 2014, were closed without criminal or disciplinary proceedings.

79. I am concerned that actions have been taken by the Government of Israel in 2015 that further restrict the rights of Palestinians, including children. For example, the Knesset passed temporary amendments to the Penal Code to increase the maximum sentence for throwing stones to 20 years, and the State Prosecutor directed that all prosecutors should seek the detention of suspects charged with stone-throwing until the end of legal proceedings. I also reiterate my concerns regarding the practice of punitive demolitions of the homes of Palestinians accused of attacking Israelis, which have rendered their families and neighbours, including children, homeless.

### **Lebanon**

80. Children were affected by intensified clashes in the Bekaa governorate and the Ein el-Hillweh Palestine refugee camp, bombings in Tripoli and Beirut and violence along the border with the Syrian Arab Republic and the Blue Line with Israel.

81. The United Nations continued to document cases of recruitment and use of children by local and foreign armed groups, including of boys between 15 and 17 years of age who were sent to the Syrian Arab Republic. The majority of incidents were related to the Nusrah Front; however, children were reportedly also recruited by other armed groups, including Hizbullah, supporting the Syrian government forces. Furthermore, the United Nations documented the recruitment and use of boys and girls between 15 and 17 years of age by Palestinian armed factions and other armed groups within Lebanon. Reportedly, boys were used to man checkpoints or as guards, while girls were used in support roles.

82. As noted in my previous report (A/69-926-S/2015/409), I am concerned that children are held in pretrial detention under military jurisdiction on charges relating to national security. Fifteen boys (between 14 and 17 years of age at the time of their arrest) were still detained as at the end of 2015.

83. The United Nations verified 14 cases of child casualties relating to explosive remnants of war in southern Lebanon (2 killed, 9 injured), stray bullets during Hizbullah mourning ceremonies (1 killed, 1 injured) and crossfire (1 injured).

84. During violence between armed factions in the Ein el-Hillweh refugee camp in August, six United Nations schools and two medical facilities were damaged by crossfire and four United Nations schools were used by armed elements.

85. I commend the Government on its intensified efforts to implement the workplan to prevent and respond to the association of children with armed violence in Lebanon, signed in August 2014. I once again urge Lebanon to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which it signed in 2002.

### **Libya**

86. Protracted fighting continued in Benghazi, and sporadic armed clashes occurred in Ajdabiya, Darnah, Kufrah, Sabha, Sirte, Tripoli and the oil crescent. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIL expanded and gained territory in central Libya.

Access for monitoring continued to be restricted by insecurity, and United Nations international staff were located outside the country.

87. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups was reported. For example, groups affiliated with ISIL reportedly operated training camps south of Sirte, with a graduation ceremony for 85 children under 16 years of age reportedly held in December. It has been reported that children have been exposed to sexual violence during their association with armed groups.

88. At least 60 children were reportedly casualties of indiscriminate shelling of residential areas, air strikes, suicide bombings and crossfire, the majority in Benghazi. Summary executions of children were also reported, with groups affiliated with ISIL allegedly beheading a 17-year-old boy in Hawarah in May.

89. In Benghazi, 40 schools were reportedly damaged or destroyed, including through indiscriminate shelling. The United Nations also documented a case of military use of a school as a detention facility by the Darnah Mujahideen Shura Council. Attacks on hospitals and medical personnel continued. The Benghazi medical centre was shelled at least four times, and four medical personnel were reportedly killed on duty in an ambulance on 6 May. The abduction and killing of medical personnel by armed groups, including groups affiliated to Operation Karamah, was documented in Ajdabiya, Benghazi and Darnah.

90. In the context of the breakdown of law and order, there was a rise in the abduction of children by armed groups, militias and criminal organizations. For example, the body of a 16-year-old boy, reportedly abducted by militias affiliated with Operation Karamah, was found in Benghazi in December.

91. In June, an armed group believed to belong to the Magarha tribe abducted seven staff of a Libyan humanitarian organization; the whereabouts of the abductees remains unknown.

92. The United Nations engaged with the Constitution Drafting Assembly to include guarantees of children's rights in the draft constitution. I welcome the decision of the Zintan Municipal Council of February 2016 to release and reintegrate child soldiers, and look forward to its implementation with the support of UNICEF.

## **Mali**

93. Notwithstanding the peace accord signed by the Government, the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in May and June, clashes between the parties in northern Mali continued in the middle of 2015. The period was also marked by an increase in violent extremist and asymmetric attacks. In total, 109 verified and 128 unverified grave violations were reported.

94. A total of 127 cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups were received, with 30 verified. In addition, 27 cases of recruitment and use of children by the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés were verified in March 2016 in Ineggar, Gao region, and 47 other alleged cases were received. As at 31 December, of the 32 children arrested on security charges, 4 remained in detention in Bamako and Koulikoro. The United Nations continued to collaborate with the Malian authorities to ensure the implementation of the handover protocol signed in 2013. In addition, it documented cases of 14 children held by armed groups.

95. The United Nations verified the killing of 12 children and the maiming of 39 during rocket attacks and crossfire, as well as by improvised explosive device attacks and explosive remnants of war. While the identification of the perpetrators was not always possible, CMA was reportedly involved in at least two attacks. In one incident, two boys were lynched, dismembered and burned by a mob on suspicion of being associated with armed groups and participating in an attack.

96. A total of 22 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children were verified, comprising 3 by the Malian defence and security forces, 1 by the Platform and 18 by unknown perpetrators.

97. Four attacks and threats of attacks on schools and protected personnel were verified, including one by CMA and one by the Front de libération du Macina.<sup>3</sup> Following the killing of a village leader by the latter group in Dogo, Mopti region, reportedly for seeking the authorities' support after he had been told to close secular schools, the group threatened teachers in six local communes, leading to the closure of 93 schools. The number of schools used for military purposes by armed groups had dropped from 20 in 2014 to 7 by December.

98. The operational environment remained extremely volatile and targeted attacks against humanitarian personnel and facilities contributed to the disruption of the delivery of assistance. In a verified incident, CMA forced an international medical non-governmental organization supporting two health centres in the Timbuktu region to withdraw.

99. In the light of increasing threats to education, the United Nations initiated a dialogue with the Ministry of Education on the protection of schools. Efforts to engage CMA on ending and preventing grave violations against children continued and steps were taken to develop an action plan with the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad. In October, the United Nations also assisted the Malian authorities in developing a separation and reintegration strategy for children. I encourage the Malian authorities and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the peace agreement to dedicate attention to the rights and specific needs of children.

## **Myanmar**

100. Conflict continued in Kachin and Shan States and the south-east between government armed forces (Tatmadaw) and armed groups. On 15 October, the Government and eight armed groups, including four listed parties, signed a nationwide ceasefire agreement.

101. The United Nations received reports of 217 cases of recruitment, of which 95 were verified. Five verified incidents took place in 2015, with three attributed to the Tatmadaw (those recruited were subsequently released) and two to the Kachin Independence Army. Twenty-six incidents verified in 2015 had taken place in 2014. Furthermore, the United Nations received seven reports of the use of children in support functions by the Tatmadaw, including two verified cases in Rakhine State. The Government indicated that action had been taken against 382 military personnel, including 73 officers, for failing to adhere to recruitment procedures. A civilian was also sentenced to a year's imprisonment for aiding underage

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<sup>3</sup> The Front de libération du Macina is an armed group formed in January 2015. Attacks in the central and northern regions have been attributed to it.

recruitment. Credible information indicates that children were recruited and used by armed groups; however, five reported incidents could not be verified owing to limited access to the areas. Reports of recruitment involved the Karen National Liberation Army, the Kachin Independence Army, the Shan State Army-South and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army in Kachin, Kayin and Shan States.

102. The United Nations documented three children held in military detention. Two were released after notification to the Tatmadaw and the other was returned to his regiment pending age verification. In addition, three children were reportedly detained at the battalion level and subsequently discharged.

103. The United Nations documented 37 incidents of killing and maiming (25 killed and 50 injured), of which 23 were verified and which resulted in the killing of 15 children and injury of 37. More than half of the verified cases were related to landmines and explosive remnants of war (10 killed and 24 injured).

104. The United Nations verified three cases of sexual violence against girls, aged between 5 and 10 years, by Tatmadaw soldiers. In a grievous case, an 8-year-old girl was raped by a soldier and died after being taken to hospital. The perpetrators were court-martialled for being absent from duty and intoxicated, and two were convicted of rape by civilian courts.

105. The United Nations received 11 reports of attacks on schools. Three verified incidents were attributed to the Tatmadaw, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and an unknown armed group. Six verified cases of military use of schools were attributed to the Tatmadaw.

106. Five incidents of abduction were verified, with three leading to the disappearance of 11 children, which were attributed to the Tatmadaw, and two incidents involving three children were attributed to the Kachin Independence Army. Additional reports of abduction by armed groups in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine States, including for recruitment and use, could not be verified owing to access restrictions.

107. The United Nations received two reports of humanitarian personnel being caught in crossfire during engagement between the Tatmadaw and armed groups. Humanitarian access to areas outside government control in Kachin and Shan States was reduced compared with 2014, owing to limited government authorization.

108. Positive steps continued to be taken by the Government to advance the implementation of the joint action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Tatmadaw, including training on age assessment in recruitment centres, increased access to military battalions and units for monitoring missions and monthly case review meetings with the United Nations for the verification of suspected child recruits. In 2015, 146 former child soldiers, including 28 still under 18 years of age, were released and reintegrated into their families and communities.

109. My Special Representative visited Myanmar in July. While acknowledging the progress made, she noted that gaps remained in the systematic prevention of and accountability for the recruitment and use of children. Criminalizing recruitment and use by both military personnel and civilians is critical. The passage of the revised Child Law, including a chapter on children and armed conflict and a corresponding penalties section, would be highly important. The enforcement of existing accountability mechanisms also needs to be strengthened for all grave



violations, including through legal clarity to ensure consistency in decisions, improved witness protection and follow-up of cases in civilian courts.

110. In September, Myanmar signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I strongly encourage its ratification.

111. My Special Representative engaged in dialogue with three armed groups listed in the annexes to the present report, to encourage the development of action plans to address the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations. The United Nations has pursued further dialogue with these groups, and one listed party, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army, is ready to sign an action plan. I urge the Government to allow the signing and implementation of action plans with listed armed groups, which is a critical component of its commitment to end the recruitment and use of children throughout Myanmar, in line with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitment made by signing the Optional Protocol.

### **Somalia**

112. The period saw increased attacks by Al-Shabaab on the Somali security forces, government officials and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in addition to inter-clan clashes. In July, AMISOM and the Somali National Army resumed their offensive against Al-Shabaab. The national forces of Ethiopia and Kenya also conducted military operations. The situation resulted in a spike in the number of grave violations against children, with an increase of almost 50 per cent compared with 2014.

113. The recruitment and use of 903 children was documented, with 60 per cent of the cases (555) attributed to Al-Shabaab. In December, around 150 children were reportedly abducted for recruitment purposes from madrasas by Al-Shabaab in the Bay region. Of those cases, 26 (all boys) were verified by the United Nations. The Somali National Army also recruited a high number of children (218), who were used for various tasks, such as manning checkpoints. Recruitment was also attributed to clan militias (68), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (40) and Galmudug forces (17).

114. An increase in the detention of children for association with armed groups was documented, with 365 cases. The vast majority of children were detained by the Somali National Army (346), but also by Jubaland forces (11), Galmudug forces (6) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (2). Twenty-four boys were detained by AMISOM and later released. In a positive development, following engagement and advocacy by the United Nations, 79 children formerly associated with Al-Shabaab who had been held in rehabilitation centres were handed over to United Nations-supported non-governmental organization partners. At the time of writing (March 2016), however, dozens of children were reported to have taken part in an Al-Shabaab attack on Puntland and Galmudug and had been detained by the regional authorities.

115. A total of 474 incidents of killing and maiming were documented, affecting 753 children, and attributed to unknown armed elements (259), the Somali National Army (144), Al-Shabaab (138), clan militias (123), AMISOM (60), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (3) and other regional forces (8). Most incidents were related to indiscriminate gunfire or improvised explosive devices. The United Nations also documented six cases of children being executed by Al-Shabaab. Most incidents

attributed to AMISOM were caused by indiscriminate shooting in response to attacks by Al-Shabaab and during Operation Juba Corridor. For example, eight children were killed in two incidents in Marka district, Shabelle Hoose region, in July. In addition, 18 children were killed on 21 July in an air strike on a madrasa in Baardheere district.

116. The United Nations documented 164 incidents of sexual violence affecting 174 children, with the majority committed by clan militias (56), unknown armed elements (54), the Somali National Army (43), Al-Shabaab (15) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama‘a and AMISOM (2 each). Eighteen cases of forced marriage by parties to conflict were also documented.

117. Attacks on 24 schools and five hospitals were documented. Al-Shabaab committed 15 attacks on schools, the Somali National Army and allied militias were responsible for 4 attacks, clan militias and unknown armed elements were responsible for 2 each and unidentified air forces were responsible for 1 attack, as mentioned above. Attacks on hospitals were committed by AMISOM (two) and Al-Shabaab, clan militias and the Somali National Army (one each). The attacks by AMISOM involved the looting of medicines. In addition, two schools were used by the Somali National Army, including one in the Shabelle Hoose region, which was vacated following engagement by the United Nations.

118. A pattern of abduction was observed. Numbers spiked compared with 2014. A total of 458 boys and 65 girls were abducted, with nearly 95 per cent by Al-Shabaab (492), but also by clan militias (14). Abductions were often used as a tactic for recruitment, but also for the purpose of sexual violence, including forced marriage. For example, parents reported the abduction of 45 children by Al-Shabaab from a madrasa in the Juba Dhexe region in August.

119. Twelve incidents of denial of humanitarian access by clan militias (seven), the Somali National Army (three), Al-Shabaab and unknown armed elements were reported. Humanitarian access to children remained extremely challenging and United Nations staff were targeted. Seventeen humanitarian staff were killed in 2015, including four UNICEF staff in a suicide attack by Al-Shabaab.

120. Regarding separation, UNICEF supported the reintegration of 749 children through community-based programmes. The United Nations also provided technical support to the Child Protection Unit of the Somali National Army. Joint screening exercises were conducted and 36 children were separated from militias in Kismaayo, as part of a vetting process before their integration into the Somali National Army. Efforts to provide the separated children with assistance were continuing at the time of writing (March 2016). In another positive development, the Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 1 October. I am, however, particularly concerned by the continuing recruitment and use of children and high numbers of Somali National Army child detainees. I call upon the Government to immediately separate all children from the Somali National Army in adherence with the action plan signed with the United Nations in 2012 and to comply with international juvenile justice standards regarding detention.

121. The United Nations has engaged with AMISOM on the alarming numbers of killing and maiming of children committed by its forces. I urge the African Union and the troop-contributing countries to take all measures necessary to prevent

violations and ensure the protection of children, as well as ensure accountability by undertaking prompt and independent investigations.

### **South Sudan**

122. Conflict continued throughout the country, with intense clashes between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A in Opposition) and their allied militias, primarily in Unity and Upper Nile States. A peace agreement was signed in August, but fighting continued, with mass displacement of civilians and severe repercussions on children. A total of 1,051 incidents affecting 28,788 children were documented, with 601 incidents in Unity State alone.

123. The United Nations verified 159 incidents of recruitment and use, affecting 2,596 children. Nearly 70 per cent were attributed to SPLA (110), other government security forces and allied forces, including the Cobra faction of the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army, which was integrated into SPLA in 2015. Recruitment and use was also perpetrated by SPLM/A in Opposition (19), Johnson Olony's armed group (11), the Arrow Boys (4) and the White Army (3). Children wearing military uniforms were spotted throughout the country, especially in the greater Upper Nile region, where they were used in direct hostilities and support roles. First-hand reports were received of children being ordered to kill civilians and loot properties in Unity State. Girls reported being gang-raped and used for sexual purposes. According to the United Nations in the Sudan, some 400 South Sudanese children were also recruited by SPLM/A in Opposition from the Kharasana refugee camp, Western Kordofan, in October.

124. The United Nations verified 131 incidents of killing and 59 of maiming affecting 480 and 128 children, respectively, a sharp increase compared with 2014. The majority were attributed to SPLA (160), including in Unity State, where soldiers and allied militias reportedly shot at and burned houses with children inside. Incidents were also attributed to the South Sudan National Police Service, SPLM/A in Opposition, Johnson Olony's armed group and other parties to conflict. Moreover, seven children were killed and maimed in four incidents in United Nations sites for the protection of civilians during exchanges of fire between SPLA and SPLM/A in Opposition. Explosive remnants of war also caused child casualties. A cross-border incident involving SPLA that killed six children and maimed five was documented by the United Nations in the Sudan.

125. A total of 103 incidents of sexual violence affecting 430 children were verified and attributed to SPLA and other government security forces. Most incidents were documented in Unity State. Boys were reportedly castrated and sexually mutilated, while girls who resisted rape were killed.

126. Ten attacks on schools by SPLA were verified. They entailed destruction, damage, looting or the recruitment of children. In an incident in Upper Nile State, 36 children were rounded up by Johnson Olony's armed group, a militia aligned at the time with SPLA, during an SPLA recruitment exercise. They were later released. Eleven attacks on hospitals and health facilities were also verified, with nine attributed to SPLA and two to SPLM/A in Opposition.

127. As at the end of December, 25 schools were being used for military purposes by SPLA and other government security forces (22) and SPLM/A in Opposition (1).

Thirty-six schools were vacated in 2015, mainly through advocacy by the United Nations and joint verifications with SPLA.

128. There was a dramatic upsurge in the number of incidents of abduction, with 79 verified incidents affecting 1,596 children. The main perpetrators were SPLA (67), the Arrow Boys (5) and SPLM/A in Opposition (4). The largest number of abductions was documented in Unity State. Most children were abducted for recruitment and use. Testimonies of rape while in captivity were also received.

129. A total of 277 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and included attacks on personnel, destruction of compounds and interference in the delivery of assistance.

130. The Cobra faction of the South Sudan Democratic Movement/Army released 1,755 children in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area following advocacy by the United Nations. Children joined reintegration programmes and received support, but some boys were reportedly rerecruited. Since the group's integration into SPLA, the United Nations has been working with the SPLA Child Protection Unit to release all children.

131. Child protection provisions were included in the peace agreement signed in August, but United Nations engagement with the parties to conflict yielded few results. Other commitments to protect children were forthcoming, however, and, in January, South Sudan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On 26 December, SPLM/A in Opposition signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children. I am, however, deeply concerned at the scale of violations affecting children and, in line with my call during my visit in February 2016, I urge the leaders of South Sudan to abide by their responsibilities to protect children. I also call upon all parties to turn their multiple commitments into action by stopping the violations against children and releasing the thousands of children from their ranks.

## **Sudan**

### *Three areas: Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

132. Clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) continued in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States and attacks against civilians were reported. The most recent round of peace talks between the two parties, convened in November, produced little progress. Intercommunal violence also occurred, including in Abyei. In addition, the period featured activities by armed groups along the border with South Sudan. Owing to access limitations, the United Nations was unable to verify allegations and figures may be underreported.

133. The United Nations documented four cases of recruitment and use of children by the Sudanese Armed Forces. As noted in my previous report (A/69/926-S/2015/409), cross-border activities by armed groups continued and two boys were recruited by SPLM-N from refugee settlements in South Sudan.

134. The United Nations documented 28 incidents of killing and maiming, mostly perpetrated by the Sudanese Armed Forces (16) and SPLM-N (6), affecting 43 and 38 children, respectively. Most incidents were caused by attacks on civilians by government forces and SPLM-N, aerial bombardment, shelling and crossfire. Two

were also the result of tribal clashes and explosive remnants of war. In addition, the United Nations documented the killing and maiming of four girls in a Sudanese Armed Forces aerial bombardment in South Sudan.

135. The rapes of four girls and one boy by Sudanese Armed Forces elements and aligned militias were documented. Sexual violence against children remained a grave concern and the numbers are believed to be underreported owing to a lack of access.

136. Seven incidents of attacks on schools (two), hospitals (three) and protected personnel (two) were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (two), SPLM-N (two) and unknown perpetrators. Two incidents occurred during clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and SPLM-N. For example, on 20 January, a hospital operated by Médecins sans frontières in the Nuba mountains was reportedly bombed by the Sudanese Armed Forces. A medical staff member and a teacher were reportedly killed in April in Western Kordofan by SPLM-N.

137. The United Nations documented the abduction of eight children, including five in Abyei, that occurred during Misseriya attacks on Ngok Dinka villages in January and March. The children were released and reunited with their families following engagement by the United Nations. Three other boys were reportedly abducted by SPLM-N, including two in South Sudan.

138. The Government continued to restrict humanitarian access, resulting in an estimated 165,000 children being deprived of immunization.

#### *Darfur*

139. The period witnessed continued confrontations between government security forces and armed groups, especially in the Jebel Marra area, which led to significant displacement. The situation, exacerbated by aerial bombardment and increasingly deadly intertribal clashes, resulted in grave violations against children.

140. The country task force on monitoring and reporting verified the recruitment of four boys by the Sudanese Armed Forces in West Darfur, including one who reportedly participated in fighting between the Abbas faction of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Armed Forces in June. More allegations were received involving the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Government's Rapid Support Forces, which could not be verified. In addition, the United Nations documented the recruitment of six children by JEM from refugee settlements in Unity State, South Sudan. During her visit in March 2016, my Special Representative was given access to 21 children detained by the National Intelligence and Security Service since April and August 2015 for their alleged association with JEM. The children had allegedly been recruited in Southern Kordofan and South Sudan and used in combat in Darfur and South Sudan. My Special Representative advocated further access by the United Nations to the children and their release and reunification with their families.

141. Killing and maiming accounted for the majority of verified violations (196). Some 50 per cent of the children were killed (21) and maimed (74) by explosive remnants of war, but casualties also resulted from indiscriminate shooting, intercommunal clashes in East Darfur and aerial bombardments. A number of cases in restricted areas could not be documented.

142. Forty-five incidents of sexual violence affecting 60 children, including a boy, were verified and attributed to unidentified armed men (35), militias (13), the Rapid Support Forces (5), armed nomads (3), the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and the police and JEM-Wing for Peace (1 each). In addition, the United Nations in South Sudan documented three incidents by JEM affecting 12 children.

143. Thirteen schools were damaged or looted by the Central Reserve Police and the Rapid Support Forces, but also during Sudanese Armed Forces aerial bombardments and intertribal clashes. All but one of the incidents took place in the eastern Jebel Marra. In two additional incidents, school personnel were threatened by elements of the Rapid Support Forces. Two attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were attributed to the Rapid Support Forces and the Central Reserve Police.

144. Humanitarian access, in particular to Jebel Marra, remained heavily restricted, which impeded efforts to reach affected communities, including children.

145. The country task force on reporting and monitoring engaged with armed groups and a command order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children was issued by JEM in September. In addition, my Special Representative met the leaders of JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid in Austria in May, in consultations organized by the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur and the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution. The leaders of the groups issued a joint statement with a commitment to stop and prevent grave violations against children. Lastly, in June SPLM-N signed Geneva Call's Deed of Commitment for the Protection of Children from the Effects of Armed Conflict.

146. In March 2016, my Special Representative visited the Sudan and witnessed the signing of an action plan by the Government to end and prevent child recruitment and use in its security forces. I welcome that step and count on the Government to ensure the swift and full implementation of the action plan.

147. The country task force on monitoring and reporting provided technical support to government personnel and local communities through awareness-raising, the development of referral pathways and community-based child protection networks. Although impunity for grave violations continued to be a concern, there was progress, with arrests being made for sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. I call upon the Government to ensure accountability for all grave violations.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

148. The conflict was marked by increasing indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombings, especially in the second half of the year, and the proliferation of parties involved, including international forces. Besiegement of areas continued to be used as a tactic of war. On 27 February 2016, a cessation of hostilities agreement allowed the delivery of humanitarian assistance to previously unreachable areas. Owing to the increasingly constrained monitoring environment, the figures below do not reflect the full scale of grave violations committed by all parties to the conflict.

149. A total of 362 cases of recruitment and use of children were verified and attributed to ISIL (274), the Free Syrian Army and affiliated groups (62), Liwa' al-Tawhid (11), popular committees (5), Kurdish People's Protection Units (4), Ahrar al-Sham (3), the Nusrah Front (2) and the Army of Islam (1). Of the verified cases, 56 per cent involved children under 15 years of age, a significant increase

compared with 2014. The payment of salaries and ideology continued to be major influencing factors.

150. The massive recruitment and use of children by ISIL continued. The United Nations verified the existence of centres in rural Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and rural Raqqah that provided military training to at least 124 boys between 10 and 15 years of age. Verification of the use of child foreign fighters increased significantly, with 18 cases of children as young as 7 years of age. The use of children as child executioners was reported and appeared in video footage.

151. The United Nations also verified the recruitment and use of children as young as 9 years of age by the Free Syrian Army, and the recruitment of 11 Syrian refugee children from neighbouring countries by Liwa' al-Tawhid. While cases became increasingly difficult to verify, the Kurdish People's Protection Units continued to recruit boys and girls as young as 14 years of age for combat roles, with pressure and coercion by communities reportedly a factor.

152. Recruitment and use by pro-Government groups was verified, with five cases of boys being recruited by the Popular Committee of Tallkalkh (Homs) to work as guards and conduct patrols. In addition, there were allegations of the use of children by government forces to man checkpoints.

153. The Government continued to detain children for their alleged association with armed opposition groups, with 36 cases verified. In 28 of those cases, the children were tortured, and one incident resulted in the child's death in detention. Pro-Government groups continued to deprive children of liberty for alleged association with opposition groups, with three cases attributed to the Popular Committee of Bludan. There were also five cases of ISIL depriving children of liberty owing to their association with parties to conflict.

154. Air strikes, indiscriminate attacks on civilian areas and objects, and complex attacks were the primary causes of killing and maiming of children. The United Nations verified 591 cases of children killed (269 boys, 106 girls and 196 of unknown sex) and 555 injured (203 boys, 128 girls and 224 of unknown sex), attributed to government forces and international forces supporting the Government (585), ISIL (142), the Nusra Front (23), other armed groups (168), the international coalition against ISIL (7), the Kurdish People's Protection Units (2) and unknown parties (219). Mortar, rocket and suicide attacks on government-controlled areas resulted in the killing and maiming of 275 children (77 boys, 93 girls and 105 of unknown sex), attributed to ISIL (79), the Nusra Front (14) and other armed groups (167). Aerial attacks and shelling of civilian areas by government forces and international forces supporting the Government killed and injured 531 children, including 133 from indiscriminate barrel bombs.

155. There was a significant increase in the number of verified cases of children killed and maimed as a result of their association with armed groups, including while participating in combat. Owing to the large numbers of children used by ISIL, at least 148 children were killed in ISIL military areas targeted by air strikes by government forces, international forces supporting the Government and the international coalition. ISIL and the Nusra Front continued to commit atrocities, including the execution of children. On 5 March, the Nusra Front executed two children during a ground offensive on Kanafez (Hama). On 22 August, in Muh

Hasan (Dayr al-Zawr), ISIL publicly amputated limbs of a 15-year-old boy accused of being affiliated with the Free Syrian Army.

156. Conflict-related sexual violence against children continued to be extremely difficult to document, with no case verified in 2015. In areas controlled by ISIL, girls reportedly continued to be vulnerable to early and forced marriage to fighters, while Yezidi girls captured in Iraq in 2014 were reportedly trafficked into the Syrian Arab Republic and used as sex slaves.

157. According to the Ministry of Education, since the beginning of the conflict, more than 6,500 schools have been destroyed, partially damaged, used as shelters for internally displaced persons or rendered otherwise inaccessible. The Ministry reported that 571 students and 419 teachers had been killed in 2015. The United Nations verified 69 attacks on educational facilities (60) and personnel (9) attributed to government forces and pro-Government groups (48), ISIL (11), the Nusra Front (1), other armed groups (9) and unknown parties (1), which killed and maimed 174 children.

158. ISIL continued to use education to indoctrinate and recruit children. In December, it imposed new regulations of compulsory education for all boys from grades 1 to 12, and for girls from grades 1 to 4, which is a factor contributing to recruitment in ISIL-controlled areas.

159. Reports of attacks on medical facilities increased, with 122 attacks on 93 separate medical facilities and at least 60 medical personnel targeted or killed. The United Nations verified 41 attacks on health facilities (33) and health personnel (8) by government forces and pro-Government groups (32), ISIL (2), other armed groups (2) and unknown parties (5).

160. The United Nations verified eight incidents of military use of schools by government forces in Idlib in March (four of the schools were subsequently attacked by armed groups) and three incidents of military use of hospitals by ISIL in Dayr al-Zawr and Raqqah.

161. Children continued to be abducted by parties to the conflict, with 21 cases (15 boys, 4 girls and 2 of unknown sex) attributed to government forces in a hostage-taking incident (13), ISIL (5) and 1 each to the Nusra Front, the Kurdish People's Protection Units and groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army.

162. Parties to the conflict, in particular the Government, ISIL, the Nusra Front and armed opposition groups, continued to use siege and starvation as a tactic of war. In January 2016, an estimated 393,700 people were living under siege. Deaths of children as a result of malnutrition were reported. Some 35,000 children targeted by polio vaccination campaigns could not be reached owing to denial of vaccinations by armed groups, including ISIL. The use of water as a weapon of war escalated significantly, with some 7.7 million civilians affected by deliberate water cuts. The United Nations verified attacks on humanitarian facilities and attacks and threats against humanitarian personnel.

163. I call upon the Government to respect its obligations and take urgent action to protect civilians. Furthermore, I urge the Kurdish People's Protection Units and the Free Syrian Army to end child recruitment and use, and implement the commitments previously made.



## Yemen

164. The conflict in Yemen escalated significantly following the takeover of Sana'a by the Houthis in September 2014 and the beginning of air strikes by the coalition led by Saudi Arabia on 26 March 2015. Intensive aerial bombardment was followed by ground fighting, taking a devastating toll on the civilian population. Grave violations against children increased dramatically as a result of the escalating conflict.

165. The United Nations documented a fivefold increase in cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular following the escalation of 26 March, notwithstanding the challenges in verifying cases owing to security and access constraints. Of the 762 verified cases of recruitment of children (all boys), the majority were attributed to the Houthis (72 per cent), followed by the pro-Government popular committees (15 per cent) and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (9 per cent). Recruitment was predominant in Houthi strongholds, such as Amanat al-Asimah (103), Ta'izz (69) and Amran (34). A shift was observed from largely voluntary enlistment towards forced or involuntary recruitment through coercion, including through the provision of misleading information or incentives.

166. In 2015, 183 boys were deprived of liberty by popular committees, owing to their association with armed groups, predominantly in Abyan, Aden and Lahij. At least 48 children recruited by Houthi forces were captured by popular committees and deprived of liberty for three to five months, before being released as part of a prisoner exchange that included adults held by popular committees. In addition, a child in Amanat al-Asimah was accused of planting chips in installations to be targeted by the coalition, and deprived of liberty by the Houthis.

167. The United Nations verified a sixfold increase in the number of children killed and maimed compared with 2014, totalling 1,953 child casualties (785 children killed and 1,168 injured). More than 70 per cent were boys. Of the casualties, 60 per cent (510 deaths and 667 injuries) were attributed to the Saudi Arabia-led coalition and 20 per cent (142 deaths and 247 injuries) to the Houthis. In 324 incidents, the responsible party could not be identified. ISIL claimed responsibility for an improvised explosive device attack on a mosque in Amanat al-Asimah that killed seven children and injured six, in addition to causing many adult casualties. Of the child casualties, 60 per cent were caused by air strikes, predominantly in Amanat al-Asimah, Hajjah and Sa'dah. Significant civilian casualties, including children, as a result of air strikes continued to be documented early in 2016. Ground fighting accounted for 29 per cent of child casualties, with the vast majority in Ta'izz, Aden and Dali'. Child casualties as a result of landmines and explosive remnants of war were documented, with 15 children killed and 67 injured in Abyan, Aden, Amanat al-Asimah, Amran, Bayda', Dali', Dhamar, Lahij, Ma'rib, Sa'dah, Shabwah and Ta'izz.

168. The United Nations verified an incident of sexual violence against a child by a member of an armed group. However, it is likely that this category of violation is underreported.

169. The United Nations verified 101 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals, which is double the number of incidents verified in 2014. Of the attacks, 90 per cent caused the partial or complete destruction of schools or health facilities, while the remaining 10 per cent involved attacks on protected personnel, including students. Of the attacks on schools and hospitals, 48 per cent were attributed to the coalition,

29 per cent to the Houthis and 20 per cent to unidentified perpetrators. More than half of the violations occurred in the period from April to June.

170. Fifty-nine incidents of attacks on 34 hospitals were verified, with multiple attacks on the same facilities, especially in Aden and Ta'izz. In Aden, six facilities were attacked 10 times. In Ta'izz, three health facilities were hit in 23 separate incidents. The majority of repeated attacks were attributed to Houthi forces. For example, the Jumhuriyah hospital in Aden was attacked three times by the Houthis in April. In addition, coalition air strikes destroyed 15 health facilities in the governorate of Sa'dah.

171. The United Nations verified 42 attacks on schools, with the largest number in Amanat al-Asimah (12), Ta'izz (10) and Sa'dah (10). Of the attacks, 57 per cent were attributed to the coalition, 16 per cent to the Houthis and 21 per cent to unknown parties.

172. The United Nations verified 51 incidents of military use of schools, of which the large majority (44) took place in Ta'izz by Houthi forces (20), popular committees (8) and unknown armed groups (16). The Houthis also used schools in Aden, Dali' and Lahij, and two incidents were attributed to popular committees in Aden and unknown armed groups in Ibb. Four incidents of military use of hospitals were verified, of which three were attributed to the Houthis and one to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

173. The United Nations verified the abductions of 11 children, all of which were attributed to the Houthis, with the exception of a case attributed to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. For example, two children were abducted next to Houthi barracks in Dali'. The Houthis and affiliated groups requested a ransom for the return of the children to the families, but the children were later killed.

174. Humanitarian access was severely restricted, with both the coalition and the Houthis imposing obstacles to the delivery of goods and services. The United Nations verified 16 incidents of denial of humanitarian access in Ta'izz, Sa'dah, Aden and Dali', mostly relating to the restriction of entry of humanitarian personnel, and threats and violence against personnel. The majority of verified incidents were attributed to the Houthis (11) and the coalition (3).

175. In May 2014, the Government signed an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. However, implementation did not advance in the light of the escalation of conflict. My Special Representative engaged in dialogue with the Government, Member States and subsidiary bodies of the Security Council to raise serious concerns about the devastating impact of the conflict on children. I call upon all parties to respect their international legal obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, and encourage the inclusion of child protection concerns in negotiations to end the conflict.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Colombia**

176. Substantial progress was made in the peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del

Pueblo (FARC-EP). In February, the group announced that it would stop recruiting children under 17 years of age and intended to release children under 15 years of age from its ranks. At the invitation of the Government, my Special Representative twice visited Havana to engage with the negotiating parties and facilitators on according priority to the release and reintegration of all under-aged members of FARC-EP, stressing that any action should be based on the principle of the best interest of the children to ensure their protection and successful reintegration, guarantee their rights as victims and prevent rerecruitment by other armed actors. Early in 2016, FARC-EP made public a commitment to ending the recruitment of children under 18 years of age and discussions on the separation of children continued. A historic agreement on the peace agenda item relating to victims was announced on 15 December, foreseeing the creation of a comprehensive system of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition for victims, which identified children as a vulnerable group.

177. Armed violence between FARC-EP and government forces reached its lowest level in 50 years and displacement decreased following the unilateral ceasefire declared by FARC-EP and the suspension of government aerial bombings. Nevertheless, activities by the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)<sup>4</sup> and post-demobilization armed groups continued to cause forced displacement.

178. The United Nations verified 289 cases of child recruitment and use by armed groups, the majority of which were documented following their separation and had been formerly associated with FARC-EP (182) and ELN (74). Cases were also attributed to the Ejército Popular de Liberación (1) and post-demobilization and other armed groups (32).

179. The killing of 12 children and maiming of 10, mainly as a result of landmines, were verified. With 31 of its 32 departments contaminated, landmines are a serious concern for the protection of children in Colombia. On 7 March, the Government and FARC-EP announced that they would carry out joint humanitarian demining initiatives (joint communiqué No. 52) and the parties began working on pilot projects.

180. The country task force on monitoring and reporting recorded 10 girls who were victims of sexual violence committed by the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (8), FARC-EP and an unidentified perpetrator. One additional case by a member of the Colombian military in 2012 was reported in 2015. The perpetrator was in detention awaiting trial at the time of writing (March 2016).

181. Eleven schools were damaged in crossfire and by landmines and explosive remnants of war. At least two teachers were killed by unidentified armed groups and allegations of threats against teachers by FARC-EP, ELN, the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia and Los Rastrojos were received. In addition, there were one case of military use of schools by FARC-EP and four cases by the Colombian military in violation of directives issued by the Ministry of Defence.

182. I welcome the decision of the Constitutional Court of 18 February 2016 that children recruited by all armed groups, including post-demobilization groups, are victims and have the right to reparations guaranteed in the Victims' Act (No. 1448 of 2011). This is an important step forward that aims to guarantee equal treatment

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<sup>4</sup> ELN has been listed for recruitment and use of children in annex II to the present report since 2003. The launch of peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and ELN was announced in March 2016.

between children associated with guerrilla groups and those associated with post-demobilization groups, by ensuring that every recruited child will be treated primarily as a victim and receive adequate reintegration support.

183. There has been historic progress in Colombia and I encourage the Government to secure guarantees for non-repetition and pay particular attention to the specific protection needs of indigenous children, children of African descent and children in marginalized areas, so as to address and prevent violations against children.

### **India**

184. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children as young as 6 years of age by armed groups, including the Naxalites, in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha and West Bengal States. Reports indicate that children were coerced to join children's units ("Bal Dasta"), where they were trained and used as couriers and informants, to plant improvised explosive devices and in front-line operations against national security forces. For example, in April, the Bharatiya Communist Party (Maoist) reportedly forced the inhabitants of seven villages in Gumla district, Jharkhand State, to hand over five children per village to join their ranks. To avoid such forcible recruitment, families have resorted to sending children away from home at a young age, leading to children dropping out of school.

185. In the eastern provinces, children were killed and injured as a result of violence and fighting between armed groups and national security forces. In June, 12 Communist Party of India (Maoist) fighters, including 4 children dressed in uniforms, were killed in a joint police operation in Bhalwahi village, Jharkhand State.

186. The abduction of children, especially girls, by armed groups was a serious concern. Abducted children are subjected to further grave violations and abuses, and have been forced to serve in combat functions, exposed to sexual violence and, reportedly, used as human shields. In April, Maoists reportedly abducted five girls aged between 10 and 13 years of age from Karcha village, West Bengal State, and their whereabouts remain unknown.

### **Nigeria**

187. Early in 2015, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, renamed Islamic State's West African Province and commonly known as Boko Haram, controlled large swathes of territory in the north-eastern States of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. In response, the Nigerian security forces intensified their military operations, in conjunction with the Civilian Joint Task Force, as well as local pro-Government vigilante groups, retaking control of territory. According to the Nigerian security forces, only two local government areas were under Boko Haram control (Abadam and Mobar in Borno State) by December.

188. As Boko Haram increasingly resorted to hit-and-run attacks on "soft targets", the group also intensified its operations, including suicide attacks, which have spread from north-east Nigeria to Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, causing a significant number of casualties among civilians and large-scale displacement. Consequently, by the end of December, in excess of 1.8 million persons had been displaced within Nigeria, including more than 1 million children, and 220,304 were registered as refugees in neighbouring countries.

189. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 278 children (143 boys and 135 girls) by Boko Haram (225) and the Civilian Joint Task Force (53). Twenty-one girls were used in suicide attacks claimed by Boko Haram, 11 of which were documented in the fourth quarter. Children were used in suicide attacks not only in Nigeria, but also in Cameroon and Chad, with cases also reported early in 2016. Of the 1,010 children (422 boys and 588 girls) encountered or rescued during the course of military operations in north-east Nigeria, 204 (117 girls and 87 boys) had been recruited and used by Boko Haram. With regards to the Civilian Joint Task Force, children were used to man checkpoints and as messengers and spies.

190. Cases of 129 children detained for alleged association with Boko Haram were documented (69 boys and 60 girls), including 85 held in military barracks in Maiduguri, 22 at the Aguata camp in eastern Nigeria by the Office of the National Security Adviser, after passing through the Chad security corridor, and 21 girls in Lagos detained by the Nigeria Department of State Services and the Nigerian security forces. On 1 December, an 11-year-old boy was arrested in Maiduguri, reportedly for being a suspected “Boko Haram terrorist”, and his picture displayed on posters disseminated throughout Nigeria. The poster appeared to include at least three other boys. In November, the Nigerian security forces handed over to the Governor of Borno State 48 boys and 10 girls who had been in military detention in Maiduguri since August for alleged association with Boko Haram.

191. At least 5,480 persons were reportedly killed in 352 incidents, a decrease of 26 per cent compared with 2014. The United Nations verified the killing of 244 children (109 boys and 135 girls), mostly in Borno (130), Adamawa (54) and Yobe (48). Sixty-five of them were killed in 13 suicide attacks committed by children. A total of 112 children (54 boys and 58 girls) were also maimed.

192. In May and June, 253 children (84 boys and 169 girls) encountered during military operations participated in an “deradicalization programme” run by the Office of the National Security Adviser in a facility in Kaduna State, to which the United Nations was given access in June. The Office reported that four girls were pregnant as a result of sexual violence during their captivity and that all 68 mothers of the 112 children under 5 years of age had been either raped and/or were wives of Boko Haram members. The facility was closed down on 6 November, but it was unclear whether the women and children who returned to their communities or camps for displaced persons received reintegration support.

193. Since 2014, an estimated 1,500 schools have been destroyed in north-east Nigeria, including 524 in Borno State. This has prevented access to education for more than 400,000 children. Five schools were reportedly used for military purposes by Boko Haram in Bauchi State, and three schools by the Nigerian security forces since April 2014 in Maiduguri and Chibok Local Government Area, Borno State. To strengthen the protection of education, Nigeria endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, agreeing to use the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

194. Abduction by Boko Haram continued, with 162 cases documented, of which the United Nations verified 26 (15 boys and 11 girls). In addition, 693 children encountered or rescued during military operations (327 boys and 366 girls) had reportedly been abducted. There is no indication whether any of the Chibok schoolgirls, abducted in 2014, were among those rescued.

195. Engagement with the Nigerian authorities continued, including on the handover of children encountered during operations by the Nigerian security forces to civilian authorities. In December, the United Nations assisted the National Human Rights Commission and the Nigerian security forces in organizing a workshop to review the military code of conduct and rules of engagement for operations against Boko Haram. With regard to efforts to combat impunity, I welcome the establishment of a human rights desk at the army headquarters tasked to investigate human rights violations committed by the military, and I encourage the inclusion of dedicated child protection capacity to investigate grave violations committed against children. I am concerned by the number of children recruited and used by the Civilian Joint Task Force and I call upon the Government to take swift action to prevent further cases.

### **Pakistan**

196. In 2015, attacks by armed groups in Pakistan declined by 48 per cent compared with 2014. The majority of attacks were attributed to TTP, predominantly in Baluchistan. The Government's military operations in North Waziristan against armed groups continued throughout 2015.

197. Reports were received of the use of religious schools for recruitment and military training of children by TTP and other armed groups (see S/2015/336).

198. Child casualties were reported as a result of indiscriminate attacks and armed violence. For example, on 4 January, four children were killed and 10 injured when an improvised explosive device detonated at a volleyball match in Orakzai Agency, Federally Administered Tribal Areas. In October, a suicide attack on a religious procession in Jacobabad, Sindh Province, killed 18 children and injured more than 40 others. Further indiscriminate attacks occurred early in 2016, when a large bomb blast claimed by a TTP faction killed more than 20 children in Lahore on 27 March.

199. Fourteen attacks on educational institutions across Pakistan were recorded, a decline of 65 per cent compared with 2014. They included the destruction of schools, including girls' schools, and occurred mostly in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (eight), Sindh (four) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (two).

200. Notwithstanding the continued targeting of health personnel, humanitarian access to children increased, in particular for polio workers in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Attacks on polio workers continued, however, with 11 people killed in six attacks. For example, four members of a polio team were killed following their abduction in Northern Baluchistan. In addition, 76 security incidents, including 42 cases of threats and intimidation against polio workers, were reported throughout Pakistan.

201. I am concerned by reports of children being sentenced to death by military courts on terrorism-related charges. I urge the Government to adhere to its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits capital punishment for offences committed by persons under 18 years of age.

### **Philippines**

202. There were limited large-scale armed engagements in 2015. However, sporadic low-intensity clashes continued to affect children, predominantly in Mindanao. An increased number of grave violations were documented in indigenous communities

resulting from the conflict between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the New People's Army (NPA), increasingly involving the Alamara and Magahat paramilitary groups with alleged links to the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

203. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 17 children, including 15 children used as human shields, by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters in one incident, and two recruited by NPA. Unverified reports indicated that the Abu Sayyaf Group recruited around 30 children in Basilan in April.

204. Two cases of detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups were verified. In January, a 17-year-old boy was detained and questioned by the Armed Forces of the Philippines for alleged association with NPA in the Davao region.

205. The United Nations verified the killing of 6 children and the injury of 25. A third of the casualties were attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group. For example, in May, a boy was beheaded by the Group in Basilan for allegedly spying. Two verified incidents were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, involving the killing of two children and injury of two others. On 18 August, in Bukidnon Province, northern Mindanao, the Armed Forces of the Philippines killed five family members in front of their house, including two boys aged 14 and 17 years. Two injuries were attributed to the Magahat paramilitary group, one killing to NPA and one injury to the National Police. The other 13 casualties were attributed to crossfire or explosive remnants of war.

206. The United Nations verified the rape of a 14-year-old girl by three soldiers in three separate incidents between May and July. The soldiers were court-martialled and their superior was recommended for administrative sanctions. However, the civilian criminal proceedings for rape were dismissed owing to insufficient evidence.

207. Almost all verified cases of attacks on schools and education personnel took place in indigenous communities. Private schools run by non-governmental organizations were systematically targeted for alleged links to NPA. Five incidents were attributed to the Magahat paramilitary group, three to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, two to the Alamara paramilitary group and one each to NPA and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. In a particularly grave incident, the director of a school run by a non-governmental organization was killed in an indigenous community in Caraga by the Magahat paramilitary group. No arrests have been made, despite warrants being issued. The United Nations verified 10 incidents of military use of schools; 6 incidents were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, 3 incidents jointly to the Armed Forces of the Philippines and paramilitary groups and 1 to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters.

208. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front demonstrated a strong commitment to the action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use, achieving significant progress. The majority of the benchmarks have been reached and, in November, its leaders agreed on the steps required to identify and disengage any children associated with it. The full implementation of the action plan also requires safeguards to prevent recruitment and association, linked to the implementation of existing accountability mechanisms. Services to minimize the risk of reassociation of children will also be important.

209. In an encouraging development, in 2015, UNICEF renewed engagement with the National Democratic Front of the Philippines/NPA on its declaration and programme of action for the rights, protection and welfare of children.

210. The United Nations continues to work with the Armed Forces of the Philippines on its 2012 strategic plan on prevention and response to grave child rights violations in situations of armed conflict to ensure that it strengthens the protection of children in the light of continuing violations involving the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

### **Thailand**

211. Violence in southern Thailand continued, notwithstanding the reinitiation of dialogue between the Government and an umbrella organization of armed groups.

212. Although no cases of recruitment and use of children were reported, according to information provided by the Government, an armed group trained children as young as 13 years of age in the use of weapons in Narathiwat Province early in January 2016. The United Nations continued to receive reports of children being detained for alleged association with armed groups.

213. The United Nations received reports of the killing of 4 children and the injury of 15 in shootings and improvised explosive device attacks in Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala Provinces. This is a significant decrease compared with 2014 (23 children killed and 65 injured).

214. Schools and education personnel continued to be targeted by armed groups. According to the Ministry of Education, as at November, two teachers and a student had been killed, and a teacher and two students injured, in such attacks. In addition, on 11 September, a bomb attack at the entrance of a community school in Pattani Province injured five students between 3 and 15 years of age; a criminal investigation is continuing. The authorities have provided security escorts to teachers in affected areas.

215. I welcome and encourage the continuing dialogue between the Government and the United Nations country team on strengthening the protection of children in the southern border provinces and on access to those areas to conduct independent verification and reporting of alleged violations against children. In December, during a consultation on the dialogue process, convened by the Internal Security Operation Command for Southern Thailand, civil society organizations and the United Nations raised the need to include children in the agenda of the dialogue process to strengthen their protection in the south, which I strongly support.

## **IV. Recommendations**

**216. I am deeply concerned at the scale and increasing severity of the grave violations that were committed in 2015, including continuing large-scale abduction, and call upon all parties to immediately end and take all measures to prevent grave violations against children.**

**217. I urge Member States to ensure that their engagement in hostilities and responses to all threats to peace and security, including in efforts to counter violent extremism, are conducted in full compliance with international**



humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law. It is unacceptable that the failure to do so has resulted in numerous violations of children's rights. Member States should include specific mitigating measures for the protection of children in their responses, in particular when conducting aerial bombing campaigns or ground operations. I also call upon all parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas, and to consider making a commitment to this effect.

218. I encourage the Member States concerned by the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign to redouble their efforts to fully implement their action plans in the coming year and invite regional organizations, the international community and all relevant partners to provide increased support to those making progress.

219. I urge Member States to hand over children encountered during military operations to civilian child protection actors as soon as possible, in accordance with their international obligations and the best interests of the child. It is crucial that there be appropriate resources for the reintegration of the children separated from parties to conflict, with attention given to psychosocial support and the needs of girls.

220. I call upon Member States to treat children associated with armed groups, including those engaged in violent extremism, as victims entitled to full protection of their human rights and to urgently put in place alternatives to the detention and prosecution of children.

221. I call upon Member States to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of grave violations against children. I encourage the donor community to support national justice systems in conflict and post-conflict situations, including by providing resources and technical capacity.

222. I encourage the Security Council to highlight, in its resolutions and debates, the prevention of displacement, the rights of children displaced by conflict and the obligations of States of origin, transit and destination.

223. I encourage Member States and regional organizations involved in negotiating cessation of hostilities or peace agreements to include specific child protection provisions to maximize opportunities to engage with parties and enhance the protection of children.

224. I call upon the Security Council to continue to request the deployment of dedicated child protection capacity to United Nations peace operations, in order to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and for monitoring and reporting.

## V. Observations

225. I am shocked by the scale of the grave violations committed by parties to conflict in many situations, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Noted herein are the complex environments created by aerial operations by some Member States' armed forces and international coalitions, which killed and maimed many children. State-allied armed groups and militias have also increasingly been used to fight in support of government forces.

In some cases, State-allied armed groups have recruited and used children and committed other violations. Furthermore, I am gravely concerned at the increasing prevalence of deprivation of liberty of children allegedly associated with parties to conflict.

226. Member States should consider, as a matter of priority, changes in policies, military procedures and legislation, where necessary, to prevent violations and protect children. I have previously stated that those who engage in military action resulting in numerous violations of children's rights will find themselves under scrutiny by the United Nations. Accountability remains a key priority and a shared responsibility in order to end and prevent grave violations against children.

227. I reiterate that all parties to conflict identified in the present report should work with my Special Representative to protect children caught up in conflict.

## **VI. Lists in the annexes to the present report**

228. In accordance with Security Council resolution 2225 (2015), Al-Shabaab (Somalia), Boko Haram (Nigeria), LRA (Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo), ISIL (Iraq) and the Taliban (Afghanistan) are listed for abduction of children. Those five groups have committed patterns of abduction of children over a number of years. SPLA (South Sudan) is also listed for abduction as a result of hundreds of violations attributed to it in 2015. Other parties have been added to existing trigger violations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Raia Mutomboki<sup>5</sup> is listed for the recruitment and use of and sexual violence against children. In Nigeria, the Civilian Joint Task Force is listed for the recruitment and use of children, with more than 50 verified cases in 2015. In South Sudan, SPLA is now also listed for sexual violence against children, with more than 100 incidents attributed to government forces. In Yemen, owing to the very large number of violations attributed to the two parties, the Houthis/Ansar Allah and the Saudi Arabia-led coalition are listed for killing and maiming and attacks on schools and hospitals.

229. Other changes in the lists resulted from changes in the respective situations. With the removal of the specific regional section in the report, the Lord's Resistance Army, in addition to being listed for abduction, is now listed in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of, and sexual violence against, children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine" and former elements of the Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais are now referred to as the Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix also known as Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine", while Mayi Mayi Simba "Morgan" is now referred to as Mayi Mayi Simba.

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<sup>5</sup> The main commanders identified within Raia Mutomboki are (Major) Bwansolu Lizaba (alias "Mwami Alexandre"), (Major) Eyadema Bugugu and (Major) Kikuni Savikungi.

## 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, or abduct children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police<sup>a,\*</sup>
2. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Hezb-i-Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces, including the Tora Bora Front, Jama'at al-Da'wa ila al-Qur'an wal-Sunna and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d,c</sup>

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo)<sup>a,c,\*</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda<sup>a,c,d</sup>
4. Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri<sup>a,c,d</sup>
5. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
6. Mayi Mayi Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain "Colonel Janvier"<sup>a</sup>
7. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (UPCP) also known as Mayi Mayi "Lafontaine"<sup>a</sup>
8. Mayi Mayi Simba<sup>a,c</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

<sup>e</sup> Parties that abduct children.

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

9. Mayi Mayi Kata Katanga<sup>a</sup>
10. Nduma Defence of Congo/Cheka<sup>a,b</sup>
11. Mayi Mayi Nyatura<sup>a</sup>
12. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Iraq**

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in Mali**

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army-South<sup>a</sup>
7. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a,\*</sup>
8. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>
3. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,\*</sup>

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army<sup>a,b,c,e,\*</sup>
2. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition<sup>a,b,\*</sup>
3. White Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

1. Government security forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, the Popular Defence Forces and the Sudan Police Forces<sup>a,\*</sup>
2. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-Government militias<sup>a</sup>

4. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
5. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a</sup>
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Free Syrian Army — affiliated groups<sup>a</sup>
3. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and the shabbiha militia<sup>b,c,d</sup>
4. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
5. Nusrah Front<sup>a,b</sup>
6. People's Protection Units<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in Yemen**

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia<sup>a</sup>
3. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces, the First Armoured Division, the Military Police, the special security forces and Republican Guards<sup>a,\*</sup>
4. Pro-Government militias, including the Salafists and Popular Committees<sup>a</sup>
5. Saudi Arabia-led coalition<sup>b,d</sup>

## 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, or abduct children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

1. Civilian Joint Task Force<sup>a</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. Moro Islamic Liberation Front<sup>a,\*</sup>
4. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

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

<sup>a</sup> Parties that recruit and use children.

<sup>b</sup> Parties that kill and maim children.

<sup>c</sup> Parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

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

<sup>e</sup> Parties that abduct children.

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



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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council  
Seventy-second year**

## **Children and armed conflict**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2016, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2225 \(2015\)](#). It highlights trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on violations committed in 2016, as well as related protection concerns. Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and, in line with the resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the report include a list of parties that, in violation of international law, engage in the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel,<sup>1</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. All the information provided in the report has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations where the ability to obtain or verify information was hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. In this regard, the information contained in the report is only indicative and does not always represent the full scale of incidents committed in 2016. In addition, some incidents, in particular instances of recruitment and use of children, abduction of children and sexual violence against children, were verified in 2016 but may have commenced earlier.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of the mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. Accordingly, the present report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and

\* [A/72/150](#).

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Security Council resolutions, “protected personnel” are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



standards for the protection of children affected by conflict are considered to be of such gravity as to warrant international concern. In characterizing the facts described below as grave violations, it is the aim of my Special Representative to bring these situations to the attention of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility in providing effective protection and relief to all affected children, and to encourage them to take remedial measures. However, reference to a situation is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status.

4. The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, at Headquarters and in the field. The preparation of the present also reflects a new approach of enhanced engagement with Member States. Over the past six months, consultations with parties to conflict noted in the report focused on gaining a greater commitment to prevent violations against children. Where significant progress was achieved or ongoing conduct gave rise to concern, this is highlighted in country-specific sections.

## **II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children**

### **A. Overview of the situation of children and armed conflict**

5. While in some country situations the impact of armed conflict on children was low in 2016 and few violations were documented, in other country situations incidents affecting children continued at high levels. In 2016, there were at least 4,000 verified violations by government forces and more than 11,500 verified violations by the range of non-State armed groups.

6. The recruitment and use of children documented in Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic more than doubled compared with 2015. In South Sudan, 1,022 children were recruited and used. Children continued to be exposed to an unacceptable risk of killing and maiming in a number of country situations. In Afghanistan, the United Nations verified 3,512 child casualties, the highest number ever recorded. In Yemen, the United Nations verified 1,340 child casualties. The cross-border activities of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), coupled with responses to that group, also led to significant child casualties, with over 2,000 children documented as killed or maimed in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. The number of child casualties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was also the highest recorded since 2012.

7. In the Lake Chad basin, Boko Haram activities continued to expand from Nigeria into neighbouring countries and attacks against civilians were perpetrated across the region. Sexual violence against girls was prevalent in Nigeria, as well as in other country situations, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic.

### **B. Concerns regarding the increasing disrespect for international law and its impact on children**

8. The ever-changing and complex nature of certain conflicts, as well as continually shifting allegiances, posed challenges for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. In addition, the troubling trends presented above are a clear manifestation of the use of abhorrent tactics of warfare by a number of parties to conflict.



9. Asymmetric attacks by non-State armed groups had a severe impact on children in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, including forcing children to be suicide bombers. The number of violations committed by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, ISIL and the Taliban totalled more than 6,800. Responses to the actions of these groups led to high levels of child casualties, largely owing to their cross-border nature and presence in densely populated areas.

10. The denial of humanitarian access to children was also a troubling trend in certain contexts. Children were trapped in besieged areas or deprived of access to food, water and medical assistance, including vaccines. This is a deeply troubling issue that compounds the direct impact of hostilities and has devastating consequences for children, particularly in their formative stages.

11. The increasing number of non-State armed groups that were used to fight on behalf of Governments as well as ongoing air strikes by multiple entities, including international coalitions, were once again a particular concern. While these actors are bound by applicable obligations under international law, their composition, structure or cross-border nature can hamper the implementation of important safeguards, such as applying precautionary measures, and reduces the clarity of command structures, resulting in violations against children. I urge Member States, acting alone or as part of a coalition, to increase efforts to prevent such violations.

12. Given the number of incidents of killing and maiming of children documented in the present report, I also call for a renewed focus to ensure respect for the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution under international humanitarian law. Specifically, when making operational decisions, armed forces need to take into account that, in situations where armed groups hold territory, a significant number of children may be in close proximity to military positions or may even be used as human shields.

13. Enhanced implementation of these essential principles will also help to prevent the destruction of vital civilian infrastructure. In 2016, in nearly all the countries mentioned in the present report, schools and hospitals were subjected to air strikes as well as ground operations. I urge parties to conflict to be cognizant of the long-term impact of conducting hostilities in heavily populated or residential areas, such as the persistence of explosive remnants of war.

14. The “security screening” of civilians in areas formerly held by non-State armed groups, undertaken by government security forces or pro-government militias, has been an emerging concern related to the deprivation of liberty of children. While it is the responsibility of Governments to ensure the safety of civilians, authorities in conflict-affected areas are urged to use civilian child protection actors to carry out such screening, and to adhere to the principles of last resort and shortest possible time for deprivation of liberty of children, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I also encourage the adoption of protocols for the handover of children associated with, or in areas formerly held by, armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

15. Regarding displacement, disregard for the fundamental principles of international law is a significant incentive for civilians to flee. The unprecedented number of refugee children and internally displaced children is not the result of conflict alone but of the brutality with which parties conduct hostilities, including by directly targeting children. Increased efforts must be made by the international community to enhance the protection of civilians and respect for international humanitarian law, including through ending impunity. These efforts also need to be coupled with conflict resolution and prevention initiatives.

### **C. Positive developments regarding engagement with parties to conflict**

16. Notwithstanding the challenges to ending violations, there has been clear progress to protect children through dialogue and efforts to achieve conflict resolution and prevention. The United Nations has continued to utilize the “Children, not soldiers” campaign and to leverage peace processes to engage with a wide range of parties in order to gain commitments to protect children.

17. In this regard, the Security Council continues to have a crucial role to play to facilitate and encourage dialogue on child protection. When these efforts are fruitful and political space is opened, the protection needs of children can be addressed in negotiations and mainstreamed in peace agreements. The importance of this work has been demonstrated during the reporting period, with the continued direct engagement of the United Nations in support of the talks between the Government of Colombia and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). This important development builds on previous interactions, which have proved that engagement on issues such as the separation, release and handover of children can provide an entry point for difficult or protracted negotiations.

18. Other engagements by the United Nations with non-State armed groups resulted in the signing of two new action plans in Mali and the Sudan, while in the Central African Republic 3,897 children were separated from armed groups and in the Philippines more than 1,850 children were separated from the military wing of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

19. Moving forward, the progress achieved through the “Children, not soldiers” campaign to strengthen national capacity has helped to lay the foundations in a number of countries for strengthened engagement with non-State armed groups. I urge concerned Member States to support engagement with non-State actors on child protection and note that these initiatives can strongly contribute to peacemaking and conflict prevention efforts.

## **III. Information on 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**

#### **Afghanistan**

20. The security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated in 2016, with intensifying armed clashes between the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban affecting children throughout the country. The United Nations verified 3,512 child casualties, the highest number ever recorded in the country and an increase of 24 per cent compared with 2015; almost 1 in 3 civilian casualties was a child casualty.

#### *Grave violations*

21. The United Nations verified 96 cases of child recruitment and use of children, double the number of cases verified in 2015. Armed groups remained the main perpetrators of recruitment and use of children, with 84 verified cases, of which 69 (including 1 girl) were attributed to the Taliban (a threefold increase compared with

2015); 10 to ISIL-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP), while 5 could not be attributed to a specific group. In addition, there were unverified reports of recruitment affecting more than 3,000 children, mostly by armed groups including Taliban and ISIL-KP.

22. A total of 11 verified cases of recruitment and use of children were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, of which 7 were perpetrated by the Afghan National Police; 2 by the Afghan Local Police; 1 by the Afghan National Police and Afghan Local Police at a joint checkpoint; and 1 by the Afghan National Army, while 1 verified case was attributed to pro-government militias. In addition to being used as checkpoint guards or as bodyguards, 3 of the boys were reportedly also sexually abused and exploited for the purposes of *bacha bazi*.

23. As at December, the Government reported that 167 boys were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges, including for association with armed groups. The United Nations remains concerned about the detention of these children in adult detention centres, particularly the large increase in children detained in the maximum security detention facility in Parwan, where 133 juveniles were held in December compared with 53 juveniles held in January.

24. The United Nations verified 3,512 child casualties in Afghanistan in 2016 (923 killed and 2,589 injured). Ground engagements and explosive remnants of war were the leading causes.

25. Of these, 273 children were killed and 674 injured by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 12 were killed and 41 injured by the pro-government militias and 3 were injured in joint operations of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces/pro-government militias. In addition, 87 casualties were attributed to international military forces, 19 were attributed to joint operations involving Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, pro-government militias or international military forces and 19 were attributed to undetermined armed forces. Trends of concern include a doubling of child casualties (200) resulting from air strikes and a 33 per cent increase of child casualties attributed to pro-government militias. In addition, 10 child casualties resulted from cross-border shelling from Pakistan.

26. Armed groups perpetrated 1,447 child casualties, including 1,093 attributed to the Taliban, 100 attributed to ISIL-KP, 4 attributed to Hizb-i Islami, 1 attributed to the Haqqani Network, 7 attributed to two or more groups and 242 to undetermined armed groups.

27. The United Nations verified 7 cases of sexual violence: 5 incidents were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and 2 to the Taliban. These incidents included children being raped at Afghan National Police and Afghan Local Police checkpoints as well as the abduction and forced marriage of a nine-year-old girl by the Taliban. As at early 2017, the United Nations had not received any information regarding actions taken against the perpetrators.

28. Verified attacks on schools and education personnel decreased to 77 incidents, compared with 132 in 2015. Intensive fighting between the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and the Taliban led to schools being hit in crossfire. Of the verified incidents, 51 were attributed to the Taliban, 7 to ISIL-KP and 12 to undetermined armed groups; 23 incidents directly targeted girls' education; 4 incidents were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (3 to the Afghan National Army, 1 undetermined); and 1 incident was jointly attributed to the Afghan National Army and the Taliban.

29. The United Nations verified 118 incidents of attacks on health facilities and personnel, of which 106 were attributed to armed groups, including 84 to the Taliban, 1 to Hizb-i-Islami and 1 to ISIL-KP. The targeting of, and threats against,

polio workers by armed groups remained a particular concern.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 9 incidents were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 1 was attributed to pro-government militias and 1 was jointly attributed to the Afghan National Army and international military forces.

30. The United Nations also documented the military use of 34 schools and 13 health facilities by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. In addition, 1 school was used by pro-government militias. Armed groups were responsible for the military use of 7 schools and 10 health facilities. In a positive development, in 2016 the Ministry of Education promulgated two directives instructing the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces to stop using schools for military purposes.

31. The United Nations verified 10 incidents of abduction affecting 20 boys and 1 girl. A total of 13 children were abducted by armed groups (11 by the Taliban and 2 by ISIL-KP), including on account of their perceived affiliation with the Government; 1 verified incident was attributed to the Afghan National Army and 1 to the Afghan Local Police, affecting 8 children; and in September, the Afghan National Army took 7 boys from a school to pressure the Taliban to release a soldier.

32. Of 155 reported incidents of denial of humanitarian access, 98 were verified, including 46 incidents of threats and 10 incidents of attacks against humanitarian workers. Armed groups perpetrated 94 incidents, including the abduction of humanitarian workers; 2 incidents were also attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

#### *Developments and concerns*

33. I commend the Government for the significant progress made in implementing its action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, notably through the establishment of child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres and the issuance of ministerial directives, including the decision of the National Directorate for Security prohibiting the transfer of children to the detention facility in Parwan.

34. Notwithstanding this progress, I am concerned that children continue to be detained in the detention facility in Parwan, and I call upon the Government to transfer them to juvenile rehabilitation centres in accordance with national directives and in line with international obligations under international law and international standards. Moreover, while important advances to strengthen age assessment processes in Afghan National Police recruitment centres were realized, the lack of corresponding procedures for Afghan Local Police recruitment, as well as the continued reliance on pro-government militias for which no recruitment oversight mechanisms are evident, remain cause for concern.

35. Lastly, regarding killing and maiming, I am deeply concerned about the increase of child casualties and urge the Government and other parties to conflict to take urgent action to better protect children.

#### **Central African Republic**

36. Notwithstanding a relatively stable election process in early 2016, intercommunal violence and conflict persisted across the country. The Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) extended its presence eastwards and opposed the

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<sup>2</sup> According to information provided by the World Health Organization, Afghanistan is one of three remaining polio-endemic countries in the world.

ex-Séléka coalition reunification attempt by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC).

37. Documented violations affecting children decreased by half compared with 2015, notwithstanding an increase in cases of recruitment and use of children. Incidents of violations also grew at the end of 2016 as a result of clashes between ex-Séléka and anti-balaka elements in Kaga Bandoro, as well as among ex-Séléka elements in Ouaka and Haute-Kotto Prefectures.

#### *Grave violations*

38. The number of children recruited and used increased by almost 50 per cent, with 50 boys and 24 girls affected, including some children as young as nine. Cases were attributed to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (56), FPRC (9), anti-balaka elements (4), UPC (4) and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (1).

39. A total of 66 children, including 27 girls, were killed (34) or maimed (32), the youngest being two months old. Child casualties resulted from targeted and stray bullets, stabbing and explosive remnants of war. FPRC, MPC and their coalition were responsible for the killing of 10 and maiming of 13 children; 9 casualties were attributed to anti-balaka elements, 7 each were attributed to UPC and the Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation group, 5 were attributed to armed Fulani elements and 2 were attributed to LRA.

40. The United Nations verified that 55 girls were victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence. Most incidents occurred in the Bangui PK5 neighbourhood, Ouaka prefecture and other areas controlled by armed groups. Perpetrators included anti-balaka elements (13), FPRC (6), MPC (6), PK5 self-defence group in Bangui (5), undetermined ex-Séléka elements (5), LRA (4), the Révolution et justice group (4) and UPC (3). There were also 2 incidents of sexual violence committed by government elements and 1 incident of attempted rape and 2 incidents of rapes committed by the Uganda People's Defence Force.

41. The United Nations verified 8 attacks on schools and protected personnel by LRA, MPC, RPRC, the FPRC/MPC coalition and anti-balaka elements. In October, 3 schoolteachers were killed by elements of the FPRC/MPC coalition who invaded a school in Kaga Bandoro and 1 teacher was stabbed by ex-Séléka elements in Bamou.

42. A total of 22 schools were used by armed groups, who claimed that the facilities were disused. In September, the United Nations issued press releases condemning the practice and, subsequently, MPC and FDPC vacated 6 schools, while 3 other schools were vacated by UPC and FRPC but were later reused. United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) troops used 2 schools in late 2016 and early 2017. Once informed, MINUSCA vacated the schools in accordance with its 2015 directive on the protection of schools and universities.

43. A total of 16 attacks against hospitals and medical personnel were verified, including by anti-balaka elements, LRA, FPRC, UPC, RPRC and the FPRC/MPC coalition. For example, on 12 October, anti-balaka elements invaded a health centre at a site for internally displaced persons in Kaga Bandoro, killed 1 mother and 1 baby and looted medical supplies.

44. The number of verified incidents of abduction almost doubled compared with 2015, with 38 incidents affecting 66 boys and 32 girls. LRA was responsible for the abduction of 84 children, while 43 children escaped from LRA during 2016, some of whom had been held in captivity since 2011. Following United Nations advocacy, anti-balaka elements released 4 Fulani children abducted in 2013.

45. Denial of humanitarian access remained a concern, with 72 verified incidents of killing, looting and threats against humanitarian workers. The majority of cases were attributed to anti-balaka elements, FPRC and other unidentified ex-Séléka elements. Moreover, LRA seemed to target non-governmental organizations for communication equipment. The national police and gendarmerie also arbitrarily arrested 5 humanitarian workers.

*Developments and concerns*

46. I urge MPC and FPRC to expeditiously fulfil their pledges to end and prevent grave violations, identify associated children and negotiate action plans. In this regard, I am encouraged that dialogue with anti-balaka local commanders, the Groupe des patriotes, the Révolution et justice group, RPRC and FPRC resulted in the handover of children.

47. A total of 2,691 boys and 1,206 girls, some as young as eight, were separated from armed groups (70 per cent from anti-balaka elements). The community-based nature of some groups represented a risk of re-recruitment for children and tailored programmes sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were put in place. However, lack of funding and the resumption of violence impeded reintegration efforts.

48. Breaking the cycle of impunity in the Central African Republic must be prioritized and I call on all parties and partners to support accountability efforts, including the work of the Special Criminal Court, as well as through the framework of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation led by the African Union.

49. Sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers, whether under the command of the United Nations or other international arrangements, continued to be a serious protection concern in the Central African Republic (for more information, see [A/71/818](#)).

**Colombia**

50. The year 2016 was marked by the signing of a final peace agreement between the Government and FARC-EP and preparations for dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). Armed violence between the Colombian military and FARC-EP reached its lowest level in 50 years. Since FARC-EP committed itself to ending child recruitment in the context of the peace talks, the overall number of recruitment cases has dropped, although cases by ELN and dissident fronts of FARC-EP were reported towards the end of the year. According to data provided by the Government's Victim Assistance and Comprehensive Reparation Unit, displacement decreased compared with 2015 and affected approximately 70,000 victims, more than 45 per cent of whom were children. Despite a decline in conflict intensity and the withdrawal of FARC-EP, the presence of non-State armed groups, such as ELN and post-demobilization groups, as well as FARC-EP dissident fronts, continued to pose child protection challenges.

*Grave violations*

51. The recruitment and use of 151 boys and 79 girls was verified. Most of these children were recruited before 2016. The majority had been associated with FARC-EP (105) and ELN (102). For example, in February, a 16-year-old boy was handed over to humanitarian workers in Arauca, 11 months after his recruitment by FARC-EP. In October in Cauca, the Colombian military handed over to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute a pregnant girl of seventeen who had escaped from ELN. Other cases were attributed to post-demobilization groups (11) and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (3).

52. The United Nations verified the killing of 6 children and maiming of 2 children by landmines and unexploded ordnances, a sharp decrease following the 2015 demining agreement between the Government and FARC-EP. There were also developments regarding the accountability of Colombian military members who had killed children in the context of the armed conflict.

53. The number of verified cases of sexual violence remained low, with 3 girls affected. The peace agreement indicated that sexual violence-related crimes would not be subject to amnesty. Progress was made in fighting impunity, with a member of the Colombian military sentenced to 14 years of imprisonment in January for raping a 14 year-old girl in Cundinamarca in 2012.

54. The United Nations verified 6 attacks on schools and 3 cases of military use. Damage to schools occurred during crossfire between the Colombian military and ELN and as a result of landmines planted by unknown perpetrators. A school in Arauca was also damaged in an aerial bombing by the Colombian military in September. Allegations of teachers being threatened by armed groups, such as ELN and the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, were also received.

#### *Developments and concerns*

55. The final peace agreement between the Government and FARC-EP included an important provision on the best interests of the child and the primacy of children's rights in all areas of implementation. Moreover, the amnesty law approved by Congress in December included a special provision on children, requiring the State not to prosecute those who were under eighteen when they committed acts in the context of armed conflict.

56. I strongly commend the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP leadership for the signature of the peace agreement. I note that successful implementation requires dedicated resources, sustained political will and effective coordination to address remaining challenges. In particular, I encourage the strengthening of institutional capacity at the local level and expansion of community-level prevention programmes to address the root causes of recruitment and use of children. I also call upon subregional organizations to support these processes.

57. In related developments, a Constitutional Court decision in February confirmed that all children recruited by armed groups, including post-demobilization groups, were victims and as such were entitled to reparations and reintegration support under the law on victims' rights and land restitution.

58. As reflected in my country report on the situation of children in Colombia (S/2016/837), one key achievement was the May agreement between the Government and FARC-EP on the separation of children. In September, 13 children were released by FARC-EP. In addition, presidential decree 1753 was issued in November to ensure that armed groups prepare a list of children for separation. Parties also agreed on the development of a special programme for the restoration of rights, reintegration and reparations for all separated children under eighteen. However, the operational modalities of the special programme remained to be defined as at early 2017.

59. As stipulated in the peace agreement and at the request of the Government, a United Nations political mission of observers was deployed to monitor and verify the bilateral ceasefire and laying down of arms, as part of a tripartite monitoring and verification mechanism. As FARC-EP are laying down arms, I urge parties to continue to identify recruited children, prevent informal demobilization and ensure an adequate child protection response to prevent retaliation or re-recruitment by

other groups, as well as to provide health and education services to the most vulnerable communities.

60. I am concerned at the increasing numbers of cases of the recruitment and use of children attributed to armed groups, in particular ELN, and I call on them to take immediate steps to end this practice. Furthermore, I call upon the negotiating parties to take the issue of child recruitment fully into consideration in the ongoing peace talks between the Government and ELN.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

61. The security situation in the east of the country remained volatile and was marked by military operations by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) against armed groups. The situation deteriorated in North Kivu, with the appearance of new armed groups, as well as violence between the Hutu and Nande communities. There were also clashes among Twa and Luba communities in Tanganyika and between security forces and the Kamuina Nsapu militia in the Kasai provinces. While information regarding violations committed in the Kasai provinces was pending verification in early 2017, the magnitude and nature of allegations received was alarming.

62. A total of 2,334 grave violations were verified. The number of child casualties increased by 75 per cent compared with 2015 and was the highest since 2012.

#### *Grave violations*

63. The United Nations verified the new recruitment and use of 492 children (including 63 girls) by armed groups, 82 per cent of which occurred in North Kivu; 129 of those children were under fifteen at the time of recruitment. The main perpetrators were the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) (141), Nyatura (122), the Mai-Mai Mazembe (44) and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) (40). Almost one third of the children were also victims of other violations during their association. Verification of the number of children recruited and used by militias of the Twa and Luba communities and by the Kamuina Nsapu militia was ongoing as at early 2017. In addition, 28 boys were identified among the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition elements extracted by the United Nations from the Garamba National Park in September.

64. In 2016, FARDC handed over to the United Nations 193 children allegedly associated with armed groups, including from Angenga prison, Mongala province, some of whom had been detained by national authorities for up to one year. As at early 2017, 21 boys were still detained by FARDC, including 3 for more than six months.

65. At least 124 children were killed and 116 maimed, including 41 due to crossfire and 34 due to unexploded ordnances. Mai-Mai Mazembe (49), FDLR (23) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (19) were the main perpetrators. Furthermore, 110 children were allegedly killed and maimed by machete during the Twa-Luba violence in Tanganyika Province, while 20 child casualties were attributed to FARDC and 4 to the Congolese National Police. In December, the outbreak of violence in the Kasai region resulted in the maiming of at least 4 boys by FARDC and in the alleged killing of 1 baby boy by the Kamuina Nsapu militia. More allegations were being verified as at early 2017.

66. The rape of 170 girls and 1 boy was verified, with 87 violations taking place in North Kivu and 50 in Ituri. The main perpetrators among armed groups were FRPI (42), FDLR (14) and Nyatura (10). FARDC was responsible for 64 cases,



including 1 boy in detention, the Congolese National Police for 12 cases and the Agence nationale de renseignement for 1 case.

67. A total of 68 attacks on schools (51) and hospitals (17) were verified, a significant increase compared with 2015. Perpetrators included Twa militia (13), ADF (8), Mai-Mai Simba (4), Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki (4) and FRPI (3). In Butembo in October, an FARDC rocket hit a school and killed 2 girls and 2 teachers and injured 4 children. In addition, 51 schools and a health centre were allegedly damaged by militias from the Twa and Luba communities. The verification of allegations of a high number of attacks on schools in the Kasai region by the Kamuina Nsapu militia and FARDC was ongoing as at early 2017.

68. A total of 19 schools and 2 hospitals were used for up to several weeks by FARDC (14), the Congolese National Police (1) and armed groups (6) in North Kivu, Tanganyika and South Kivu.

69. A total of 137 boys and 56 girls were abducted, mostly by FDLR (29), FRPI (26), LRA (25), ADF (23) and Nyatura (13), while 4 abductions, including 3 for sexual purposes, were attributed to FARDC. At least 114 children were abducted for recruitment purposes.

70. In terms of denial of humanitarian access, 2 threats against humanitarian workers by Nduma Défense du Congo-Rénové and the Agence nationale de renseignement were verified. In addition, in North and South Kivu, at least 4 humanitarian workers lost their lives and 33 were kidnapped.

#### *Developments and concerns*

71. I commend the Government's continued and strong commitment to the action plan. While efforts need to be sustained to end and prevent sexual violence by FARDC and to ensure accountability for perpetrators of grave violations, I welcome the significant steps taken to fulfil the provisions of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. This includes the establishment of an additional joint technical working group, the validation of standard operating procedures for age verification, the adoption of a Ministry of Defence directive for the dissemination of those standard operating procedures within FARDC and the screening of new recruits. I am encouraged that, for the second year in a row, no new case of child recruitment and use by FARDC was documented. In terms of accountability, the United Nations documented the arrest of at least 15 FARDC and 5 Congolese National Police officers, including for child recruitment and use of children offences before 2016, while 41 individuals (23 FARDC, 11 Congolese National Police, 1 Mouvement du 23 mars and 6 Nyatura) received sentences ranging from three years of imprisonment to the death penalty for sexual violence against children. The Government indicated that perpetrators of sexual violence against children were sentenced in 129 instances.

72. In July, the Government also endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. Lastly, the Government provided multisectoral assistance to child victims of recruitment and use and child survivors of sexual violence.

73. Despite these advances, I am concerned by the reported levels of killing and maiming of children attributed to FARDC, particularly in the Kasai region where there were allegations of the disproportionate use of force, and I urge the Government to take immediate action to prevent child casualties and ensure accountability for any criminal acts, in accordance with its obligations under international law.

74. The United Nations provided technical support and screened more than 7,512 members of FARDC, the Congolese National Police, the Direction générale

de migration and the Agence nationale de renseignement, and separated 191 children in recruitment centres during the screening of new recruits. Awareness-raising by the United Nations and military pressure also contributed to the separation of 1,662 children from armed groups (177 girls), including from FDLR (585), Nyatura (354), FRPI (115) and Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki (93). In 2016, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain signed a deed of commitment to protect children in collaboration with the non-governmental organization Geneva Call. However, the Alliance had not signed an action plan with the United Nations as at early 2017.

## **Iraq**

75. Conflict intensified throughout 2016, particularly in Anbar and Ninewa Governorates, with large-scale operations to retake territory from ISIL in Fallujah and Mosul. In addition, suicide and other asymmetric attacks by armed groups had a significant impact on children.

### *Grave violations*

76. At least 168 boys were reportedly recruited and used by parties to the conflict, including ISIL, the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdish Workers Party and the popular mobilization forces. The United Nations verified 114 cases: 40 verified cases were attributed to ISIL in Anbar, Babil, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk and Ningwa, with 28 boys recruited as fighters, 11 as suicide bombers and 1 as a spy. Children were also allegedly used as human shields by ISIL. A total of 57 children were recruited and used by groups operating under the umbrella of the popular mobilization forces, most of whom received military training and were deployed for combat, while 12 children were recruited by tribal mobilization groups, including from internally displaced persons camps. Five boys were also recruited by the People's Defence Forces

77. As at December, at least 463 children, including 172 in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, remained in detention on national security-related charges, including association with armed groups. There have been allegations of detention and ill-treatment of children by security forces during the screening of civilians from areas formerly held by ISIL and the Government of Iraq requested United Nations assistance to undertake training to prevent abuse of children during screening.

78. The killing and maiming of children remained the most prevalent grave violation. The United Nations recorded 257 incidents, resulting in 834 child casualties of which 138 were verified, resulting in the killing of 229 children (145 boys, 58 girls, 26 sex unknown) and injuries to 181 children (129 boys, 44 girls, 8 sex unknown). ISIL was responsible for at least 13 incidents of targeted attacks against children, including torture. A total of 66 verified incidents resulted from the use of improvised explosive devices, particularly by ISIL, while public areas, security forces and Shia ceremonies were also targeted: 32 incidents of killing and maiming of children were attributed to Iraqi security forces and the international counter-ISIL coalition (30), the Peshmerga (1) and the popular mobilization forces (1), resulting from mortars and rocket attacks, air strikes and artillery shelling. As at early 2017, the Government was working with the United Nations Mine Action Service to remove mines from areas previously under the control of ISIL.

79. One incident of sexual violence was verified, involving a 17-year-old boy who was raped by a member of an unidentified armed group. While concerns of widespread sexual violence perpetrated by ISIL persisted, the violation remained underreported.

80. A total of 10 attacks on schools and education personnel were verified: 2 schools were damaged by air strikes in Mosul, 1 of which was used by ISIL; 3 other schools were damaged during fighting in Kirkuk and Ningwa; 4 teachers were abducted, killed or injured; and teachers were threatened by ISIL in at least 1 other incident. Attacks on 8 health facilities and personnel were verified: 2 hospitals were damaged by air strikes in Ningwa; 3 by were damaged by mortars in Anbar; and medical personnel were targeted in 3 incidents in Diyala and Salah al-Din. Of the 18 verified attacks on education and health facilities and personnel, 8 were attributed to ISIL, 3 to air strikes by Iraqi or international forces and 1 to the popular mobilization forces, while 6 could not be attributed. A further 18 attacks were recorded but could not be verified.

81. The United Nations documented 41 incidents of the military use of schools and hospitals: 34 schools were used by ISIL as military positions, depots and training facilities in Anbar, Kirkuk and Ningwa; 3 schools were used by Iraqi security forces as screening centres in Ningwa; 1 school was used by the popular mobilization forces in Ningwa; and 2 hospitals were reportedly used by ISIL as military positions.

82. The United Nations verified 8 incidents of abduction involving 9 boys and 3 girls: 7 cases were attributed to ISIL (6 boys in Ningwa and 1 girl in Salah al-Din), while the perpetrators of the remaining cases in Diyala, Kerbala and Salah al-Din could not be confirmed. A further 7 incidents of abduction involving 26 children were reported but could not be verified. Moreover, as at 31 December, it is believed that approximately 1,700 women and children remained ISIL captives.

83. A total of 3 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children were verified: in 1 case in Ningwa, a boy died when ISIL denied him access to critical medical assistance. In addition, it was reported that screening processes for civilians leaving areas formerly held by ISIL in Ningwa and Salah al-Din were used to deny access of children to assistance.

#### *Developments and concerns*

84. The continued level of violations by ISIL was gravely disturbing. I am also gravely concerned by the recruitment and use of children by pro-government forces. In this regard, the United Nations raised concerns with the Government and the Kurdistan region of Iraq authorities regarding the recruitment and use of children by the popular mobilization forces. Given that these forces formally came under the purview of the Government at the end of 2016, I urge the authorities to ensure that recruitment is in line with Law No. 3/2010, article 30 (2), to establish appropriate age verification mechanisms and separate any children currently in the ranks, and to pursue accountability for the recruitment and use of children and other violations against children.

#### **Israel and State of Palestine**

85. The first half of 2016 was marked by continued levels of violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, with clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces and a number of attacks against Israelis. Children in Israel and the State of Palestine continued to be affected by violence, security responses and the prevailing situation of military occupation and closure.

#### *Grave violations*

86. The United Nations did not receive reports of the recruitment and use of children in 2016; however, this violation is difficult to document, particularly in Gaza.

87. An increasing number of children from the West Bank were detained by Israeli forces for alleged security violations. Monthly figures provided by the Israel Prison Service indicated that the numbers of Palestinian children in military detention reached the highest levels recorded since 2010, with 444 children (including 15 girls) detained as at the end of March, although this number had decreased to 271 as at September. In East Jerusalem, the United Nations documented 712 cases of Palestinian children detained for security-related offences, including 15 children under twelve, which is the age of criminal responsibility. Following the resumption of the administrative detention of Palestinian children by Israeli authorities in 2015, 10 cases were documented in 2016. The United Nations also documented a total of 185 incidents of ill-treatment of children (175 boys, 10 girls) by Israeli forces during arrests and detention.

88. A total of 36 children (35 Palestinian boys, 1 Israeli girl) were killed and 900 children (887 Palestinian, 13 Israeli) were injured, predominantly in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

89. In the West Bank, 31 Palestinian boys were killed and all but 1 of the killings were attributed to Israeli forces: 15 children were killed while allegedly perpetrating stabbing attacks, 3 while carrying out stabbing attacks, 11 during military and search operations and 1 during demonstrations. Frequent use of live ammunition was documented, killing 30 Palestinian children. A number of cases raise concerns about excessive use of force. For example, on 20 September, an eyewitness stated that Israeli forces continued shooting at a sixteen-year-old boy in Bani Na'im after he had fallen to the ground following initial gunshots to his legs.

90. A total of 857 Palestinian children (797 boys, 60 girls) were injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem: 465 children were injured by Israeli forces during arrest operations or demonstrations, 356 during clashes and 4 in response to stabbing or alleged stabbing attacks. In addition, 29 Palestinian children were injured by Israeli settlers and 3 by unexploded ordnances.

91. In the Qiryat Arba' settlement, 1 thirteen-year-old Israeli girl was stabbed to death by 1 seventeen-year-old Palestinian boy who was subsequently killed by an Israeli settler, while in the West Bank 11 Israeli children were injured: 10 children were injured by Palestinian civilians in incidents of stone-throwing (8) and gunfire (2) towards vehicles and 1 child was injured by shrapnel from live ammunition fired by Israeli forces.

92. In Gaza, 3 boys were killed by Israeli forces and 30 children (27 boys, 3 girls) were injured: 25 children were injured by Israeli forces, 4 by unexploded ordnances and 1 by crossfire. On 12 March, 1 six-year-old boy and 1 nine-year-old boy were killed and their twelve-year-old brother was injured when Israeli security forces fired missiles in response to rocket fire into Israel at a site reportedly used by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades adjacent to their home in Baht Lahya.

93. In Israel, after he reportedly stabbed and injured an Israeli civilian, 1 seventeen-year-old Palestinian boy was killed in Petah Tiqua on 8 March. At least 2 Israeli children were injured in attacks by Palestinians conducted in Israel, including in a suicide attack on a bus in West Jerusalem on 18 April, which Hamas praised.

94. In the West Bank, the United Nations documented 74 incidents of attacks on schools or protected persons in the context of operations by Israeli security forces, clashes in and around schools or closure of schools as a result of attacks, with over 8,000 students affected, particularly in Bethlehem, Hebron, Nablus and Ramallah Governorates. Incidents resulted in damage to 3 schools, injury and physical assault of students: 68 incidents were attributed to Israeli security forces and 6 to Israeli

settlers. The United Nations also documented the disruption of access to education resulting from the closure of schools, search operations, detention of students and school personnel, as well as delays to the schedules of students and teachers caused by checkpoints.

95. The United Nations documented the confiscation of a donor-funded mobile health clinic by the Israeli authorities in December, which affected access to health-care services for 93 children in the Markez and Halawah communities in Hebron Governorate. In 2016, 26 per cent of child applications to cross the Erez checkpoint out of Gaza for medical treatment were delayed, affecting 2,490 children (1,026 girls, 1,464 boys), and 1 per cent were denied, affecting 87 children, representing the highest percentage of delayed and denied applications since 2010.

#### *Developments and concerns*

96. I note with grave concern the ongoing killing and maiming of children in Israel and the State of Palestine and voice my preoccupation regarding the potential recruitment and use of children in Gaza. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international law in order to protect children. I also call upon the Government of Israel to reconsider its imposition of administrative detention for children and to prioritize alternatives to detention in line with international juvenile justice principles contained in, inter alia, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules).

#### **Lebanon**

97. Heavy clashes in the north Bīqā' valley and the Ein El-Helweh Palestine refugee camp, bomb attacks and sporadic violence in border areas continued to have an impact on children.

#### *Grave violations*

98. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, with several dozen uniformed boys seen with arms in Aرسال, north Bīqā' valley. Armed groups, including ISIL and the Nusrah Front (also known as Jabhat Fath al-Sham) were active on the outskirts of Aرسال in the reporting period. Consistent with my previous reports, boys were reportedly trafficked to fight in the Syrian Arab Republic. Children from northern Baalbek-Hermel Governorate reportedly joined Hizbullah. Other children, mostly from Wadi Khalid in Akkar or Aرسال, allegedly joined ISIL. A total of 18 children, including 4 children from twelve to fourteen years old, were also seen wearing uniforms and, in most cases, holding weapons during patrols or celebrations in 2 Palestine refugee camps in southern Lebanon.

99. Children continue to be held in pretrial detention under military jurisdiction on charges relating to terrorism or national security, following their alleged association with armed groups in Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic: 10 boys were arrested during the reporting period and 6 remained in detention as at December, along with 3 others detained before 2016.

100. The United Nations verified 8 child casualties (4 boys, 4 girls) caused by stray bullets, shrapnel during clashes and a car bomb. The majority of cases were documented in Bekaa Governorate.

101. Two United Nations schools were damaged during violence between armed factions in Ein el-Helweh Palestine refugee camp and 1 school in Beirut was damaged

by a car bomb explosion, while 4 cases of attacks on health services were verified in Baalbek-Hermel Governorate (3) and the Ein el-Helweh refugee camp (1). On 27 June, 1 medical professional was killed and 1 ambulance was destroyed in multiple suicide attacks on the village of al-Qaa in northern Bīqa'.

102. Following repeated armed clashes in the Ein el-Helweh camp, 19 United Nations schools suspended classes for 1 to 10 days, with over 10,000 students affected, while 2 United Nations health centres also suspended activities for 11 to 13 days.

#### *Developments and concerns*

103. In the light of the continued recruitment and use of children by armed groups and the continued detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, I reiterate my call for the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to use the detention of children as a last resort, pursuant to international juvenile justice standards.

#### **Libya**

104. Conflict continued throughout Libya, particularly around Benghazi, Sabha, Sirte and Tripoli. In May, forces affiliated with the Presidency Council began an offensive to retake Sirte from ISIL, which lasted until early December. Monitoring continued to be restricted by insecurity, with the majority of United Nations staff remaining located outside Libya.

#### *Grave violations*

105. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups was documented. Groups pledging allegiance to ISIL reportedly ran a training camp for children and adolescents south of Sirte. On 4 January, a 15-year-old boy from Tripoli was reportedly used by ISIL to conduct a suicide attack in Sidra'. Children were also deprived of liberty as a result of their alleged association with parties to conflict.

106. At least 51 children were reportedly killed and 68 injured by air strikes, shelling, small arms fire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. The highest number of casualties was documented in Benghazi. The United Nations documented a pattern of incidents involving the use of indiscriminate weapons in heavily populated or residential areas.

107. The United Nations documented 14 incidents of attacks against health facilities or personnel across Libya. Shelling, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and air strikes killed at least 4 health-care personnel, damaged medical facilities and caused their closure. The abduction of 4 nurses to treat fighters was also documented.

108. The abduction of children continued to be reported, particularly in western Libya. The United Nations verified incidents affecting at least 3 boys and 1 girl. For example, on 4 November, the body of 1 four-year-old girl was found in the al-Ma'mura neighbourhood of Warshafanah, 15 days after she was abducted by an unidentified armed group.

109. The United Nations documented 1 incident of denial of humanitarian access: in August, food assistance for families in Darnah was reportedly confiscated by local authorities and redirected to Ajdabiya.

*Developments and concerns*

110. I am concerned about the impact of the volatile security situation on children in Libya. In this regard, I welcome the agreement concluded between the municipality of Zintan and the United Nations for the release and reintegration of children involved in armed conflict and call for support for similar efforts throughout Libya.

**Mali**

111. The lack of State authority in northern regions led to heightened security threats, which expanded to central regions and caused child casualties and displacement. Progress in the implementation of the 2015 peace accord was stalled as fighting resumed in July between signatory armed groups. The reporting period was also marked by attacks and threats against education personnel, intercommunal tensions and an increase in asymmetric attacks against national and international forces.

*Grave violations*

112. The presence of children among armed groups remained an issue of concern, with 442 cases of recruitment and use of children, of which 78 were verified and attributed to the Platform coalition of armed groups (54), Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (18) and Al Mourabitoun (3). This represents an increase compared with the 27 cases verified in 2015, which may be attributed to both improved monitoring and renewed fighting. The increase also affected girls. For example, 14 girls were used in support roles by the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA)/the Platform coalition of armed groups in Gao region. In some instances, signatory armed groups inflated their numbers with children to benefit from disarmament, demobilization and reintegration packages. In the context of registration and screening of Platform coalition of armed groups and CMA combatants in Gao in December to establish mixed patrols, 10 children were identified but had still not been handed over to child protection actors as at early 2017.

113. As at December, 5 of 13 children arrested and detained on security charges in 2016 remained in detention. The United Nations continued advocacy with the national authorities to ensure their release in line with the handover protocol signed in 2013.

114. The United Nations verified the killing of 12 children and the maiming of 35 children during rocket attacks and crossfire, as well as in improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war incidents. Almost one third of the victims were injured in Kidal and its vicinity during clashes between the Platform coalition of armed groups and CMA in July and August.

115. Rape and other forms of sexual violence continued to be underreported: 6 cases were documented, of which 2 were verified, including 1 attempted rape of a seven-year-old girl by a member of the Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad-Platform coalition of armed groups and the attempted rape of 1 four-year-old girl by an alleged element of Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'ouest. The 4 unverified cases concerned 4 girls associated with GATIA in the Gao region.

116. A total of 6 attacks and threats of attacks on schools and protected personnel and 9 attacks against medical personnel were verified in Ménaka, Mopti and Timbuktu, none of which could be attributed. On 4 April, an attack by armed individuals against a medical team from Timbuktu led to the suspension of a vaccination campaign. Attacks and threats against educational staff, students and

parents were prevalent, particularly in Mopti region. On 11 July, the director of a school was killed by armed elements allegedly hostile to “Western education” and State authorities. As at December, 367 schools remained closed in the conflict-affected regions.

117. In addition, 14 schools were militarily used by armed groups in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, of which 2 were vacated by CMA and CMA/Haut Conseil pour l’unité de l’Azawad. The military use of 8 schools by the Platform coalition of armed groups and CMA in Gao and Timbuktu regions was under verification as at March 2017, while 1 facility used by the Malian defence and security forces in Ménaka region was vacated in early 2017.

118. A total of 7 boys from seven to fifteen years old were abducted in 5 verified incidents, 2 of which were perpetrated by CMA: 4 of the incidents, affecting 5 boys including a relative of a CMA commander, occurred in Kidal. In October, 2 other boys under the age of ten, sons of a prominent figure in the peace process, were abducted in Bamako and released three weeks later.

119. A total of 43 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, including armed robbery, carjacking and kidnapping of humanitarian workers, none of which could be attributed. At least 2 entities were forced to temporarily suspend their humanitarian programmes in Mopti and Timbuktu regions.

#### *Developments and concerns*

120. I welcome the signature by CMA of an action plan with the United Nations in March 2017 to end and prevent grave violations against children, which I urge them to swiftly implement. Moreover, in June, the Platform coalition of armed groups signed a unilateral communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence. However, I am seriously concerned about the high level of cases of recruitment and use of children attributed to the Platform coalition of armed groups, including specifically to GATIA, and I urge the leadership to take immediate action and work with the United Nations to release children and end this practice.

121. In December, following United Nations advocacy, a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme with child protection provisions was adopted and a senior defence representative was appointed for women and child protection issues within the newly established national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration commission. I encourage all those involved in the cantonment process to implement age assessment mechanisms and ensure that children are identified and transferred to child protection actors. I further encourage subregional organizations to support these efforts.

#### **Myanmar**

122. Despite the ongoing peace process between the Government and a number of armed groups, conflict intensified in Kachin and Shan States, while sporadic skirmishes continued in Kayin State and other parts of the south-east.

123. There were also significant outbreaks of violence affecting the Rohingya community in Rakhine State, with the resumption of fighting between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw and military operations following separate attacks on border guard posts on 9 October. While the United Nations was not been granted access to the affected areas, accounts of serious human rights violations by government security forces, including killing and maiming of children and sexual violence against children, have been documented.



*Grave violations*

124. The United Nations received 489 reports of the recruitment and use of children and verified 127 cases (123 boys, 4 girls), 21 of which occurred in 2016: 2 verified cases of use of children in the current reporting period were attributed to the Tatmadaw and 4 cases of recruitment of children were under joint review as at early 2017. An additional 99 verified cases were attributed to the Tatmadaw but occurred before 2016, while 17 verified cases were attributed to armed groups, comprising the Kayan New Land Party (KNLP) (10) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (7).

125. The United Nations documented 9 suspected cases of children held in military detention for being absent without leave from the army: following notification, the Tatmadaw returned them to their regiments pending age verification. In addition, 1 child used as a cook by the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army was held in military detention following his capture and a number of children as young as 10 have been held by the Border Guard Police in northern Rakhine State on charges of “unlawful association” since November 2016, while 1 thirteen-year old boy died in detention in February 2017.

126. The United Nations documented 51 incidents of killing and maiming of children, of which 19 were verified (6 children killed, 13 injured): 6 verified incidents were attributed to the Tatmadaw, including 2 targeted killings, and 2 incidents each were attributed to KIA and Ta’ang National Liberation Army, and 1 to the Arakan Army. At least 8 cases of the killing of children by security forces in Rakhine State were also documented.

127. The United Nations verified 2 cases of sexual violence against 2 girls (four and nine years old) by Tatmadaw soldiers. Both cases were referred to civilian courts and judicial proceedings were initiated. In addition, at least 7 cases of sexual violence were documented against Rohingya girls as young as eleven during military operations in northern Rakhine State.

128. A total of 6 incidents of attacks on schools were reported, of which 2 could be verified: 1 incident was attributed to the Tatmadaw and 1 incident was jointly attributed to the Tatmadaw and the KIA during crossfire, resulting in the injury of 1 teacher. In addition, 2 cases of military use of schools by the Tatmadaw were documented in Kachin and Rakhine States.

129. The United Nations received 30 reports of the abduction of children, an increase compared with 2015. Verified incidents involved 20 children and were attributed to KIA (5), KNLP (1) and the Tatmadaw (1).

130. Humanitarian access to conflict-affected areas decreased significantly in 2016, especially in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine States, in particular following the suspension in October of all access to Rakhine State. In August, the Tatmadaw prevented the delivery of medicine to camps for internally displaced persons in eastern Kachin State.

*Developments and concerns*

131. I note the steps taken by the Government towards implementing its action plan, including through issuance of military directives; training on age assessment guidelines; accountability measures taken against 440 military personnel, including 86 officers; and the release of 101 children and youth from the Tatmadaw in 2016. I urge the Government to accelerate the joint age verification process to allow for the expeditious release of child recruits, to continue collaboration on strengthening accountability mechanisms for all perpetrators of grave violations and to finalize all aspects of the joint action plan. In this regard, I encourage the swift passage of the

revised Child Law, which includes a chapter on children and armed conflict and corresponding penalties.

132. During 2016, the United Nations engaged with all armed groups listed in the annexes to the present report with a view to ending and preventing violations against children and encouraging the development of action plans. I urge the Government to facilitate the signature of action plans with armed groups, especially those with which they have engaged in peace talks.

### **Somalia**

133. The security situation remained highly volatile, with continued attacks by Al-Shabaab on the Somali security forces, government officials and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), as well as inter-clan clashes. The Somali National Army and AMISOM continued joint offensives against Al-Shabaab. Military forces of Ethiopia, Kenya and the United States of America also conducted operations against the group.

#### *Grave violations*

134. The number of children recruited and used doubled (1,915) compared with 2015 as a result of a twofold increase in cases attributed to Al-Shabaab (1,206). In September, Al-Shabaab compelled elders in the Galguduud region to persuade children to join the group, leading to the recruitment of 100 boys. Children were also recruited and used by clan militias (447), the Somali National Army (182) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (78). The use of 17 children by AMISOM was documented.

135. Regarding detention, 386 children were held by the Government for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab. As mentioned in my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia (S/2016/1098), children were captured or arrested during military and security operations, including mass security sweeps or house searches. In May, the Galmudug Interim Administration handed over to child protection actors 44 children allegedly associated with Al-Shabaab whom the group had captured in March. In October, the Puntland authorities also handed over 26 children from twelve to fourteen years old.

136. The Puntland authorities treated as adults 40 other captured children from fifteen to seventeen years old, in contravention of the obligations of Somalia under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; they were given lengthy sentences of 10 to 20 years' imprisonment or even sentenced to death. In January 2017, after sustained high-level United Nations advocacy, the death sentences were commuted to 20 years of imprisonment: at the time of preparation of the present report, those children had been handed over to child protection actors and the United Nations continued to engage with authorities on the legal status of the released children, whose prison sentences remained in effect.

137. A total of 1,121 children were killed and maimed by unknown armed elements (482), Al-Shabaab (290), the Somali National Army (146), clan militias (143), Puntland armed forces (5) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (1). Most child casualties resulted from crossfire during military operations, mortar shelling, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. Among the children killed by Al-Shabaab, at least 30 were publicly executed on suspicion of spying. Child casualties attributed to AMISOM (42) primarily occurred in operations against Al-Shabaab or in indiscriminate fire responding to attacks. Child casualties also resulted from air strikes by the Kenyan defence forces (11) and United States armed forces (1).

138. The United Nations verified incidents of sexual violence affecting 310 girls and 1 boy, attributed to unknown armed elements (96), clan militias (94), the Somali National Army (81), Al-Shabaab (33), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (3) and Puntland armed forces (1), while 3 cases were attributed to AMISOM. Rape and forced marriage often occurred in the context of abductions; for example, on 16 June, a sixteen-year-old girl, abducted from her house, was gang raped by 5 Somali National Army soldiers in the Bakool region.

139. Attacks on 46 schools and 10 hospitals were verified. Attacks on schools were attributed to Al-Shabaab (31), the Somali National Army (9), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a and clan militias (2 each) and AMISOM (1). Attacks on hospitals were attributed to Al-Shabaab (5) and clan militias (4). In addition, 1 school and 1 hospital were used by the Somali National Army and 1 health centre by Al-Shabaab. In Gedo region, Ceel Adde secondary school was vacated by AMISOM after being used for six days in January.

140. The number of abductions spiked compared with 2015: 950 children were abducted, 87 per cent of them by Al-Shabaab (827) and most of the others by clan militias (113). Of the cases involving Al-Shabaab, 548 children were abducted for recruitment purposes.

141. Incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children were attributed to clan militias (10), Al-Shabaab (5), the Somali National Army (2) and Puntland armed forces (1). For example, in April in Gedo region, Al-Shabaab ambushed a truck belonging to a non-governmental organization in Ced Adde and stole food, including child nutrition products.

#### *Developments and concerns*

142. I welcome the release of children who had been detained for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab in Puntland and Galmudug and I urge that the legal status of the children released be swiftly resolved. Regarding reintegration, the United Nations supported 604 separated children and provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Defence Child Protection Unit. On 6 January, the Somali National Army Chief of the Defence Forces issued a general staff order stating that an individual must be at least eighteen to enlist. I urge subregional organizations to work with my Special Representative to develop a regional dimension for child protection efforts in Somalia.

143. During her visit to Somalia in July 2016, my Special Representative urged the authorities to implement their 2012 action plans signed with the United Nations and to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims, with the best interests of the child and international protection standards as guiding principles. My Special Representative also raised concerns with AMISOM about grave violations.

#### **South Sudan**

144. The security situation deteriorated following clashes in Juba in July between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition, as well as the subsequent split within the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition. Overall in 2016, the level of violations against children remained at a similar level to that of 2015 and displacement continued at high levels.

*Grave violations*

145. The United Nations verified 169 incidents of recruitment and use affecting at least 1,022 children, 61 per cent of which were attributed to SPLA (574) and other government security forces (50). Children were also recruited and used by the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (115), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition allied with Taban Deng Gai (207), the South Sudan Democratic Army-Cobra Faction (SSDA-CF) (32), Johnson Olony's armed group (25), the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (16) and the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) (3). Children were observed wearing military uniforms and carrying weapons in the greater Upper Nile, Equatoria and Bahr el-Ghazal regions. The United Nations verified reports of children transported by SPLA from Jonglei, Lakes and Unity states to other parts of the country for military training and deployment. According to first-hand testimony, in one incident 100 boys were affected, while 40 boys previously released by SSDA-CF were recruited again but following United Nations advocacy all but two were released again.

146. A total of 101 incidents of killing and maiming of children, affecting 108 and 71 children, respectively, were verified, mostly in Western Bahr el-Ghazal and Central Equatoria. Children were killed and maimed by SPLA (104), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (6), the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition allied to Taban Deng Gai (3) and the South Sudan National Police Service (3). Children were also killed and maimed by crossfire and unexploded ordnances (63). Some were deliberately fired at while fleeing SPLA, including at close range.

147. The United Nations verified 142 cases of sexual violence against girls, including 26 who were gang-raped. Most cases were documented in Unity and Equatoria regions and were attributed to SPLA (114), South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (15), other government security forces (7) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (6). After the outbreak of conflict in Juba in July, girls were raped as they left the protection of civilian sites or at checkpoints.

148. Attacks on 17 schools and hospitals were reported, including in protection of civilian sites, carried out by SPLA (10) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (3).

149. Attacks on 28 health facilities and 2 medical personnel were verified, with the majority of cases attributed to SPLA (19) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (5). More than two thirds of the attacks occurred in the Equatoria region.

150. A total of 21 schools were newly used for military purposes, with the majority of cases attributed to SPLA (10) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (7).

151. A total of 17 incidents of abduction were verified, affecting approximately 180 children mostly in Unity and Western Equatoria, with the majority attributed to SPLA, SSPPF and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition. In 1 large-scale incident in Unity, approximately 100 boys as young as fourteen were abducted by SPLA for recruitment purposes and transferred to Juba for military training.

152. A total of 445 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, almost twice as many as in 2015. Most incidents were attributed to SPLA (182) and government security forces and institutions (179), followed by the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (54). Incidents included attacks on personnel and compounds, looting of warehouses and humanitarian assets, and bureaucratic constraints and restriction of movement. In a particularly troubling example in

Upper Nile in May, SPLA fired on humanitarian workers attempting to reach populations in need.

*Developments and concerns*

153. The scale of violations affecting children in South Sudan continued to be alarming. I urge leaders to abide by their responsibilities to protect children, I call upon all parties to cooperate with the African Union in the implementation of the peace agreement and I encourage the inclusion of child protection concerns in the national dialogue.

154. I am concerned that the implementation of the action plan by SPLA and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition has stalled as a result of the ongoing conflict. In this regard, I call upon these parties to resume the implementation of their action plans and note that the action plan for the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition applies equally to any splinter elements. It is encouraging, however, that following United Nations advocacy, 32 boys in Unity, were released by SPLA (25) and the South Sudan National Wildlife Service (7). In Jonglei, 148 boys were released, including 3 associated with SPLA, 120 associated with SSSA-CF and 25 associated with the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition.

**Sudan**

155. Hostilities continued in early 2016 but reduced in the second half of the year. In Darfur, military operations by the Government focused on dislodging the Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid from Jebel Mara. In June, the Government announced a unilateral ceasefire in Darfur although skirmishes continued. At the same time, there were confrontations between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan States. In April and June, respectively, SPLM-N and the Government announced ceasefires, which were still in place as at early 2017; however, hostilities continued sporadically and access for the United Nations to areas under the control of SPLM-N remained constrained. A detailed account of the effects of armed conflict on children is available in my country report ([S/2017/191](#)).

*Grave violations: Darfur*

156. While allegations regarding the recruitment and use of 5 boys were received, only 1 was verified and attributed to the former Liberation and Justice Movement in Central Darfur.

157. A total of 109 incidents of killing and maiming affecting 199 children (85 killed, 114 maimed) were verified, resulting mostly from shooting (94), unexploded ordnances (55) and aerial bombardments (42): these were attributed to government forces (39) (Sudanese Armed Forces, rapid support forces, national police forces, popular defence forces, National Intelligence and Security Service), pro-government militias (7) and unidentified armed men (37), while 24 incidents related to unexploded ordnances.

158. Incidents of rape affecting 94 girls and 1 boy were verified and attributed to government forces (20) (Sudanese Armed Forces, rapid support forces, Central Reserve Police, national police forces, pro-government militias (18) and the Sudan-Chad Joint Forces (1). Unidentified armed men were responsible for 30 incidents. While efforts were made by the Government to address impunity for crimes of sexual violence against children, only 9 cases resulted in the arrest and sentencing of perpetrators.

159. A total of 20 schools and 6 hospitals were attacked, destroyed and/or looted by the Sudanese Armed Forces (15), the rapid support forces (1), tribal militias (2) and unidentified armed men (8), most as a result of aerial bombardments in Jebel Marra; 3 schools in Central Darfur were also reportedly used by the Sudanese Armed Forces in 2016.

160. A total of 18 incidents of abduction affecting 15 boys and 6 girls were verified and attributed to pro-government militias (10), the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and unidentified armed men (6).

161. A total of 14 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, such as attacks on humanitarian workers and bureaucratic constraints and restriction of movement, were verified, including 11 by the Sudanese Armed Forces and 1 by the Sudanese Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid. Access continued to be severely impeded, particularly in eastern Jebel Marra.

*Grave violations: Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

162. The United Nations received allegations of recruitment and use of boys between twelve and seventeen years old by government forces, particularly in Blue Nile, and by the SPLM-N in the greater Upper Nile region, South Sudan, although no cases could be verified.

163. The killing (2) and maiming (6) of 6 boys and 2 girls was verified and attributed to SPLM-N (2), the Sudanese Armed Forces (1) and the rapid support forces (1); 2 children were also affected by unexploded ordnances and 2 children were affected by an explosion at a military garrison.

164. The rape of 4 girls between thirteen and fifteen years old by Sudanese Armed Forces elements in Blue Nile was verified and reported to the police, resulting in the arrest and sentencing of perpetrators.

165. A total of 4 allegations of attacks on schools (3) and hospitals (1) during air strikes were received but could not be verified. In March, the military use of a school in Kadugli, Southern Kordofan, by the National Intelligence and Security Service was documented.

166. In March, 2 boys of twelve and sixteen were abducted by Misseriya militiamen in Abyei. They were released and reunified with their families following interventions by the United Nations and community networks.

*Developments and concerns*

167. I commend the Government's ongoing commitment to the action plan signed in March and the significant progress achieved, including through the formation of high-level and technical committees and the development of a workplan. Command orders for dissemination of the action plan were issued and focal points at the rank of Inspector General were appointed to facilitate discussions on access. In March 2017, the Government granted access to the United Nations to areas of Blue Nile to follow up allegations of child recruitment and use of children by its forces.

168. On 29 March, following extensive advocacy, the United Nations was granted access to 21 children who had been detained by the National Intelligence and Security Service for their alleged association with an armed group after their apprehension in Darfur in 2015. The children were released in September, granted a presidential pardon and reunited with their families.

169. Following engagement by my Special Representative and United Nations partners, SPLM-N signed an action plan to end recruitment and use of children in November. In December, SPLM-N issued a command order and appointed a high-

level focal point. In November, the United Nations also met with the leader of the Justice and Equality Movement and a representative of the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi, who both agreed to develop implementation plans to expedite their action plans.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

170. Widespread conflict continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic and further escalated in the last quarter of 2016, with intense hostilities in eastern Aleppo city and in Bab and Manbij in Aleppo Governorate. The intensification of hostilities and continuing access restrictions posed considerable challenges for monitoring.

#### *Grave violations*

171. The recruitment and use of children increased sharply: the number of verified cases more than doubled compared with 2015. The United Nations verified 851 cases attributed to armed groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (507), ISIL (133), pro-government militias (54), People's Protection Units (46), government forces (29), Army of Islam (28), Ahrar al-Sham (17), the Nusrah Front (also known as Jabhat Fath al-Sham) (10), Nur al-Din al-Zanki (3) and unidentified armed groups (24); 20 per cent of verified cases involved children under the age of fifteen. Payment of salaries, ideology and family or community influence continued to be incentives. As a result of their association with parties to conflict, at least 37 children were killed and 17 injured.

172. Some 60 per cent of verified cases were attributed to groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army, a tenfold increase compared with 2015, with most cases occurring in Aleppo, Dar'a and Rif Dimastiq Governorates; 98 per cent of the boys recruited by these groups were used for military functions, including front-line combat. At least 103 children were used by ISIL for military functions, including to conduct executions and suicide attacks. People's Protection Units recruited and used 40 boys and 6 girls, who received military training and were used to patrol and guard checkpoints. Children recruited and used by other armed groups (82) predominantly guarded checkpoints.

173. The United Nations verified the association of 29 children with government forces, 5 of whom were trained, armed and used in combat, while the others were deployed at checkpoints, mostly unarmed. Pro-government militias recruited 54 boys, 20 of whom were used in combat and 34 to guard checkpoints. Coercion and financial incentives were used to recruit children.

174. Children continued to be arrested and detained for their alleged association with armed groups. The United Nations verified the arrest and detention of 12 boys by government forces and popular committees. In at least 7 of these cases, children were subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

175. Armed groups also deprived children of liberty for their alleged association with opposing parties to conflict. For example, ISIL deprived 27 boys of their liberty, some as young as ten, 9 of whom were executed and 17 remained unaccounted for as at early 2017.

176. The United Nations verified the killing of 652 children (297 boys, 125 girls, 230 sex unknown) and the maiming of 647 (223 boys, 133 girls, 291 sex unknown) during 2016. These casualties were attributed to government and pro-government forces (708), ISIL (235), People's Protection Units (8), groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (5), other armed groups (10) and unidentified armed

groups (145). Verified violations were most prevalent in Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Dar'a and Idlib.

177. A total of 533 of the verified child casualties were caused by air strikes, with 451 casualties attributed to government and pro-government forces and 82 casualties attributed to unidentified parties to conflict. Parties involved in aerial operations in the Syrian Arab Republic included government forces, international forces supporting the Government, members of the international counter-ISIL coalition, Turkey and Israel.

178. A total of 243 of the verified child casualties were attributed to mortar, rocket and improvised explosive device attacks by armed groups on government-held areas. Children continued to be killed and maimed by suicide attacks (70), executions (16), sniper attacks (17) and improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnances (130). In February, 3 children were publicly beheaded by ISIL after being accused of "spying". In addition, ISIL arrested 41 children for a wide range of acts that it classifies as crimes, some of whom were executed or subjected to amputation.

179. The United Nations verified 8 cases of sexual violence against girls, including rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery: 7 cases were attributed to ISIL and 1 was attributed to the pro-government Shu'aytat militias. Accounts were received of ISIL fighters demanding marriage of girls living in ISIL-held areas. In 1 verified case, a fourteen-year-old girl was abducted and gang-raped by 6 ISIL fighters after her family refused marriage. Reports also indicated that Yazidi girls captured in Iraq in 2014 continued to be trafficked into and within the Syrian Arab Republic and used as sex slaves. Trauma from sexual violence and social stigma continued to deter child survivors from coming forward.

180. The United Nations verified 76 attacks on schools and 11 attacks on education personnel resulting in 28 casualties among education personnel, a 40 per cent increase compared with 2015. These attacks were attributed to government and pro-government forces (57, including 38 air strikes), ISIL (6), People's Protection Units (1) and unidentified armed groups (14). Verified attacks on schools caused 255 child casualties and mostly occurred in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates. For example, in October the Kamal Qal'aji school complex in Idlib Governorate was hit by consecutive pro-government air strikes that killed 3 teachers and 19 children, injured 61 children and severely damaged the school.

181. The United Nations verified 81 attacks on medical facilities and 30 incidents of attacks on medical personnel resulting in 29 child casualties and 94 casualties among medical personnel, a nearly threefold increase compared with 2015. These attacks were attributed to government and pro-government forces (93, including 61 air strikes), ISIL (7), groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (2), Ahrar al-Sham (1) and unidentified armed groups (3). The majority of verified violations occurred in Aleppo and Idlib Governorates. In April, 13 children and 4 medical personnel were killed when pro-government attacks hit the Quds hospital in Aleppo Governorate.

182. A total of 9 incidents of military use of schools were attributed to groups affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (5), ISIL (3) and government forces (1), with 2 of those schools subsequently attacked by opposing forces, while 4 incidents of military use of medical facilities were attributed to ISIL.

183. The United Nations verified the abductions of 43 children that were attributed to ISIL (34), People's Protection Units (8), and government forces and pro-government militias (1). People's Protection Units abducted at least 8 children for recruitment purposes.



184. Parties to the conflict continued to use siege and denial of access to water as tactics of war, and as at end-2016, an estimated 292,000 children were trapped in besieged areas. The Government was responsible for 80 per cent of the instances of besiegement and ISIL was responsible for 17 per cent. Essential medicines were removed or excluded from humanitarian convoys by government authorities, while more than 411,000 children targeted by polio vaccination campaigns were not reached due to deliberate denial of access by ISIL and the Nusra Front.

185. The United Nations verified 90 instances of denial of humanitarian access, including 37 cases of deliberate denial of humanitarian services, 32 attacks on humanitarian facilities and related personnel and 21 acts of besiegement. Verified cases were attributed to government and pro-government forces (59), ISIL (15), Free Syrian Army-affiliated groups (2), the Nusra Front (2), the Army of Islam (1) and unidentified armed groups (5). In September, a United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) humanitarian convoy was hit by air strikes in rural western Aleppo, killing 17 staff and the head of the Urum al-Kubra branch of SARC.

#### *Developments and concerns*

186. The continued level of violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic remains highly alarming and I urge all parties to engage in the inclusive and Syrian-led peace process under United Nations auspices aimed at ending conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. I also call upon all parties to abide by their obligations under international law, and I urge the Government to take all possible measures to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by their armed forces and pro-government militias.

#### **Yemen**

187. A cessation of hostilities was in effect from April until peace talks adjourned in early August. During this period, while fighting continued in many locations, there was a significant decrease in the number of child casualties, in particular those resulting from air strikes, and in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals, although the intensification of hostilities following the adjournment led to increased violations. Throughout 2016, the documentation of violations against children was constrained by access restrictions and insecurity.

#### *Grave violations*

188. The United Nations verified 517 cases of the recruitment and use of boys as young as eleven, predominantly in Aden, Abyan, Amran, Sana'a and Ta'izz. The decrease in verified incidents compared with 2015 (917) reflects the challenges in monitoring rather than a reduction in cases. A further 105 reported cases could not be verified during 2016. The majority of verified cases (359) were attributed to the Houthis and affiliated forces, while 50 cases were attributed to the pro-government Popular Resistance, 29 to Ansar al-Sharia, 27 to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and 26 to the Yemeni Armed Forces. Children were mainly used to guard checkpoints and buildings, patrol areas and act as porters. In 69 verified cases, mostly in Amran and Aden, boys were used in combat, while 2 boys were killed and 5 injured at checkpoints or on the battlefield. Recruits for the Popular Resistance were often motivated by a desire to secure income for their families. In 1 verified case on 19 June, 5 boys recruited by the Popular Resistance, who were armed and wearing military uniforms, were queuing inside a government building in Jawf to collect salaries.

189. The United Nations documented the arrest or detention of 10 boys on the basis of their suspected association with an opposing party to conflict, 7 of which cases

were attributed to the Yemeni Armed Forces and 3 to the Popular Resistance. In June, as part of a confidence-building measure during peace talks facilitated by the United Nations, the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia released 52 children who had reportedly been associated with parties to conflict. The children were handed over to the Government of Yemen and some were reunified with their families.

190. The killing and maiming of children remained the most prevalent violation. The United Nations verified 1,340 child casualties, with 502 children killed (345 boys, 152 girls, 5 sex unknown) and 838 injured (620 boys, 218 girls): 683 were attributed to the coalition, 414 to the Houthis and affiliated forces, 17 to the Popular Resistance, 6 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, 6 to ISIL in Yemen and 1 to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula.

191. The highest number of child casualties was documented in Ta'izz, where 72 per cent (343 of 474 casualties) were attributed to the Houthis, mainly resulting from ground fighting. In 2016, ground fighting accounted for 39 per cent of all child casualties, causing the death of 107 children and injuries to 421 children. Large numbers of child casualties were also documented in Sa'dah, where 91 per cent (222 of 245 casualties) were attributed to air strikes by the coalition. In the reporting period, air strikes were the cause of over half of all child casualties, with at least 349 children killed and 334 children injured. For example, in October a coalition air strike hit Salah Hall in Sana'a during a funeral, killing at least 24 children.

192. A total of 113 child casualties were also attributed to landmines and unexploded ordnances, including in Aden, where armed groups allegedly planted landmines as they retreated. In addition, a number of civilians were reportedly killed in Saudi Arabia as a result of cross-border attacks.

193. The United Nations verified 52 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals, resulting in the partial or complete destruction of facilities (46), attacks on protected personnel (3) and looting (3): 73 per cent of attacks were attributed to the coalition (28 schools, 10 hospitals) and 15 per cent to the Houthis and affiliated forces (4 schools; 4 hospitals). Attacks were also attributed to the Popular Resistance (2), the Yemeni Armed Forces (1) and crossfire.

194. A total of 33 attacks on schools were verified, affecting 30 schools: the majority of the incidents (28) resulted in the destruction of schools as a result of air strikes by the coalition, while 4 incidents were attributed to the Houthis and 1 to the Yemeni Armed Forces.

195. The United Nations verified 19 incidents of attacks on hospitals affecting 16 facilities, with hospitals being subjected to multiple attacks in Ta'izz and Marib, 10 of which were attributed to air strikes by the coalition; for example, on 10 January in Sa'ada Governorate, 1 hospital was hit by an air strike, resulting in 4 deaths, 10 injuries and the destruction of several hospital buildings. Of the remaining verified attacks, 4 were attributed to the Houthis in Ta'izz and Jawf and 2 to the Popular Resistance.

196. A total of 12 incidents of the military use of schools were documented: 6 were attributed to the Houthis, 4 to the Popular Resistance and 1 each to the Yemeni Armed Forces and Ansar al-Sharia, while 5 of the schools used were subsequently attacked. In addition, 2 incidents of the military use of hospitals occurred in Jawf and were attributed to the Houthis and to the Popular Resistance.

197. During 2016, 4 boys were abducted, 3 by unidentified armed groups in Ma'rib and Hudaydah and 1 by AQAP in Bayda' for ransom.

198. The United Nations received 220 reports of incidents of denial of humanitarian access, which involved bureaucratic constraints and restriction of movement (149), violence against humanitarian workers, assets and facilities (43) and interference with the implementation of humanitarian activities (28). The majority of incidents were documented and verified in Hudaydah, Sana'a, Ta'izz and Hajjah, and were attributed to the Houthis (181), unidentified armed groups (17), the coalition (13) and the Popular Resistance (9).

#### *Developments and concerns*

199. The action plan signed by the Government of Yemen in 2014 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces remained stalled owing to the ongoing conflict. However, the United Nations and its partners provided support for reintegration to 100 children separated from armed groups in Aden.

200. The United Nations also engaged in enhanced dialogue with parties to conflict, including through several interactions between the Office of my Special Representative and Saudi Arabia, as leader of the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen, to address ongoing grave violations against children. The United Nations was informed of measures taken by the coalition in 2016 to reduce the impact of conflict on children, including through their rules of engagement and the establishment of a joint incident assessment team mandated to review all incidents involving civilian casualties and identify corrective actions. These initiatives are steps in the right direction. Nevertheless, I urge the coalition to improve its approach since, despite these measures, grave violations against children continued at unacceptably high levels in 2016. In this regard, I remain deeply concerned about the plight of children in Yemen and strongly request parties to take urgent measures to end violations against children. Furthermore, I urge the coalition, in particular Saudi Arabia as leader of the coalition, to continue to refine and fully implement the preventive and corrective measures put in place in 2016 to protect children, and to deepen its engagement with the United Nations and my Special Representative on this issue. In this regard, I wish to note that at the time of preparation of the present report, Saudi Arabia has created a child protection unit at the coalition headquarters.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **India**

201. Children continued to be affected by incidents of violence between armed groups and the Government, in particular in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, as well as tensions in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### *Grave violations*

202. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, including the Naxalites, in particular in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Owing to access restrictions for monitoring and reporting, the United Nations was unable to verify these incidents. Armed groups reportedly resorted to abduction and threats against parents in order to recruit children, who subsequently underwent military training and served as messengers, informants or guards in child squads (*bal dasta*). In March, the police relocated 23 children under threat of abduction by armed groups in Gumla district, Jharkhand, and supported their enrolment in schools. However, unverified reports suggest that police may be using

children formerly associated with armed groups as informants, potentially making them targets for retaliation.

203. Children continued to be killed and injured in the context of operations of national security forces against Maoist armed groups. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, the number of civilians killed in these encounters increased to 213, compared with 171 in 2015; however, no disaggregated data on children were available.

204. According to government information, at least 30 schools were burned and partially destroyed by armed groups in Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, government reports confirmed the military use of 4 schools by security forces in that region for several weeks. In a troubling development, Maoists were allegedly running several schools in Chhattisgarh and included combat training as part of their curriculum.

#### *Developments and concerns*

205. In the light of persistent reports of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, I call upon the Government to develop appropriate mechanisms to protect children from recruitment, as well as to separate and reintegrate recruited children. The United Nations stands ready to assist in this process. I also urge the Government to ensure the protection of children from any form of violence in the context of civil unrest or law and order operations.

#### **Nigeria**

206. With the loss of territory to the Nigerian security forces, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, intensified attacks on civilians in north-east Nigeria as well as in neighbouring countries, including through suicide bombings, and in late 2016 split into two factions. In this context, 402 incidents of grave violations affecting 2,698 children were verified. A detailed account of the impact of armed conflict on children in Nigeria is available in my country report ([S/2017/304](#)).

#### *Grave violations*

207. The number of verified cases of the recruitment and use of children in 2016 (2,122) increased significantly compared with 2015 (278). The main perpetrators were Boko Haram (1,947) and the Civilian Joint Task Force (175): 4 boys and 26 girls were used by Boko Haram to carry out suicide attacks in Nigeria (19) and in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger (11). Children associated with the Civilian Joint Task Force were mostly used in support functions.

208. In 2016, 237 children were detained for their alleged association with Boko Haram, while 1,128 children were detained on the basis of their parent's alleged affiliation. While most were released, 336 children were still in detention as at December, including 71 held since 2015.

209. The killing of 304 children and maiming of 184 children was verified, a 27 per cent increase compared with 2015. More than half of the casualties were girls. The majority of casualties resulted from suicide attacks, including children used in these incidents, while internally displaced persons camps were the target of suicide attacks in 7 incidents. Boko Haram was responsible for 97 per cent of child casualties (475). The killing of suspected child suicide bombers by the Nigerian security forces was also a growing concern, with 13 children killed in November and December.

210. The rape or other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by Boko Haram against 51 girls as young as nine was verified. In addition, 3 girls between fourteen and seventeen years old were raped by Nigerian security forces elements. Allegations were also received of 19 cases of sexual abuse of girls in camps for internally displaced persons, reportedly perpetrated by Nigerian security forces elements, camp officials, the Civilian Joint Task Force and vigilantes. The investigation ordered by the Government culminated in the arrest of 8 suspected perpetrators.

211. No attacks on schools and hospitals were documented in Nigeria in 2016; however, Boko Haram perpetrated 3 attacks on schools and 5 on hospitals in the Diffa region of the Niger; 1 attack on a medical centre resulted in the killing of a health worker. A total of 7 schools were verified as militarily used by the Nigerian security forces in Borno (5) and Yobe States (2), 2 of which were vacated in early 2017.

212. Boko Haram abducted 17 boys and 17 girls in 2016. In addition, 2,046 child abductions from previous years were documented in liberated areas following Nigerian security forces operations; 106 of the Chibok schoolgirls abducted in 2014 were freed, partly as a result of internationally supported negotiations between Boko Haram and the Government.

213. A single incident of denial of humanitarian access was verified: on 28 July, 2 staff members were injured by unidentified assailants in an attack on a United Nations humanitarian convoy returning to Maiduguri, following which United Nations operations to Bama were suspended for 18 days.

#### *Developments and concerns*

214. I commend the efforts made by the Government to improve the protection of children, including the development of a plan of action to implement the Safe Schools Declaration, which was endorsed in 2015. Moreover, since April, the United Nations has been granted access to children detained in Giwa barracks, enabling the release and reintegration of 1,300 children.

215. Following the listing of the Civilian Joint Task Force for recruitment and use in my previous report ([A/70/836-S/2016/360](#)), the United Nations initiated dialogue with that group to develop an action plan to end and prevent recruitment and use of children. In this regard, I welcome the fact that at the time of preparation of the present report, the action plan had been signed.

216. Lastly, a total of 765 girl victims of sexual violence by Boko Haram were provided with support in Maiduguri through a UNICEF-funded community-based rehabilitation programme that aims to address negative community perceptions of girls and women who have survived sexual violence. I encourage subregional organizations to support these efforts.

#### **Pakistan**

217. Attacks by armed groups declined by 28 per cent in 2016, with 441 incidents reported. The majority of the incidents were attributed to Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The security operation launched against armed groups in North Waziristan in 2014 concluded in April 2016, although a significant military presence remained.

#### *Grave violations*

218. Reports of the recruitment and use of children, including from madrassas, continued to be a concern and incidents of the use of children by armed groups for suicide bombings were reported. In a particularly troubling incident, on

12 November at least 52 people were killed and more than 100 wounded when a teenage suicide bomber blew himself up at the Shah Noorani shrine in Balochistan.

219. Age-disaggregated data on civilian casualties were extremely limited but the majority of incidents affecting children were reported in Balochistan. For example, on 7 February at least 10 people, including 1 girl, were reportedly killed in a suicide attack on a Pakistan Armed Forces vehicle in Quetta. Attacks also occurred in other parts of the country. In Lahore, a suicide attack on 27 March in a public park claimed the lives of 74 people, including 29 children. On 17 October, at least 1 child was killed in a bomb attack at an imambargah in Karachi, which was claimed by Lashkarh-e Jhangvi al-Alami.

220. A total of 6 attacks were carried out on educational institutions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On 20 February in South Waziristan, armed elements blew up part of a newly constructed government school, while on 25 November, TTP claimed responsibility for a bomb attack on a government primary school in Mohmand Agency, reportedly for promoting “Western values”.

221. Attacks on health care by armed groups continued in 2016, including direct attacks on and threats and intimidation against polio vaccinators, which was condemned by the Government. The majority of incidents occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and led to the killing of at least 1 vaccinator.

#### *Developments and concerns*

222. In November, Pakistan ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I welcome this important step and urge the Government to uphold its obligations under the Optional Protocol, particularly by criminalizing the recruitment and use of children in hostilities.

### **Philippines**

223. Children continued to be affected by low-intensity armed engagements, as well as large-scale military operations conducted by government forces against armed groups, primarily in Mindanao. Owing to the intensification of activities of armed groups in Basilan, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao and Sulu, access for monitoring was challenging. Following the resumption of peace talks between the Government and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines/New People’s Army (NDFP/NPA) in the second half of 2016, grave violations during clashes between them decreased significantly.

#### *Grave violations*

224. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 9 boys between thirteen and seventeen years old. Of the verified cases, 8 were attributed to armed groups, 5 to the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and 3 to NPA. As well as being used in support roles, some boys attended training in arms and were used in combat: 1 child recruited by NPA died during a skirmish with the Armed Forces of the Philippines. In addition, credible reports suggest that the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Maute Group recruited children for combat. In addition, 1 verified incident was attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines, which has used 1 boy in a support role in Negros Occidental since 2013.

225. The United Nations documented the detention of 8 children without a formal judicial process for their alleged association with armed groups. For example, despite continued advocacy by the United Nations, 1 fifteen-year-old boy has been detained in an adult prison in Basilan for his alleged association with the Abu Sayyaf Group since November 2015.

226. The United Nations verified the killing and maiming of 38 children (14 killed, 24 injured; 26 boys, 12 girls); the cases were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (11), the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the national police in a joint operation (2) and alleged pro-government armed groups (New Indigenous People's Army Reform (6) and Alamara (1)). In addition, 4 cases were attributed to the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters and 2 to NPA. Along with incidents of crossfire, indiscriminate attacks or explosive remnants of war, children were subjected to targeted killings and alleged torture.

227. A total of 10 attacks affecting 12 schools were verified and were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (1) or were unattributed (7). Reports of threats by alleged pro-government armed groups against teachers working for schools run by non-governmental organizations in indigenous communities were also received. In addition, the United Nations documented the use of 8 schools for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and/or the national police (6) and the Maute Group (2), 4 of which schools were attacked while they were occupied.

228. Of 4 reports of abduction received in 2016, one incident, which occurred in December 2015, was verified. In this incident, 1 eight-year-old boy and his parents were taken hostage by the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters. The boy and the mother were released; however the father was reportedly killed.

#### *Developments and concerns*

229. In the light of ongoing violations, the United Nations supported the Government's efforts to strengthen the protection of children in conflict. In particular, the Department of National Defence issued a circular setting out procedures and guidelines for the Armed Forces of the Philippines to prevent grave violations. To further strengthen the protection of children, I encourage the Government to promptly adopt the draft law on children in situations of armed conflict while ensuring its adherence to the highest standards of international law, and to leverage existing child protection mechanisms to provide assistance to victims.

230. Regarding MILF, I commend it for the significant progress in implementing its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. In this regard, all 1,869 children identified by MILF as associated with its armed wing underwent formal disengagement in a series of ceremonies, the last of which was held in March 2017. In addition, MILF promulgated a directive requiring regular self-monitoring and screening of armed elements as well as age-assessment guidelines to establish safeguards for the prevention of association and reassociation of children. This significant progress should be replicated by other armed groups, including NDFP/NPA, who held discussion with UNICEF during the reporting period.

#### **Thailand**

231. A peace dialogue between the Government and an umbrella organization of armed groups continued in 2016. However, there was ongoing armed violence in southern Thailand, including sporadic clashes between security forces and armed groups, as well as attacks by armed groups on civilian targets.

*Grave violations*

232. The United Nations received reports of the killing of 5 children and injuries to 27 children resulting from improvised explosive device attacks and shooting, an increase compared with 2015, when 19 child casualties were recorded (4 killed, 15 injured). For example, in April in Songkhla Province, a 4-year old boy was killed in a motorcycle bomb attack allegedly targeting the police.

233. Schools and education personnel continued to be targeted by armed groups, including by the killing of teachers and by arson and improvised explosive device attacks. On 6 September, for example, a motorcycle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated in front of an elementary school, killing 1 four-year-old girl and injuring at least 10 people, including teachers. One attack on a hospital was reported on 13 March, when an unknown armed group stormed the Joh Airong Hospital in Narathiwat Province and used it to attack a nearby government security post. Before leaving, the attackers tied up 1 pregnant nurse and destroyed hospital equipment.

*Developments and concerns*

234. I welcome the ongoing peace dialogue between the Government and armed groups and encourage all parties involved to include the protection of children and schools in discussions.

## **IV. Recommendations**

**235. I am gravely concerned by the scale and severity of the violations committed against children in 2016, which included alarming levels of killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children and, in certain situations, denial of humanitarian access to children, and I call upon parties to conflict, the Security Council and Member States to take immediate action to prevent these violations against children from occurring.**

**236. Ensuring full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law by all parties must be the cornerstone of our prevention efforts. In this regard, I welcome the steps taken by a number of Member States to make international commitments to protect children in the context of armed conflict, including through the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the endorsement of the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups. To further the aim of protecting children in all situations included in the present report, I urge all Member States engaged in operations against violent extremist groups, whether acting alone or as members of coalitions, to make commitments to establish specific safeguards to protect children from violations, including by placing an increased focus on the principles of distinction and proportionality under international humanitarian law.**

**237. I urge Member States, including when countering violent extremism, to treat children allegedly associated with non-State armed groups primarily as victims and to swiftly adopt protocols for their handover to civilian child protection actors in order to prioritize their reintegration. I also encourage the Security Council to highlight the detrimental impact on children that results from widespread screening of civilians in situations of armed conflict.**



238. I encourage Member States to establish long-term multi-year mechanisms for the reintegration of recruited and used children, including by placing a specific focus on girls and on psychosocial and education programmes and vocational training. Adequate long-term funding is vital to implement and sustain such programmes.

239. I welcome national and international efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for crimes against children in situations of armed conflict. Impunity must end in order to break the cycles of violence and aid prevention efforts. Member States should strengthen their support for justice systems by allocating sufficient resources and capacity to the investigation and prosecution of those who perpetrate crimes against children.

240. I welcome the leadership and contributions of regional and subregional organizations regarding the protection of children and I call upon them to engage with my Special Representative to continue the integration of child protection considerations into their policies, planning of peace support operations, training of personnel and conduct of operations.

241. I urge Member States and regional and subregional organizations involved in negotiating cessation of hostilities or peace agreements to include specific child protection provisions from the outset in order to prioritize the prevention of grave violations.

242. I call upon the Security Council to continue to request the deployment of dedicated child protection capacity to United Nations peace operations, in line with newly revised United Nations policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations, in order to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and for monitoring and reporting. The need for such child protection capacity, including the budget required, should be systematically assessed during the preparation of peacekeeping operations and political missions.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

243. The modifications in the presentation of the lists contained in the annexes to the present report resulted from additions to the report of dedicated sections to note the developments and concerns in the situations covered. In this regard, both annexes have divided the list into two sections: parties to conflict that have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period and parties that have not.

244. In Afghanistan, ISIL-Khorasan Province is listed for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children in the light of the number of verified incidents attributed to that party. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mai-Mai Mazembe has been included in the annexes for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children given the number of incidents attributed to that party since its emergence in mid-2016. In Iraq, the popular mobilization forces were responsible for 57 verified cases of recruitment and use during 2016 and that party is listed for that violation. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Army of Islam also recruited and used children in significant numbers and has therefore been listed. All of the above-mentioned parties are included in section A of annex I. In Yemen, the actions of the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen objectively led to that party being listed for the killing and maiming of children, with 683 child casualties attributed to it, and as a result of that party being responsible for 38 verified incidents, for attacks on schools and hospitals during 2016. The coalition is included

in section B of annex I, as it has put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children.

245. Other previously listed parties to conflict have had additional violations added based on incidents that occurred in 2016. In this regard, given the levels of abductions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri have been included for that violation. In Nigeria, Boko Haram is listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence in the light of the cases verified as a result of improved access. In the Syrian Arab Republic, government forces and pro-government militias are listed for the recruitment and use of children. In the same country, ISIL is also included for the abduction of children.

246. In terms of delisting, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took all necessary steps in its action plan pertaining to the recruitment and use of children and that party has been delisted for that violation; however, it remains listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. In addition, in the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front has been delisted for the recruitment and use of children following the completion of its action plan.

247. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations. In this regard, in Afghanistan the name of the Taliban has been amended. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the names of the government forces and the Free Syrian Army have been slightly changed to more accurately reflect the realities on the ground. Similarly, in Yemen, the name of the government forces has also been slightly modified.

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
3. ISIL-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Tora Bora Front, Jama'at al-Da'wah ila al-Qur'an wal-Sunnah and the Latif Mansur Network<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
2. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
3. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
4. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
5. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

† Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

6. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine)<sup>a</sup>
7. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b</sup>
8. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Kata Katanga<sup>a</sup>
10. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové/Mai-Mai Cheka<sup>a,b</sup>
11. Nyatura<sup>a</sup>
12. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Popular mobilization forces<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

1. Tatmadaw Army, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a,†</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army-South<sup>a</sup>
7. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army<sup>a,b,c,e,†</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition<sup>a,b,†</sup>
2. White Army<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in the Sudan**

*Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,†</sup>
2. Pro-government militias<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
4. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a,†</sup>

**Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

*State actors*

1. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>
5. Nusrah Front (also known as Jabhat Fath al-Sham)<sup>a,b</sup>
6. People's Protection Units<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in Yemen**

*State actors*

1. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces<sup>a,†</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Afghanistan**

*State actors*

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police<sup>a,†</sup>

### **Parties in Colombia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia — Ejército del Pueblo<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### *State actors*

1. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,†</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,†</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *State actors*

1. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,†</sup>

### **Parties in the Sudan**

#### *State actors*

1. Government security forces, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, popular defence forces and national police forces<sup>a,†</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North<sup>a,†</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *State actors*

1. Coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen led by Saudi Arabia<sup>b,d</sup>

## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

**A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

1. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

**Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

1. Civilian Joint Task Force<sup>a,†</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>†</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Seventy-third year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2017, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2225 \(2015\)](#). The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in the field and at Headquarters, and with relevant Member States. It highlights recent global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on violations committed in 2017, as well as related protection concerns. Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and, in line with the resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the present report include a list of parties that, in violation of international law, engage in the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel,<sup>1</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. All the information provided in the report has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations where the ability to verify information was hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. In this regard, the information contained in the report is only indicative and does not always represent the full scale of violations committed in 2017.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of the mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. However, reference to a situation is not a legal determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the present report documents situations in which apparent violations of

<sup>1</sup> Under the terms of Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#) and [2143 \(2014\)](#), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.





international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by conflict are considered to be of such gravity as to warrant international concern. In characterizing the facts described below as grave violations, it is the aim of my Special Representative to bring these situations to the attention of national Governments, which bear the primary responsibility of providing effective protection and relief to all affected children, and to encourage Governments to take remedial measures.

4. Where significant progress was achieved and measures taken by listed parties positively affected the protection of children or where ongoing conduct gave rise to concern, this is highlighted in the country-specific sections. On the basis of the approach of enhanced engagement with Member States to prevent violations against children, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and parties that have not.

## **II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children**

### **A. Overview of the situation of children and armed conflict**

5. Children continue to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict in many country situations. In 2017, there was a large increase in the number of violations compared with the number reported for 2016 ([A/72/361-S/2017/821](#), para. 5), with at least 6,000 verified violations by government forces and more than 15,000 by a range of non-State armed groups.<sup>2</sup>

6. In 2017, changing conflict dynamics, including the intensification of armed clashes, directly affected children. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children quadrupled in the Central African Republic (299) and doubled in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1,049) compared to 2016. The number of verified cases of the recruitment and use of children in Somalia (2,127), South Sudan (1,221), the Syrian Arab Republic (961) and Yemen (842) persisted at alarming levels. In addition, boys and girls recruited and used were often doubly victimized by subsequently being detained for their former association with armed forces or groups.

7. Surges in the recruitment and use of children often coincided with increasing levels of killing and maiming of children. In addition, spikes in armed clashes and violence led to a substantial increase in the number of child casualties in Iraq (717) and Myanmar (296). Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen remained the country situations with the highest number of verified casualties. In Nigeria, Boko Haram continued to force civilians, including children, to perpetrate suicide attacks, which led to over half of all the verified child casualties in the country.

8. Following the outbreak of violence in the Kasai region, there was an almost eightfold increase in attacks on schools and hospitals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, totalling 515 cases in 2017. The siege of Marawi in the southern Philippines also led to a sharp increase in such incidents.

9. Additional developments included the abduction of over 1,600 children by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, pointing to a sustained reliance on children for combat and support duties. A high number of denials of humanitarian access, including in Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, prevented thousands

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<sup>2</sup> The use of the term “incident” describes an action by a party to conflict that leads to one or more grave violations. “Violations” or “cases” refer to each individual child or protected structure affected by an incident. Incidents may therefore result in multiple violations (for instance, one incident of abduction may affect several children).

of children from receiving essential aid. The nature of constraints to humanitarian access differ vastly from one context to another, which is reflected in the focus of the reporting in the different country-specific sections. Over 900 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against girls and boys were verified across all country situations, representing an increase from last year. However, cases of conflict-related sexual violence remain particularly challenging to verify, including as a result of the sensitivity of the issue, and remain chronically underreported (for more information, see the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, [S/2018/250](#)).

10. In contrast, in situations where Governments and listed armed groups enhanced their engagement on preventing grave violations, important advances in the strengthening of child protection were achieved. Regarding the Government of the Sudan, for example, close cooperation with the United Nations resulted in the full implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. A process of building on the action plan in order to develop a national plan for prevention has since been initiated.

## **B. Strengthening partnerships to end and prevent grave violations against children**

11. Preventing violations against children affected by conflict should be a primary concern of the international community. Failing to assume this collective responsibility affects not only the boys and girls living in insecurity, but may also amplify grievances between belligerent parties and reduce their ability to overcome conflict in a peaceful manner. And yet, as illustrated in the present report, time and again, armed conflict strips away layers of protection afforded by families, society and law and children are victimized as both the targets and the perpetrators of violence. We must do more to address this challenge by ensuring that child protection is made an integral part of any comprehensive strategy to prevent and resolve conflict in view of enabling sustainable peace and by promoting the close involvement of children during the development of such strategies.

12. Enhanced engagement with the Member States mentioned in the present report remains crucial in this regard. Action plans and other bilateral commitments provide the main framework for this engagement. Such commitments both address the immediate protection concerns and contribute to broader prevention by ensuring that national mechanisms are put in place to prevent future violations. In Afghanistan, child protection units in Afghan National Police centres have now been established in all but one province, preventing the recruitment of over 300 children in 2017. The Government of the Sudan issued formal command orders and directives to all Government forces to prevent child recruitment. The development of national, subregional or regional prevention plans, covering all listing violations, could support the systematization of preventive measures beyond the implementation period of action plans.

13. The global consensus among Member States that children should not be recruited and used in conflict also allowed for intensified engagement with armed groups. In the Central African Republic, such efforts resulted in the issuance of command orders by two armed groups barring the recruitment and use of children. Similarly, the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad in Mali and the Civilian Joint Task Force in Nigeria signed action plans to release children from their ranks and prevent future recruitment. I encourage Member States to continue to facilitate the interaction between the United Nations and armed groups on the issue of child protection.

14. Engagement with armed forces and groups resulted in the formal release of over 10,000 children in 2017. In addition, an unknown number left such entities through informal pathways. While disengagement from armed actors is an essential first step, it is vital to ensure sustained psychosocial and educational reintegration support in order to break the cycle of violence and consolidate peace. Over 12,000 children were reintegrated during the reporting period by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and partners, but too many children were unable to benefit from such programmes. Cases documented in 2017 reconfirmed that when children are released but do not have access to appropriate long-term reintegration programmes they are particularly vulnerable and subject to mistreatment, social stigmatization and rerecruitment. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, over 8,000 children who have been released from armed groups are yet to receive basic socioeconomic reintegration support, owing to a lack of funding.

15. Ensuring predictable, sustained and flexible funding for the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict is essential to allow UNICEF and other child protection actors to set in place viable alternatives to military life and prevent their rerecruitment. Realizing this goal will require increasing child protection capacity and strengthening collaboration between child protection actors and potential reintegration funding partners, including concerned Member States, the World Bank and the Peacebuilding Fund.

16. Armed groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram, continue to recruit and use children on a large scale, including across borders. It is therefore more important than ever to ensure adequate capacity to deal with the increasingly complex task of prevention, tracing and reintegration. The phenomenon of the cross-border recruitment of children and their repatriation requires a coordinated international response, based firmly on international law and drawing on international child protection standards. Denying children the opportunity to rejoin their communities and to gain access to services, or detaining them solely for their alleged association with such groups, runs counter to the best interest of the child and international protection standards, and may generate new grievances.

17. As reflected in the report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace ([A/72/707-S/2018/43](#)), closer strategic and operational partnerships with regional and subregional actors is essential to address the challenge of sustaining peace. This approach was adopted by my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, who initiated a process to further deepen her cooperation with regional and subregional actors in view of multiplying child protection efforts, including to address the cross-border nature of the recruitment and use of children and the growing number of unaccompanied children on the move. Such collaboration, closely involving UNICEF, facilitated the appointment of a Senior Child Protection Adviser by the African Union in January 2018, further strengthening the regional child protection architecture.

### **III. Information on 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**

##### **Afghanistan**

18. Conflict-related violence continued to severely affect children throughout Afghanistan, with 3,179 verified cases of children killed and maimed in 2017. Although the number of verified cases represents a 10 per cent decrease in verified cases compared to 2016, casualty rates remain very high.

##### *Grave violations*

19. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 84 boys, and documented an additional 643 cases (all boys). Children were recruited and used for combat, as bodyguards, at checkpoints, to assist in intelligence gathering and to plant improvised explosive devices. When recruited by armed groups, children were also used to carry out suicide attacks.

20. Almost three quarters of the verified cases were perpetrated by armed groups (61), with 40 cases attributed to the Taliban, 19 to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) and 2 to undetermined armed groups. Cases attributed to ISIL-KP almost doubled in the reporting period. A total of 23 boys were recruited and used by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (Afghan National Police, 11; Afghan Local Police, 9; other Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 3). The cases predominantly included the informal use of children, including as guards at checkpoints.

21. As at December 2017, the Government reported that 171 children were held in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges. On 7 November, 50 juveniles were transferred from the adult maximum-security detention facility in Parwan to the juvenile rehabilitation centre in Kabul, following sustained United Nations advocacy. However, following a reassessment of their age, in December, 21 of them were moved back to the detention facility in Parwan and 25 were reassigned elsewhere.

22. The United Nations verified 3,179 child casualties (861 killed and 2,318 injured), including 251 girls, accounting for 30 per cent of all civilian casualties. Overall, the leading causes were ground engagements (45 per cent), followed by incidents involving improvised explosive devices (17 per cent) and unexploded ordnance (16 per cent).

23. The United Nations attributed 723 child casualties to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 28 to pro-government militias and 21 to both pro-government militias and Afghan National Defence and Security Forces; 96 casualties were attributed to international military forces. In addition, 45 casualties were attributed either to joint operations of Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and international military forces or could not be attributed specifically to either party. The continuing increase of child casualties resulting from aerial operations remains a concerning trend. In addition, 27 child casualties resulted from cross-border shelling out of Pakistan.

24. Armed groups perpetrated 1,384 child casualties, including 1,105 casualties attributed to the Taliban, 94 to ISIL-KP, 9 to joint operations of ISIL-KP and the

Taliban and 176 to undetermined armed groups. Child casualties resulting from complex and suicide attacks increased by 34 per cent (207 casualties).

25. Four cases of sexual violence, including rape (1) and sexual abuse (3) against boys as young as 13 were verified, three of which were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and one to the Taliban. The United Nations documented an additional 78 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against boys, most of which related to the practice of *bacha bazi*. Impunity for perpetrators remains a serious challenge.

26. For the second consecutive year, verified incidents of attacks against schools and education personnel decreased (68 incidents). Armed groups perpetrated 55 of the incidents (Taliban, 41; ISIL-KP, 7; undetermined armed groups, 7). Furthermore, three such incidents were attributed to pro-government militias, two to Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, two to international military forces and two to cross-border shelling out of Pakistan.

27. A total of 58 incidents of attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were verified, a 50 per cent reduction compared to 2016. Incidents included direct attacks on health facilities (18), direct attacks on health personnel (18) and threats of attack (22). Among those, 52 incidents were attributed to armed groups (Taliban, 37; ISIL-KP, 4; undetermined armed groups, 11), and 5 to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

28. The United Nations verified 16 incidents of the military use of schools and hospitals: 10 by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, 4 by the Taliban and 2 by ISIL-KP.

29. A total of 19 incidents of abduction, involving 41 boys and 2 girls, were verified. Among those cases, 32 were attributed to the Taliban, 6 to ISIL-KP (including the two girls), and 1 to a pro-government militia.

30. The United Nations documented 39 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, 29 of which were verified. All verified incidents were attributed to armed groups (Taliban, 22; ISIL-KP, 3; undetermined armed groups, 4). Incidents included the killing and injuring as well as the abduction of humanitarian personnel.

#### *Developments and concerns*

31. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I commend the Government for the measures taken to better protect children affected by armed conflict. These measures had a positive effect on the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and the use of children by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, including through the establishment of 12 new child protection units in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, the revision of the Penal Code, which now criminalizes the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and the practice of *bacha bazi*, as well as the adoption of a child protection policy.

32. Notwithstanding the progress made in preventing the formal recruitment of children, I urge the Government to address remaining gaps, in particular the lack of screening mechanisms in the Afghan Local Police, the use of children at police checkpoints, the absence of measures for the protection, reintegration and support of children formerly associated with armed forces or groups, as well as the lack of accountability for the perpetrators of grave violations against children. I strongly encourage the Government to prioritize prevention and consider alternatives to detention for children formerly associated with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, pro-government militias or armed groups, in line with international juvenile justice principles, and ensure their reintegration into society.

33. While dialogue with armed groups regarding child protection continues, the level of violations has remained at an alarming level and I urge these parties to engage with the United Nations in pursuit of elaborating action plans.

34. I remain deeply concerned about the continuing high number of children killed and maimed and call on all parties to take immediate action to better protect children.

### **Central African Republic**

35. The conflict escalated throughout the country, with confrontations between the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)-led coalition<sup>3</sup> against the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) in Ouaka and Haute-Kotto Prefectures, and anti-balaka associated militias against UPC in Mbomou Prefecture. Towards the end of 2017, fighting intensified between a faction of the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), anti-balaka elements and Révolution et justice (RJ). In addition, attacks against civilians and humanitarians increased, leading to mass displacement and child casualties.

#### *Grave violations*

36. The number of children recruited and used more than quadrupled compared to 2016, with 196 boys and 103 girls affected, some as young as 8 years of age. Cases were attributed to UPC (89), FPRC (62), MPC (53), anti-balaka elements (32), joint operations by FPRC/MPC<sup>4</sup> (23), ex-Séléka renouée (16), Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) (14), Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (9) and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (1). Children were used as combatants, porters, informants, cooks and for sexual purposes.

37. A total of 104 children, including 34 girls, were killed (61) and maimed (43) by shooting, stabbing and when their houses were torched during clashes. Perpetrators included anti-balaka elements (34), UPC (29), FPRC (5), FPRC/MPC (4), 3R (3), MPC (2), FDPC, a self-defence group and the national security forces (1 each). Most of the incidents occurred in Ouaka and Mbomou Prefectures, with 57 per cent of casualties resulting from clashes between the Coalition and UPC, around Bambari, and anti-balaka activities in Mbomou Prefecture.

38. The number of verified cases of children affected by rape and other forms of sexual violence, some as young as 8 years of age, more than doubled (137 girls, 1 boy) compared to 2016. Among them were 48 girls who were victims of sexual violence during their association with armed groups. The main perpetrators were MPC (30), FPRC/MPC (18), anti-balaka elements (16) and FPRC (14). Additional allegations of sexual violence against boys were reported but remained unverified.

39. A total of 43 incidents of abduction were verified, affecting 35 girls and 66 boys, including infants. Most victims were abducted for recruitment purposes and four were subjected to sexual violence. Anti-balaka elements accounted for the highest number of abducted children (37), followed by LRA (20).

40. The United Nations verified 28 attacks against schools and 19 attacks against hospitals, including by anti-balaka (12), joint operations by FPRC/MPC<sup>4</sup> (9), UPC (7), FPRC (6), 3R, RJ (3 each), MPC (2), a self-defence group, MPC/RJ, the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNLC), national security forces and an unidentified armed group (1 each). Among those incidents, 12 schools

<sup>3</sup> Coalition consisting of Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique/Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique/Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (FPRC/MPC/RPRC) and anti-balaka elements associated with local defence militias.

<sup>4</sup> Where joint operations of FPRC/MPC are indicated, cases could not be attributed to one specific group.

were damaged following long-term military use. Three additional cases of the military use of schools were attributed to UPC (2) and FPRC (1).

41. A total of 101 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, including the killing of 14 humanitarian staff. The highest number of incidents was attributed to anti-balaka elements (40), followed by MPC (10), FPRC (7) and unidentified ex-Séléka elements (6). For example, on 7 September, anti-balaka elements looted non-governmental organizations' bases and damaged vehicles, which resulted in the temporary suspension of humanitarian activities in Batangafo, affecting an estimated 28,000 internally displaced persons.

#### *Developments and concerns*

42. I welcome the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and urge the Government to ensure their swift implementation.

43. I take note of FPRC and UPC having issued command orders barring the recruitment of children, on 13 May and 27 September, respectively. Dialogue with armed groups also enabled the identification and separation of 1,816 children, including 371 girls (79 per cent from anti-balaka elements). In addition, 1,250 self-demobilized children (494 girls; 756 boys) from anti-balaka and the Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) were identified in three prefectures.

44. I am deeply concerned regarding the further documented increase of grave violations against children, including the increase in abductions attributed to anti-balaka elements. I urge armed groups to take immediate action and engage with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans.

45. The sexual exploitation and abuse of children by peacekeepers remained a serious protection concern (for more information, see the annexes to [A/72/751](#) and [A/72/751/Corr.1](#)).

#### **Colombia**

46. The year 2017 was marked by the implementation of the peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP). The agreement ended a five-decade long conflict between these parties and presented a unique opportunity to enhance the protection of children. However, new dynamics of violence involving other armed groups emerged in areas vacated by FARC-EP, resulting in continued child protection challenges.

47. On 1 October 2017, a three-month temporary bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) entered into force. The commitment to suspend the enrolment of minors under the age of 15 into their ranks was one of the humanitarian measures agreed in parallel to the agreement.

#### *Grave violations*

48. A total of 57 incidents of the recruitment and use of children, affecting 169 children, were verified. ELN was the main perpetrator (113 children) followed by the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (also known as Clan del Golfo) (AGC) (35). Between September 2016 and August 2017, 135 children were formally released from FARC-EP ranks and no new cases of recruitment were documented in 2017. According to the Government, 285 children separated from armed groups entered a demobilization programme administered by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

49. The United Nations documented 46 incidents of killing and maiming, affecting 53 children, a sharp increase compared to 2016 (8 casualties). A total of 18 children were killed and 35 were maimed by shooting, crossfire and anti-personnel mines.
50. The United Nations verified four cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which were attributed to AGC (2), ELN (1) and Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (1). AGC elements threatened they would rape all girls aged 15 and above whom they meet in the streets and an AGC leader, who has since been killed, repeatedly sexually abused girls in the Department of Antioquia. At the time of writing, the case was under investigation by the Office of the Attorney General.
51. Three incidents of threats of attacks in May against protected medical personnel by unidentified armed groups were verified in Catatumbo region, Department of Norte de Santander, disrupting the functioning of health centres.
52. Three incidents of abduction, affecting nine children, were verified. Two incidents were attributed to ELN (six children) and one to AGC (three children).
53. Six incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified in the Departments of Chocó, Antioquia, Nariño and Boyacá. In November, ELN denied the Colombian Family Welfare Institute access to assist in the reintegration of children in Boyacá.

*Developments and concerns*

54. I am encouraged by the fact that, as postulated in the peace agreement, FARC-EP laid down its weapons and transformed itself into a political party, and commend the release of children, as provided for in the joint communiqué of May 2016 between the Government and the group. However, I remain concerned about reports of children who have been informally released and who fail to receive institutional support.
55. During her visits to Bogotá in November 2017 and May 2018, my Special Representative encouraged the Government to continue prioritizing the protection and reintegration of children and the prevention of violations. I welcome the efforts of the Government in this regard.
56. It is vital to continue strengthening institutions and programmes so as to ensure the effective reintegration of children and prevent new patterns of recruitment and use, particularly in areas with limited Government presence. I therefore encourage the Government to prioritize the implementation of the new recruitment prevention programme, known as “Mi futuro es hoy”, which was established in collaboration with the United Nations and civil society partners.
57. I am concerned by the high number of cases of recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular by ELN and AGC, and call on these groups to take immediate steps to end this practice. I welcome the Attorney General’s ongoing investigations into cases of the recruitment and use of children by ELN and call upon the Government and ELN to include the issue of child protection in their peace talks.
58. The issue of sexual violence against children in conflict remains of great concern and I urge the Government to prioritize the prevention thereof and to ensure that perpetrators are swiftly held to account.
59. I strongly encourage the Government to continue its mine risk education activities. The risk to the civilian population is particularly acute in areas where new landmines have been planted and humanitarian demining has not started, such as in Riosucio, Department of Chocó.



## **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

60. 2017 was a devastating year for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The reporting period saw a further fragmentation of armed groups and shifting allegiances, both of which posed challenges for the protection of children.

61. In the east, children were most affected by Nyatura and Mai-Mai Mazembe activities in North Kivu, Raia Mutomboki in South Kivu and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) in Ituri. In the Kasais, Kamuina Nsapu recruited large numbers of children and destroyed an unprecedented number of schools. A large number of children allegedly associated with the militia were killed and maimed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo) (FARDC), during operations aimed at addressing the threat posed by Kamuina Nsapu. The mobilization of the Bana Mura militias to fight Kamuina Nsapu led to further violations against children in the Kasais. Violence in the region also led to the large-scale displacement of civilians.

### *Grave violations*

62. The United Nations verified the new recruitment and use of 1,049 children (including 128 girls), 52 per cent of which occurred in North Kivu and 37 per cent in the Kasais; almost one third were under the age of 15 at the time of their recruitment. The main perpetrators were Kamuina Nsapu (370), Mai-Mai Mazembe (173), Nyatura (121), Raia Mutomboki and Mai-Mai Charles (62 each), FRPI (53), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (42), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (30) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (22). The Congolese National Police recruited three boys in Haut-Katanga and South Kivu and three cases of the use of children were attributed to FARDC, including one girl for the purposes of sexual abuse and exploitation, and two boys, who were formerly associated with armed groups, as spies.

63. A total of 291 boys and 11 girls, some as young as 8 years of age, were detained by FARDC and the Congolese National Police for their alleged association with armed groups, for periods of detention ranging between one day and one year. At the time of reporting, the United Nations was continuing to advocate the release of two boys from Tshikapa prison, Kasai Province.

64. A total of 156 children were killed and 178 were maimed. The main perpetrators among the armed groups were Nyatura (33) and Kamuina Nsapu (31). FARDC was responsible for almost half of the total number of child casualties (154), 70 per cent of which occurred in the Kasais, and the Congolese National Police was responsible for 4.

65. Cases of rape and sexual violence against 179 girls and 2 boys were verified, mostly in North Kivu (64) and the Kasais (46). Two thirds of cases were attributed to armed groups, including Raia Mutomboki (25), Kamuina Nsapu (17), Bana Mura (15) and FRPI (14). FARDC was responsible for 44 cases and the Congolese National Police for 15.

66. From a total of 1,000 reported attacks, 396 attacks on schools and 119 attacks on hospitals were verified. Kamuina Nsapu perpetrated 395 such attacks, followed by Mai-Mai Mazembe (18). Thirteen cases were attributed to FARDC. The military use of 23 schools, for periods ranging from two days to one month, was perpetrated mainly by Mai-Mai Mazembe (11) and FARDC (6).

67. A total of 143 girls and 277 boys were abducted, mostly by Bana Mura (81), Kamuina Nsapu (72), Nyatura (60), Raia Mutomboki (40), Mai-Mai Mazembe (30) and FRPI (26). One girl was abducted by FARDC and sexually abused. At least 261

of those children were abducted for recruitment purposes and 50 were subjected to sexual violence. Between March and May, in Kamonia Territory, Kasai Province, Bana Mura militias abducted 49 girls and 15 boys, forced them to work on farms, and raped and sexually abused the girls. The United Nations continues its advocacy to secure the release of these children.

68. Eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified armed elements in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Kasai region. In addition, in the last quarter of 2017 alone, 17 humanitarian staff were abducted.

*Developments and concerns*

69. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I note the continued engagement of FARDC on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, which led to their delisting in 2017 (see [A/72/361-S/2017/821](#), annex I). Important steps were taken in this regard through the training provided by the United Nations to national security forces as regards implementing the action plan and to military justice authorities on prosecuting the war crime of child recruitment. The Government continued to make progress in addressing sexual violence against children, including through disciplinary and accountability measures and by operating a nationwide helpline for victims, however more must be done. I urge the Government to redouble those efforts by urgently implementing all aspects pertaining to ending and preventing sexual violence by FARDC.

70. Furthermore, the United Nations identified 133 boys in FARDC recruitment centres during the screening of new recruits, and those boys were subsequently removed from the group of potential recruits. Awareness-raising efforts conducted by the United Nations and military pressure contributed to the separation of 271 girls and 2,089 boys, including from Kamuina Nsapu (656), Nyatura (300), Raia Mutomboki (258), Mai-Mai Mazembe (243), FDLR-FOCA (132), FRPI (108) and NDC-Rénové (95).

71. I welcome the progress made by military justice systems in holding the perpetrators of child recruitment and sexual violence accountable, with 10 armed group commanders awaiting trial and two recruiters of the Allied Democratic Forces convicted of child recruitment. I encourage the Government to ensure that Ntabo Ntaberi Cheka, who surrendered in July, is swiftly brought to trial, in accordance with due process standards, and that charges against him include all crimes he is alleged to have committed against children. I am concerned that two FARDC colonels, Colonel Ramazani and Colonel Kamulete, who are allegedly responsible for child recruitment, remain at large and encourage the Government to ensure accountability within the ranks of its security forces.

72. I am gravely concerned by the high number of children killed and maimed by national security forces, including through the disproportionate use of force, and by armed groups, notably Kamuina Nsapu, in the Kasais. I am also concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups or militia and urge the Government to treat those children primarily as victims, with the best interests of the child and other international protection standards as guiding principles.

73. I urge all parties to conflict to uphold their obligations under international law, put in place measures to mitigate the effects of armed conflict on children and ensure accountability, in close cooperation with the United Nations. I note with particular concern the high number of violations perpetrated by Kamuina Nsapu and the Bana Mura militias and call on those groups to immediately cease such actions.

## **Iraq**

74. Large-scale military operations led to the ousting of ISIL from Mosul, Tall Afar, Hawijah and Qa'im. In December, the Government of Iraq declared final victory over the group. The military operations led to a significant increase in violations against children. On 15 October, the federal Government deployed its forces to re-establish control in Kirkuk and other disputed areas that were previously under the control of Kurdish Peshmerga forces, as well as over border crossings. Since December 2016, the popular mobilization forces (PMF) are under the direct command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Iraqi armed forces.

### *Grave violations*

75. The United Nations documented 523 cases of children recruited by parties to conflict, of which 109 cases (101 boys, 8 girls) were verified. Cases of recruitment involving 59 children, including 8 girls, were attributed to ISIL. Children were used as suicide bombers and combatants, for logistics and manufacturing explosive devices, and as wives for fighters. A total of 35 boys were recruited by unidentified armed groups, 9 by the Hêzên Parastina Gel/People's Defence Forces — the armed wing of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), 4 by the Yekîneyên Berxwedana Şengalê/Sinjar Resistance Units, 1 by Hêza Parastina Êzîdxanê/Protection Force of Ezidkhan and 1 by Zeravani forces, part of the Peshmerga.

76. In 2017 at least 1,036 children (1,024 boys, 12 girls), including 345 in the Kurdistan Region, remained in juvenile detention facilities on national security-related charges, mostly for their alleged association with ISIL.

77. The killing and maiming of children remained the most prevalent violation, with 717 child casualties verified. Verified incidents resulted in 279 children being killed (143 boys, 84 girls, 52 sex unknown) and 438 children being maimed (270 boys, 143 girls, 25 sex unknown).

78. Of the total number of verified cases of killing and maiming, 424 were attributed to ISIL, 109 to Iraqi security forces (ISF) and the international counter-ISIL coalition, 34 to Peshmerga and 150 to unknown parties to the conflict. Over half of all incidents were the result of air strikes, shelling, sniper fire and rockets, resulting in 390 child casualties. Improvised explosive devices were the second leading cause (24 per cent), followed by targeted attacks on children (10 per cent), including three boys who were killed and two who were injured by unidentified parties for their alleged association with ISIL. The United Nations remains concerned about the continued targeting by ISIL of civilians fleeing areas of hostilities or of those who refuse to follow their "regulations", resulting in 79 child casualties.

79. Nine cases of sexual violence were verified. A 15-year-old boy was raped over three consecutive nights by an ISIL commander and one boy was sexually assaulted by an unidentified armed group. Six girls, aged 16 and 17, were forced to marry ISIL fighters in Hawijah and one 17-year-old Yazidi girl was sexually abused by ISIL members before being forced to manufacture bombs.

80. The United Nations documented 161 incidents of attacks on schools and hospitals, of which 153 were verified (135 of these incidents date from previous years). In Ninawa, two schools were destroyed during air strikes and eight were hit by mortars launched by ISIL. Explosive devices were found near five schools and were believed to have been placed there by ISIL, in Ninawa and Salah al-Din. In Ninawa, one member of medical staff was killed and two hospitals were damaged during ISIL attacks.

81. The United Nations verified 22 reports of the military use of schools (21) and hospitals (1), including by ISIL (14), PMF (3), the federal police (2), ISF (2) and Peshmerga (1), in Ninawa, Kirkuk and Erbil. ISIL used schools and hospitals to store weapons and explosives or position fighters and snipers, while other parties mainly used such facilities as military bases and screening centres.

82. The United Nations verified the abduction of 32 children, all by ISIL (22 of these cases date from previous years). Seven abducted children were found dead in Anbar. A 7-year-old girl, who had been abducted in Mosul, was found by ISF with a person-borne improvised explosive device, walking among civilians. One boy and one girl, aged 17, were abducted from their homes when ISIL attacked their village in Kirkuk.

83. Three incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, all of which were perpetrated by ISIL. Cases included restrictions placed on supplies of medicine and clean water, in west Mosul, and the closure of checkpoints.

#### *Developments and concerns*

84. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I welcome the endorsement of the national child protection policy by the Government of Iraq, including a focus on the release and reintegration of children. I am also encouraged by the establishment of a high-level interministerial committee on monitoring and reporting, as endorsed by the Prime Minister in November, in order to better address grave violations against children in armed conflict, as well as the appointment of the National Security Adviser as focal point for the ongoing dialogue with the United Nations.

85. I remain deeply concerned over the number of verified violations committed against children, including cases of killing and maiming and the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular ISIL. I am also concerned by credible reports from south Iraq, specifically Najaf and Diwaniyah, in which groups under the umbrella of PMF organized military training for boys aged 15 and above. I encourage the Government to develop an action plan to end and prevent the alleged training, recruitment and use of children by PMF without delay.

86. Reports of children held in detention for their alleged association with ISIL remain a concern. I urge the Government to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups primarily as victims, in line with international juvenile justice principles, and to use detention only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. In this regard, the United Nations stands ready to support the Government in developing and implementing reintegration services for children formerly associated with armed groups.

#### **Israel and State of Palestine**

87. Throughout 2017, the security and political situation remained tense. A large number of documented incidents occurred in July and December following demonstrations and clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

#### *Grave violations*

88. A large number of children continued to be arrested and detained by Israeli forces for alleged security offences. According to prison data provided by Israel Prison Service based on a request under the Freedom of Information Law, between January and December, a monthly average of 312 Palestinian children were held in detention. At the end of December, among at least 352 children detained, 244 were

being held in pretrial detention and/or during trial. The United Nations obtained affidavits from 162 Palestinian boys between the ages of 12 and 17 who had been detained by Israeli forces, in which they stated that they had been subjected to ill-treatment and breaches of due process. The United Nations also documented five cases of children held in administrative detention in 2017.

89. In 2017, 15 Palestinian children (including two girls) were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip. Among those children, five (two girls, three boys) aged between 15 and 17 were killed in the context of stabbing or presumed stabbing attacks in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Two children were killed in shelling incidents and seven children were killed by live ammunition in clashes in Gaza and the West Bank. All of the casualties were attributed to the Israeli forces.

90. A number of cases raise concerns regarding the excessive use of force by Israeli forces. In one instance, on 21 July, Israeli forces responded to a group of young men and boys throwing stones in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem, with excessive use of force, shooting a 17-year-old boy. There were also worrisome calls by Palestinian political actors for the participation of youth in stone-throwing against Israelis.

91. A total of 1,160 Palestinian children (including 39 girls) were injured in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza: 809 were injured by Israeli forces during clashes and demonstrations; 317 during military operations, including search and arrest operations; and 3 Palestinian boys, aged between 15 and 17, in presumed stabbing attempts against Israeli forces.

92. In addition, seven Palestinian children were injured after being hit by stones or physically assaulted in Hebron, Nablus and East Jerusalem, reportedly by Israeli settlers.

93. Five Israeli children were injured by Palestinians in East Jerusalem (three), Hebron (one) and Ramallah (one) when their vehicles were hit by stones or Molotov cocktails. One 12-year-old Israeli boy reportedly suffered head injuries after being hit with a stone by a Palestinian in Hebron.

94. Six schools in Gaza and Israel sustained damage in the reporting period. Four schools suffered minor damage in Gaza in the context of Israeli air strikes, reportedly in response to projectiles launched by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza. In addition, one school in Gaza and one kindergarten in Sderot, Israel, sustained minor damage as a result of rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups. In addition, the United Nations documented 164 incidents of disruption of access to education in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

95. The United Nations uncovered two tunnels used by armed elements running under three United Nations-run schools in Gaza in June and October, posing a potential threat to the lives of Palestinian children and United Nations staff.

96. The United Nations documented six incidents of incursions or clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinians in or around health facilities, affecting children in the West Bank. An increasing percentage of applications by children to cross the Erez checkpoint out of Gaza for medical treatment were delayed in 2017 (32 per cent, against 26 per cent in 2016), which affected 2,420 children (including 988 girls).

#### *Developments and concerns*

97. I am extremely concerned regarding the ongoing violence against children in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect children from all forms of violence, to refrain from the excessive use of force and from encouraging their

participation in violent demonstrations and to engage constructively with the United Nations to prevent future violations. I also reiterate my call upon the Government of Israel to draw on international juvenile justice principles, reconsider the use of administrative detention for children, refrain from the use of solitary confinement or from encouraging children to act as informants, ensure that detention is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time, and to prioritize alternatives to detention.

## **Lebanon**

98. Children continue to be affected by clashes and explosive devices in the north Bīqa' Valley and the Ein El Helweh Palestine refugee camp, by unexploded ordnance in the south and sporadic violence in border areas.

### *Grave violations*

99. In Lebanon, the United Nations continued to document the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, including three verified cases of boys recruited by ISIL in and around Tripoli for trafficking into the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, three alleged cases of recruitment from Lebanon into the Syrian Arab Republic by Hizbullah were reported, as well as the use of children by armed factions and groups for fighting in Ein El Helweh Palestine refugee camp.

100. The number of children in pretrial detention under military jurisdiction on charges relating to terrorism or national security, following their alleged association with armed groups in Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic increased: 53 boys allegedly associated with ISIL were arrested during the reporting period. Of these, 29 were released and 24 remained in detention as at December, along with 9 children detained before 2017 for their association the Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (also known as Levant Liberation Organization).

101. In a marked increase from 2016 (8 child casualties), the United Nations verified 20 child casualties (8 killed, 12 wounded). Violations were most prevalent in Arsal and Ein El Helweh camp.

102. A United Nations school for Palestinian refugees and a centre run by a non-governmental organization sustained major damages during violence between Palestinian armed factions in Ein El Helweh in February.

103. Escalations of armed violence in Ein El Helweh and one isolated incident in the Beddawi Palestine refugee camp disrupted the delivery of education and health services for extensive periods. Military operations in Arsal in July forced at least two non-governmental organizations to suspend critical services for children.

### *Developments and concerns*

104. I am concerned by the increasing number of verified cases of child casualties in Lebanon as well as by reports of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and reiterate my call on the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Children associated with parties to conflict must be treated primarily as victims and given reintegration assistance. I also call upon the Government to ensure that detention is used only as a measure of last resort, for the shortest period of time and to consider alternatives to detention of children formerly associated with armed groups whenever possible. I further call upon armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

## Libya

105. Conflict continued throughout Libya, with numerous armed groups engaging in intermittent hostilities while fighting for control of territory. Owing to the level of insecurity, most United Nations staff remained located outside of the country, which restricted the ability to monitor violations.

### *Grave violations*

106. Limited information is available regarding the recruitment and use of children by armed elements. However, cases of the use of children by armed groups continued to be reported. For instance, in October, 125 adolescents formerly associated with armed groups in the Zintan Municipality were released.

107. Children were deprived of their liberty by parties to the conflict and used in prisoner exchanges. In the context of fighting between the Libyan National Army (LNA) and the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) armed group in the oil crescent area, LNA and affiliated forces arrested and detained children for up to seven weeks for their alleged association with PFG. This included boys aged as young as 10.

108. At least 40 children were killed and 38 children injured by air strikes, shelling, small arms fire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. For example, in January, four children were killed in an air strike conducted by LNA in Ganfouda neighbourhood, Benghazi. In June, in Sabha, a 13-year-old girl and a 3-year-old boy were caught in crossfire and injured during an armed clash between gunmen loyal to Qadhadhfa and Tebu armed tribal forces. In October, six boys and three girls were killed, and four children were injured, during air strikes in the rural areas of Fata'ih and Arqam near Darnah. The attacks occurred in areas contested by LNA and affiliated forces and the Darnah Mujahidin Shura Council.

109. The United Nations documented incidents that affected displaced persons and migrants, including children, who were deprived of their liberty, raped or subjected to prostitution or other forms of sexual violence by individuals believed to be associated with armed groups or affiliated with State actors.

110. The United Nations documented two incidents of children injured by stray bullets while attending school. The source of fire could not be verified. In addition, 18 attacks against hospitals and medical personnel were verified. For example, in March, one LNA air strike hit a medical centre, killing two civilians. In September, in the context of fighting between armed groups, the University Hospital in Sabratah in western Libya was partially damaged by shelling. Incidents of abduction and detention of medical personnel were also documented, including by LNA and the Special Deterrence Force.

111. The United Nations continued to document incidents of denials of humanitarian access, including attacks on humanitarian actors. Incidents included the detention of four humanitarian staff at the Mitiga airport and an attack on a United Nations convoy by an unknown armed group in Zawiyah.

### *Developments and concerns*

112. I welcome the cooperation of authorities and commanders in releasing children associated with armed actors in Zintan Municipality and strongly encourage other armed groups to take similar steps. I am gravely concerned by reports of sexual violence and other violations committed against children in Libya, including the recruitment, use and trafficking of children, and urge the Government of National Accord to take action to address this issue without delay.

**Mali**

113. The situation in northern Mali was marked by clashes between armed groups that were signatories to the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, of 2015 (the Platform coalition of armed groups and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA)), which ended following the signing, on 20 September 2017, of the cessation of hostilities agreement. In contrast, in the northern and central regions, attacks by non-signatory armed groups against national and international forces increased.

*Grave violations*

114. A total of 159 cases of child recruitment and use were verified (157 boys, 2 girls), including 114 cases that occurred in previous years but were documented in 2017. Cases were attributed to CMA (47) (including to the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (21) and the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (18)); the Platform (73) (including to the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (29) and the self-defence groups Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy (20 each)); Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (12); Ansar Eddine (9); Al Mourabitoun (3); Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest and Front de libération du Macina (1 each); and to unidentified armed groups (13).

115. During the reporting period, 23 boys who had been detained by the Government for their alleged association with armed groups were released, including 3 boys who were convicted as adults and released after having served their sentences. The United Nations continued its advocacy with the national authorities, in line with the Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups signed in 2013, to ensure the release of three other boys who were still in detention. In separate incidents, 10 boys associated with GATIA (9) and CMA (1) were deprived of their liberty by CMA and GATIA, respectively, and released following United Nations advocacy.

116. The United Nations verified the killing (19) and maiming (15) of 34 children resulting from crossfire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. One girl died after being raped. The majority of casualties occurred in Gao (36 per cent) and Kidal (25 per cent) Regions.

117. Nine incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence were verified, affecting 13 girls aged between 12 and 17. Cases were attributed to the Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance II (CMFPR-II) (5); the Malian armed forces (3); MSA (1); and unidentified elements (4). A formal judicial process was initiated in two cases (against CMFPR-II and unidentified elements).

118. A total of 41 attacks on schools and 9 attacks against hospitals were verified in central and northern Mali, all of which remain unattributed. For instance, in September, unidentified armed elements attacked an ambulance belonging to an international non-governmental organization in Tassiga, Gao Region, firing at the vehicle and injuring a midwife. Attacks and threats against educational staff, students and parents were prevalent, particularly in Mopti Region, which accounted for 21 incidents. In addition, 12 schools were used for military purposes by armed groups, including at least four by CMA and two by the Platform. As at December, 657 schools remained closed in conflict-affected regions.

119. Two incidents of abduction, affecting three boys and one girl, were verified. For instance, in April, a 12-year-old girl, who was allegedly accompanied by an unspecified number of other girls, was abducted and raped by unidentified armed elements in Mopti Region.



120. The United Nations verified 132 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including carjacking and the killing and kidnapping of humanitarian workers. Increasing criminality also undermined humanitarian response efforts. Most incidents occurred in Gao (35) and Kidal (31) Regions. All cases remain unattributed. At least seven organizations providing care to children were affected and at least 10 non-governmental organizations were compelled to temporarily suspend their humanitarian programmes.

*Developments and concerns*

121. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** Following the signature by CMA of an action plan with the United Nations in March to end and prevent grave violations against children, the group identified focal points and priority activities, including the screening of troops to identify associated children. I welcome these steps but remain concerned regarding incidents of child recruitment and use. I urge CMA to implement the action plan without delay.

122. In a positive development, on 1 February 2018, the Government endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, aimed at protecting education facilities from military use during conflict. I encourage the Government to finalize the development of a plan of action to implement the declaration without delay.

123. I am gravely concerned about the continuing high numbers of children recruited and used by the Platform, in particular by GATIA, and urge its leadership to take immediate action and engage with the United Nations to release children and end this practice.

**Myanmar**

124. While the national peace process between the Government of Myanmar and several armed groups continued, long-standing conflicts in Kachin and Shan States persisted. In addition, on 25 August, armed attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against Myanmar police posts in northern Rakhine State triggered an immediate response from Myanmar Armed Forces, including the Border Guard Police and Tatmadaw, affecting primarily the Rohingya community. Following the Government's response, a situation of lawlessness ensued, which further compounded the vulnerability of civilians. In all these regions, the security situation remains volatile and grave violations against children continue to be documented.

125. With respect to the situation in Rakhine State, given that the majority of the affected population fled to Bangladesh, a specialized team of monitors was dispatched to camps in the border area to undertake monitoring and verification of alleged violations against children. Information from this monitoring mission is presented in paragraphs 135 to 137 below.

*Grave violations*

126. In 2017, the United Nations documented 438 cases of the recruitment and use of children, 38 of which were verified. Among those cases, 285 date from previous years.

127. The vast majority of documented cases were attributed to the Tatmadaw, including 166 cases of formal recruitment of children (as young as 13) and the informal or temporary use of about 200 children, mainly for maintenance or cleaning duties.

128. The United Nations verified 39 cases of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups were verified, 35 of which were attributed to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and four cases to the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).

129. The United Nations verified the detention of three boys for alleged association with armed groups and one for alleged “desertion” from the Tatmadaw. In addition, five cases of the military detention of suspected minors (recruited before turning 18) by the Myanmar Armed Forces for alleged “desertion” were documented. After the Myanmar Armed Forces were notified, the suspected minors were sent back to their regiment and placed on light duty, pending verification of their age.

130. The United Nations verified 29 incidents of the killing and maiming of children, involving 47 children (36 boys, 11 girls) in Kachin and Shan States. Landmines and explosive remnants of war continued to be the primary causes of child casualties in those two states (21 incidents), while eight crossfire incidents were attributed jointly to the Tatmadaw and armed groups.

131. The United Nations verified three cases of sexual violence committed against four girls aged as young as 7. Cases were attributed to the Tatmadaw, KIA and a people’s militia in Shan State (one each). In one incident, a Tatmadaw soldier was court-martialled, sentenced to one year of imprisonment and permanently dismissed from the Tatmadaw.

132. A total of 15 attacks on schools were documented during the reporting period. Incidents included damage to a school owing to an armed clash between Tatmadaw and TNLA elements, and attacks on school personnel by TNLA, including the rape of a middle school director in Kyaukme township, Shan State.

133. The United Nations documented 12 incidents of child abduction (14 boys, 3 girls). 10 incidents were attributed to KIA, mainly for the purposes of the recruitment and use of children, while one incident each was attributed to the Tatmadaw and TNLA. Most of the children affected were released after a few days or weeks.

134. Access for humanitarian organizations, particularly in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States, further deteriorated in 2017, affecting displaced people and other affected civilians in need of humanitarian assistance. Since April 2016, international humanitarian organizations have been refused permission by the Government to distribute food or other relief supplies in areas beyond Government control. Internally displaced persons located in those areas were instructed to travel to designated distribution points in Government-controlled areas in order to collect relief supplies.

#### *Grave violations in northern Rakhine State*

135. The United Nations verified the use of 53 boys in northern Rakhine State, largely by the Border Guard Police (47 boys), including for camp maintenance, construction and the carrying of equipment. Information on the recruitment and use by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army of boys, aged as young as 10, was also documented and one case was verified. The fear of reprisals by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against refugees in Bangladesh for sharing information on the violations perpetrated by the group may have impeded a more complete documentation of such incidents.

136. The United Nations verified the killing (196) and maiming (24) of 220 children (133 boys, 51 girls, 36 sex unknown). All those child casualties occurred during operations by the Border Guard Police and Tatmadaw across 28 villages in Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in response to attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

137. The United Nations documented 41 cases of rape by the Tatmadaw, including the gang rape of girls as young as 10. Ten cases were verified, including that of a 14-year-old girl in Maungdaw township, who was seized and gang-raped by two Tatmadaw soldiers before being killed in front of her mother and three siblings.

*Developments and concerns*

138. I recognize the progress of the Government on the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Myanmar Armed Forces, including through the release of 49 children from the Tatmadaw in 2017, the continued provision of access for monitoring and monthly meetings with the United Nations for joint case reviews of alleged underage recruits. I call on the Government to build on these achievements in order to reinvigorate its road map towards compliance by further accelerating the verification and release of children, ensuring that civilian and military perpetrators of child recruitment are held to account and bringing to a halt the informal association of children with its forces. Children formerly associated with armed forces or groups should be seen primarily as victims, treated in line with international juvenile justice principles and their swift release and reintegration should be prioritized whenever possible.

139. My Special Representative visited Myanmar in May 2018 and held constructive discussions with the Government, including on the speedy completion of the existing action plan, the expeditious passage of the draft child law, the inclusion of child protection issues in the ongoing peace dialogue and on the question of permission to enter Rakhine State to document violations. The Government made a commitment to prioritize these issues.

140. I commend the Kachin Independence Army, the Karenni National Progressive Party/Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Shan State Army for their engagement with the United Nations on child protection and their commitment to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, and reiterate my call on the Government to facilitate the signature and implementation of action plans with listed armed groups, as suggested by my Special Representative during her latest country visit.

141. I am concerned by the verified recruitment and use of children in northern Rakhine State and credible reports of the killing and maiming of children in a large-scale massacre of Hindus in Maungdaw township on 27 August, allegedly by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army elements. I underline the need for intensified monitoring and verification of grave violations perpetrated by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, in particular in Rakhine State, and call upon the group to take immediate action to end and prevent such violations and to refrain from issuing threats to potential witnesses of grave violations against children.

142. I am furthermore deeply concerned about the grave violations against children in northern Rakhine State following the August 2017 attacks, in particular cases of the killing, maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, and strongly urge the Government of Myanmar to immediately allow unimpeded access for child protection actors to conflict-affected areas, including Rakhine State, and to conduct transparent investigations into the allegations of grave violations against children and ensure support services for survivors and returnees, as discussed with my Special Representative.

**Somalia**

143. The security situation in Somalia remained highly volatile, with continued Al-Shabaab attacks on Somali security forces, government officials and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The Somali National Army, AMISOM and military forces of Ethiopia and Kenya conducted military operations against Al-Shabaab, and the United States of America intensified air strikes against the group.

*Grave violations*

144. A total of 2,087 boys and 40 girls were recruited and used. Recruitment of children by Al-Shabaab significantly increased (1,770) compared to 2016, especially after the group forced teachers to adopt a new curriculum. Al-Shabaab used detention, violence and threats to force family members, teachers and elders to hand over their children, causing families to flee or to send their children, often unaccompanied, out of areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, in order to ensure their protection. Children were also recruited by the Somali National Army (119), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (66), unidentified clan militias (58), Galmudug forces (40), Jubbaland forces (40), Southwest forces (21) and the Somali Police Force (11).

145. The detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab remained concerning, with children detained mainly by the Somali National Army (156), the Somali Police Force (37), Jubbaland forces (10), Southwest forces (7) and AMISOM (7).

146. A total of 931 children were killed and maimed by unknown armed elements (477), Al-Shabaab (208), the Somali National Army (88), unidentified clan militias (65), Southwest forces (26), AMISOM (21), Jubbaland forces (18), the Somali Police Force (10), Puntland armed forces (7), Kenyan Defence Forces (6), Galmudug forces (4) and Ethiopian Liyu Police (1). Most child casualties resulted from crossfire during military operations, mortar shelling, improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and air strikes. Al-Shabaab also publicly executed children.

147. The United Nations verified incidents of sexual violence affecting 330 girls and 1 boy, attributed to unknown armed elements (125), Al-Shabaab (75), the Somali National Army (37), Jubbaland forces (28), Southwest forces (26), unidentified clan militias (19), Ethiopian Liyu Police (10), Galmudug forces (5), Puntland armed forces (3), Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Somali Police Force (1 each). Rape often occurred in camps for internally displaced persons or when girls collected firewood or water.

148. Attacks on 64 schools were verified, 58 of which were attributed to Al-Shabaab. Cases included the detention of teachers for refusing to adopt Al-Shabaab's curriculum or school closures. For instance, on 24 February, Al-Shabaab closed a madrasa in Ceel Garas town, Galguduud Region, and arrested the teacher, who had declined to refer his students for military training. Of 10 verified attacks on hospitals, 6 were attributed to Al-Shabaab.

149. Abductions almost doubled compared to 2016: 1,634 children were abducted, 98 per cent of them by Al-Shabaab (1,608). Abductees as young as 9 were sent to Al-Shabaab madrasas or training camps. In July and August alone, 550 children were abducted in Ceel Buur district and taken to the Ali Jim'ale centre run by Al-Shabaab in Ceel Buur town, Galguduud Region.

150. Incidents of denial of humanitarian access were mainly attributed to Al-Shabaab (26), unidentified clan militias (9) and the Somali National Army (2).

*Developments and concerns*

151. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** The Child Protection Unit of the Ministry of Defence screened and sensitized 1,569 integrated Somali National Army soldiers, 700 members of the Darwish force and 235 members of the Southwest forces, with United Nations support. Sustained United Nations engagement with the National Intelligence and Security Agency resulted in the handover of 36 boys to child protection actors. In August, the Chief of Defence Forces

issued a General Command Order to protect children from armed conflict. In November, the drafting process for a child rights bill was launched. I welcome these steps and call on the Government to swiftly implement its action plans.

152. A group of 40 children detained in Puntland since 2016 over their association with Al-Shabaab was placed in a reintegration centre in Garowe. The prison sentences of 28 of the children were reduced to 10 years. While I welcome their handover, I am concerned about the lengthy prison sentences and call upon the President of Puntland to grant a presidential pardon and accelerate the children's transfer to reintegration centres closer to their areas of origin. I further call on Puntland authorities to harmonize its legislations with federal laws and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

153. I am extremely concerned by the surge in the number of violations against children, including the increase in the number of cases of the recruitment and use of children and of sexual violence perpetrated against them attributed to Jubbaland, Southwest and Galmudug forces; the increase in the number of Al-Shabaab recruitment campaigns, attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions; as well as the increase in the number of air strikes by unidentified perpetrators targeting Al-Shabaab training camps holding children. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international law.

154. I remain concerned by the detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab and call on authorities to treat those children primarily as victims, with the best interests of the child and international protection standards as guiding principles.

### **South Sudan**

155. Fighting between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and its allies against the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) continued and spread to the Greater Upper Nile region. Violations against children by all parties to the conflict increased, with the highest number of incidents documented in the Greater Equatoria region, followed by the Greater Upper Nile region. Owing to insecurity and access restrictions, many incidents could not be verified.

#### *Grave violations*

156. The United Nations verified 140 incidents of the recruitment and use of children, which affected 1,221 children, including 164 girls. They were attributed to pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (459 children), followed by the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) (405), SPLA (254), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (60), the South Sudan Democratic Army-Cobra Faction (SSDA-CF) (42) and the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) (1). Children were most affected in Unity but were observed throughout the country wearing military uniforms, manning checkpoints, being used as porters or bodyguards and carrying weapons.

157. The United Nations verified 54 incidents of killing (36 children) and maiming (57 children). The majority of casualties were attributed to SPLA (38 children) and pro-Machar SPLA-IO (6). Children continued to be affected by unexploded ordnance (38 child casualties).

158. The United Nations verified incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting 55 girls, including 13 girls who were gang-raped. The majority of cases were verified in Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria and attributed to SPLA (47 girls) followed by pro-Machar SPLA-IO (3), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (2), SSNPS, South Sudan National Wildlife Service and SSNLM (1 each). Girls were most frequently

affected during military operations carried out by SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO, as well as at checkpoints.

159. Attacks on 26 schools and 24 hospitals were verified. Cases were attributed to SPLA (33), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (5), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (2) and the South Sudan People's Patriotic Front (SSPPF) (1). Nine cases resulted from crossfire incidents between SPLA and pro-Machar SPLA-IO. In April, schools and health facilities in Eastern Equatoria were particularly affected following SPLA military offensives in and around Pajok, Magwe County (17 attacks).

160. In addition, 22 schools and two hospitals were used for military purposes. Cases were mainly attributed to SPLA (18), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (2), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (2) and SSNPS (1). All 22 schools continued to be used for military purposes at the time of writing.

161. A total of 12 incidents of abduction, which affected 29 children, including 9 girls, were verified. Cases were attributed to SPLA (20 children), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (6) and pro-Machar SPLA-IO (3). Children continued to be abducted for recruitment purposes. For instance, in Unity, in August, three boys, aged between 14 and 15, were abducted by SPLA soldiers on their way back to a United Nations protection of civilians site in Bentiu, before being rescued by United Nations peacekeepers.

162. A total of 783 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, a significant increase from 2016. Incidents were attributed to national authorities and institutions (400), SPLA (189), pro-Machar SPLA-IO (104), pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO (10), the White Army and SSPPF (3 each). Incidents involved attacks on humanitarian personnel and the looting of warehouses and humanitarian assets, as well as bureaucratic impediments. For instance, in March, six humanitarian workers on their way to Jonglei to implement child protection activities for children released from SSDA-CF were killed in Central Equatoria.

#### *Developments and concerns*

163. Within the framework of the action plan signed with SPLA on the recruitment and use of children, the South Sudan National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission carried out two training-of-trainers sessions on child protection, with the support of the United Nations, for a total of 70 SPLA officers. The officers subsequently facilitated internal training programmes initiated by SPLA.

164. The United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission conducted several advocacy campaigns for the release of children associated with armed groups. In August, during an age-assessment exercise in Pibor, Jonglei, 313 boys were found to be associated with pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO. Between October and December, an age assessment by the United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission in Yambio, Western Equatoria, identified 426 children associated with SSNLM and 44 children associated with pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO. In the first four months of 2018, 518 children, including 182 girls, were released in a first phase by SSNLM and pro-Taban Deng SPLA-IO.

165. In November, in a meeting with the United Nations, the First Vice-President, Taban Deng Gai, acknowledged the presence of children in the ranks of his troops, reaffirmed his support for their release and subsequently nominated a child protection focal point.

166. While I take note of the above-mentioned steps, the scale of violations affecting children in South Sudan and the level of impunity for perpetrators remain alarming. I remind parties to conflict that all children recruited and used must be released and

handed over to civilian child protection actors, in line with the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict, the 2017 Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and the action plans signed with the United Nations. I call on the Government to ensure accountability for violations and urge all parties to conflict to abide by their obligations to protect children.

167. Furthermore, I am extremely concerned about the increase in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals, particularly by Government forces, and urge the Government to end such attacks immediately.

### **The Sudan**

168. Clashes between the Government and armed groups in Darfur decreased significantly, although an unsuccessful attempt was made by the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) and allied forces to reassert their presence in North and East Darfur in May, and the arms collection campaign by the Government spurred clashes with Musa Hilal and allied forces in October. The activities of the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) remained limited to pockets of West Jebel Marra. While the situation in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei was relatively stable, divisions within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) reportedly resulted in ethnic clashes. Throughout the year, unilateral ceasefires were extended in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

#### *Grave violations: Darfur*

169. The United Nations documented the recruitment and use of 24 children, of which one case, involving the recruitment of a 14-year-old boy by SLA/AW, was verified. In addition, 22 children were detained by the Government for their alleged association with armed groups, for periods lasting between three weeks and five months. All children have been released from detention.

170. A total of 94 incidents of killing (19) and maiming (75), affecting 146 children, were verified (116 boys, 30 girls), which reflected a decrease from the 199 children killed or maimed in 2016. Child casualties resulted from shooting (75), unexploded ordnance (66), aerial bombardment (3) and physical assault (2). Incidents were attributed to unidentified armed elements (33), Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (4), Sudan Police (3), Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) (3), tribal clashes (2) and one each to SLA/AW, the Popular Defence Forces and the joint Chad-Sudan border monitoring force. Almost half of all the incidents (46) were caused by unexploded ordnance and could not be attributed.

171. The United Nations verified 36 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which affected 44 girls, aged between 6 and 17. Cases were attributed to unidentified armed elements (38), SAF (3), RSF (1), Sudan Police (1), and Sudan Liberation Army/Peace and Development (SLA/PD) (1). Of the 36 incidents, to date, 3 have resulted in a conviction.

172. A total of eight attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (4) were verified and attributed to unidentified armed elements (5), RSF (2) and SLA/PD (1). Attacks on schools and hospitals involved the abduction and rape of two teachers, physical damage to schools and the looting of medical material. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of four schools by RSF (3) and SAF (1). The school used by SAF in Laiba, East Jebel Marra, remained occupied at the time of writing.

173. Nine incidents of abduction, affecting 10 boys and 3 girls, were verified, all of which were attributed to unidentified armed elements.

174. The United Nations verified one incident of denial of humanitarian access. In Kutum, North Darfur, a vehicle transporting medicine was prevented from passing by

unidentified armed elements. Restrictions on movement and bureaucratic constraints imposed by the Government on the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations delivering aid to vulnerable populations, particularly in East Jebel Marra, continued to affect the delivery of humanitarian aid to children.

*Grave violations: South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

175. While no cases of child recruitment and use could be verified, the United Nations received allegations of the recruitment of boys by a splinter group of SPLM-N in Kurmuk, Blue Nile, prior to the group's integration into SAF.

176. The killing (10) and maiming (6) of 16 boys was verified and attributed to unidentified armed elements (10) and SPLM-N (1). Three child casualties resulted from unexploded ordnance and two occurred during clashes and could not be attributed. Five incidents took place in South Kordofan and one in Abyei.

177. No attacks on schools and hospitals were verified. However, in May, SAF used three schools formerly held by SPLM-N in Kurmuk, Blue Nile, and one hospital in Jurt West village, Blue Nile, for military purposes.

178. Access restrictions imposed by SPLM-N continued to affect the delivery of humanitarian aid to children.

*Developments and concerns*

179. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** During her visit to the Sudan from 25 February to 1 March 2018, my Special Representative witnessed commendable progress in the implementation of the Government's action plan and the initiation of a process of building on the action plan so as to create a national plan of prevention of violations against children. In this regard, I welcome the impact of measures taken by the high-level and technical committees at the national and state levels to improve the protection of children, including the adoption of the standard operating procedures on the release and handover of children associated with armed groups and the complaint mechanism manual to report child recruitment. I am encouraged by the access provided for joint United Nations-Government monitoring and verification missions to barracks and training centres of the armed forces, the issuance of command orders and directives to all Government forces to prevent child recruitment and the release of all children previously detained. There have been no verified reports of the recruitment and use of children by the Government of the Sudan since 2015. Furthermore, I welcome efforts by the Government to demilitarize schools and hospitals and the initiation of an awareness-raising campaign to prevent violations against children.

180. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I welcome the continued engagement by SPLM-N on its action plan, including the establishment of an action plan committee and the issuance of a command order prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, and call on the group to provide access for the United Nations to areas under its control.

181. I welcome the respective command orders issued by SLA/MM and the Justice and Equality Movement and urge both parties to expedite their implementation plans to end and prevent child recruitment, in particular by facilitating verification missions by the United Nations.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

182. A high intensity of conflict continued across the Syrian Arab Republic in 2017, resulting in the highest number of verified grave violations against children (2,896)



ever recorded in the country. Civilians trapped in densely populated besieged areas, mainly by Government forces, continued to be the worst affected.

*Grave violations*

183. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children increased by 13 per cent compared to 2016, with 961 cases (872 boys, 89 girls) verified. Ninety per cent of the children served in combat roles (861) and 26 per cent (254) were below the age of 15. Of the total number of verified cases, 36 children were of foreign origin and at least 16 were killed in combat.

184. Verified cases were attributed to ISIL (284); groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (244); People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (224); Government forces and pro-government militias (73); Ahrar al-Sham (53); Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (41); Army of Islam (also known as Jaysh al-Islam) (37); and unidentified armed groups (five).

185. Verified cases of the recruitment and use of children by ISIL, including a 4-year-old child, more than doubled in 2017. The recruitment and use of children by YPG/YPJ increased almost fivefold (from 46 to 224) compared to 2016. Nearly one third of the verified cases of children recruited by the group were girls (72) and 16 per cent were of Arab origin. Groups self-affiliated with the FSA were responsible for a quarter of all verified cases. Over 70 per cent of verified cases occurred in Aleppo, Hama and Idlib Governorates. In relation to children recruited by Government forces and pro-government militias, some received military training, including outside of the country when children of foreign origin were associated with pro-government militia, and were found carrying military intelligence identification cards.

186. Children continued to be arrested and detained for their alleged association with armed groups. The arrest and detention of 72 children by Government forces (46 boys, 26 girls; some aged as young as 10) for their alleged association with armed groups, was verified. At least 38 of these children were ill-treated, tortured and/or raped during their detention.

187. Six boys, as young as 12, were deprived of their liberty for alleged association with opposing parties. Four cases were attributed to groups self-affiliated with FSA, one to ISIL and one to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham. In the context of the advances made on ISIL-held areas during the second half of 2017, at least 166 children were deprived of their liberty by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) for their alleged affiliation with ISIL. ISIL also deprived 27 children of their liberty as punishment for a wide range of acts it classifies as crimes.

188. The United Nations verified the killing (910) and maiming (361) of 1,271 children. Cases were attributed to Government and pro-government forces (586 cases, of which 404 were aerial attacks); ISIL (150); the international counter-ISIL coalition (43); YPG/YPJ (29); groups self-affiliated with FSA (9); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3); Ahrar al-Sham (1); and unidentified perpetrators (450). Most of the verified cases were as a result of air strikes (734), followed by shelling (191) and improvised explosive devices (133). In one incident, in April, aerial attacks struck a residential area north of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib, killing 35 children and injuring 23.

189. The United Nations verified 24 cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence (23 girls, 1 boy). Cases included gang rape, forced marriage to armed group fighters, trafficking and sexual enslavement. Of the 24 cases, 18 were attributed to ISIL, 4 to Government forces and 2 to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham.

190. The United Nations verified 67 attacks on schools and education personnel. Incidents were attributed to Government and pro-government forces (44), the

international counter-ISIL coalition (4), ISIL (3) and groups self-affiliated with the FSA (2). The majority of attacks were a result of air strikes (47).

191. The United Nations verified 108 attacks on hospitals and medical personnel, resulting in the killing of 6 and injuring of at least 29 medical personnel. Attacks were attributed to Government forces (13); pro-government forces (67); groups self-affiliated with FSA (4); the international counter-ISIL coalition (4); ISIL (2); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1). Most of the attacks resulted from air strikes (81).

192. Schools were frequently used for military purposes, with 22 verified incidents attributed to ISIL (20) and YPG/YPJ (2). Of these, 16 schools were subsequently attacked. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of 10 hospitals by ISIL, among which 8 were subsequently attacked. Schools and hospitals served as training grounds, ammunition depots, detention facilities, accommodations and military bases.

193. The United Nations verified the abduction of 57 children (23 boys, 20 girls, 14 sex unknown), which were attributed to Government forces (20), YPG/YPJ (6), ISIL (6) and unidentified armed groups (25). The alleged affiliation of relatives with opposing armed forces or groups was the primary reason for abduction. Six children were abducted for the purpose of forced recruitment by YPG/YPJ (3) and ISIL (3).

194. In 2017, the escalation of violence in eastern Ghutah and Rural Damascus led to a rapid deterioration of living conditions for around 400,000 persons trapped inside the government-besieged enclave, including a high number of children.

195. The United Nations verified 105 cases of denial of humanitarian access, including 52 cases involving attacks on humanitarian facilities and personnel and 53 cases of the removal or blocking of humanitarian supplies. The main perpetrators included Government forces (36); air strikes by Government or pro-government forces (19); ISIL (6); YPG/YPJ (4); and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3). Attacks on humanitarian personnel resulted in the killing (21) and injury (35) of 56 persons.

#### *Developments and concerns*

196. I am deeply concerned about the continuing high numbers of verified violations, including the killing and maiming of children and the increase in child recruitment and use, and urge all parties to the conflict to put in place measures to end and prevent these violations.

197. I acknowledge the formation of a national committee to prevent and respond to underage recruitment by armed groups in March 2018, and urge the Government to work closely with the United Nations to implement concrete measures in this regard, as well as to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by its own armed forces and pro-government militia without delay.

198. I am deeply concerned about the fate of children, including of foreign origin, affiliated or allegedly affiliated with parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic and call upon parties encountering and receiving these children to abide by international norms and standards and treat those children primarily as victims. In this regard, I stress the importance of developing protection-oriented rehabilitation activities for these children, so as to facilitate their reintegration into society.

199. I renew my call upon all parties to enhance their engagement in the United Nations-led intra-Syrian talks, in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), in view of bringing sustainable peace to the country and ending violations against children.

## Yemen

200. The situation in Yemen remained grave and was marked by continued armed conflict. In November, a military escalation began between the principal belligerents, when the Houthis fired a ballistic missile towards Riyadh and subsequent air strikes and ground fighting intensified, including for the control of ports and supply routes. In December, political alliances shifted, causing intensified fighting in Sana'a between the Houthis and the General People's Congress, culminating in the killing of former President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and causing further political instability in the country.

### *Grave violations*

201. The United Nations verified 842 cases of the recruitment and use of boys as young as 11 years old. Among those cases, 534 (nearly two thirds) were attributed to the Houthis, 142 cases to the Security Belt Forces and 105 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, marking a substantial increase compared to 2016, with the majority of children aged between 15 and 17. Other parties included pro-government Popular Resistance (50) and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (1). The Governorate of Abyan was the location with the highest number of verified cases (156). Access restrictions to areas with AQAP presence led to a decrease in the ability to verify cases attributed to that group.

202. Children were mainly used to guard checkpoints and government buildings, for patrolling, fetching water and bringing food and equipment to military positions; 76 children were used as combatants. 31 boys were killed and 14 were maimed while associated with parties to the conflict. Reports indicate that financial payments by the Houthis were used as incentives for child association.

203. The United Nations documented the deprivation of liberty of 23 boys (aged between 13 and 17) by armed forces and groups for their alleged association with opposing parties. Three boys were detained by the Yemeni Armed Forces and one by the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen (hereafter the coalition). Thirteen boys were seized and deprived of their liberty by the Houthis, 5 by the Security Belt Forces and 1 by the Popular Resistance.

204. The United Nations verified the killing and maiming of 1,316 children (552 killed: 398 boys, 154 girls; 764 maimed: 549 boys, 215 girls), and 51 per cent of those casualties were caused by air strikes (368 killed, 300 injured). The second leading cause was ground fighting, including shelling and shooting (136 killed, 334 injured), followed by explosive remnants of war and mines (27 killed, 119 injured).

205. Of the total number of verified child casualties, 670 were attributed to the coalition (370 killed, 300 injured); 324 to the Houthis (83 killed, 241 injured); 41 to the Popular Resistance; 19 to other international forces fighting for the Government of Yemen; 10 to AQAP; and 4 to the Yemeni Armed Forces, among other parties.

206. The highest number of child casualties was documented in Ta'izz (35 per cent), with 459 children affected. Of those casualties, 286 were the result of ground fighting, with 245 child casualties attributed to the Houthis. The second highest number of casualties was documented in Sa'dah (187), where 168 cases were the result of air strikes and ground fighting on the northern border (2) and attributed to the coalition. The escalation of fighting between the Houthis and the Yemeni Armed Forces and affiliated groups, as well as increased air strikes, resulted in 113 child casualties in Hudaydah Governorate.

207. There was a marked decrease in verified attacks on schools and hospitals compared to 2016, when 48 schools and 23 hospitals were partially or completely destroyed.

208. The United Nations verified 20 attacks on schools, with 19 schools affected by aerial attacks attributed to the coalition, the majority of which occurred in Sa'dah (9), Hajjah (4), and Hudaydah (2). One incident was attributed to an unidentified armed group in Dali'. In addition, 11 attacks on hospitals were verified, affecting 9 hospitals and health facilities and resulting in their partial or complete destruction. Five attacks were attributed to the Houthis in Ta'izz, and five to the coalition in Hajjah (2), Hudaydah (1), Sa'dah (1) and Ta'izz (1). The remaining attack was attributed to the Security Belt Forces in Aden.

209. The United Nations verified eight incidents of the military use of schools in Ta'izz (3), Amanat al-Asimah (2), Sa'dah (2) and Sana'a (1) and two incidents of the military use of hospitals in Taiz; of these, three schools and one hospital were subsequently the target of an attack. The Houthis were responsible for five incidents of the military use of schools, the Yemeni Armed Forces for one, and the Popular Resistance for the military use of two schools and two hospitals.

210. The United Nations verified the abduction of one boy by the Houthis in Shabwah. The boy was subsequently engaged to fight with the armed group.

211. The United Nations documented 248 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including restrictions on movement (161), violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (55) and interference in the delivery of humanitarian assistance (32). Most of the incidents were documented in Ta'izz (60), Hudaydah (44) and Sa'dah (31), with the majority attributed to the Houthis (168), Yemeni Armed Forces (35) and the coalition (15).

212. Access to frontline areas was challenging and restrictions and delays were experienced throughout 2017 at main entry ports for humanitarian aid. Following the launching of missiles by the Houthis into Saudi Arabia, the coalition imposed a total land, sea and air blockade between 5 and 24 November, thereby halting all humanitarian and commercial access. A partial blockade continued until 20 December.

#### *Developments and concerns*

213. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I am encouraged by the decrease in attacks on schools and hospitals attributed to the coalition. It reflects, among other things, the impact of preventive and protective measures taken, including the establishment of a child protection unit in the coalition headquarters, composed of civilian and military staff, put in place in coordination with my Special Representative. During my visit to Riyadh in April 2018, I was also encouraged by efforts undertaken by the Government of Saudi Arabia to support the reintegration of children formerly associated with armed groups in Yemen.

214. The action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni Armed Forces, signed in 2014, must be revitalized and updated. In this regard, I welcome the ongoing discussions between the Government of Yemen and my Special Representative regarding the drafting of protocols on the handover and release of children and the issuance of a command order by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Yemeni Armed Forces in March 2018, recalling that the recruitment and use of children by the Government forces is forbidden and that violations must be reported. I further welcome the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration by the Government of Yemen in October, which is an important step for the development

of concrete safeguards to ensure a better protection of these facilities, education personnel and children.

215. Notwithstanding this progress, I am deeply concerned that during the fourth quarter of 2017, the intensification of fighting resulted in an increased number of violations against children being committed by all parties. The number of children killed and maimed in Yemen remains unacceptably high, and those numbers have remained high in the first quarter of 2018, as does the number of children recruited and used by armed forces and groups. I acknowledge the Houthis' openness to engaging with the United Nations on child protection but remain deeply concerned about ongoing recruitment campaigns by the group, specifically targeting schools as a place of recruitment, and urge the group to establish preventive and protective measures. I further urge the coalition to continue strengthening mechanisms aimed at protecting children, particularly in view of preventing child casualties.

216. I remind all parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect children from all forms of violence, including through respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, to ensure humanitarian access to populations in need, to release children deprived of their liberty and hand them over to appropriate child protection actors and to engage constructively with the United Nations to prevent future violations.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **India**

217. Children continued to be affected by incidents of violence between armed groups and the Government, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand and during tensions in Jammu and Kashmir.

#### *Grave violations*

218. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including by the Naxalites, particularly in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Naxalites reportedly resorted to the use of a lottery system to conscript children in Jharkhand. In addition, three incidents of the recruitment and use of children were reported in Jammu and Kashmir in the context of clashes with national security forces. One case was attributed to Jaish-i-Mohammed and two to Hizbul Mujahideen. Unverified reports also indicate the use of children as informants and spies by national security forces.

219. Children continued to be killed and injured in the context of operations of national security forces against armed groups. According to Government data, 188 civilians were killed in Naxalite-affected regions, although no disaggregated data on children were available. On 9 March, a 15-year-old boy was killed by national security forces during a clash with alleged Lashkar-e-Tayyiba elements in Padgampora village, Pulwama district.

220. In Jharkhand State, suspected Naxalites elements attacked one school in Khunti district, partially destroying it. With regard to military use, the occupation of over 20 schools was documented by the Central Reserve Police Force in Srinagar, Kashmir, in April. Increased tensions in Jammu and Kashmir reportedly also led to school closures for varying periods, including in Rajouri (65) and Poonch (76) districts.

*Developments and concerns*

221. I welcome the Government's signature of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) in June 2017, and encourage the Government to put in place measures to hold perpetrators of child recruitment and use to account and engage with the United Nations in view of ending and preventing violations against children.

**Nigeria**

222. In north-east Nigeria, as well as in neighbouring countries, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, intensified attacks on civilians, including through suicide bombings and ground attacks. In the northern part of Borno State, a new Boko Haram faction emerged following its separation from the Abubakar Shekau faction.

*Grave violations*

223. The total number of verified cases of the recruitment and use of children decreased by almost 50 per cent, from 2,122 in 2016 to 1,092 (738 boys, 353 girls, 1 unknown sex) in 2017. The main perpetrator remained Boko Haram (1,051). The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) recruited 41 children, all of whom were used in support roles. The decrease may be attributed to the loss of territory by Boko Haram, the displacement of civilians from areas controlled by the group and the CJTF action plan, signed by the group in 2017.

224. In 2017, 2,199 children were deprived of liberty for their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram, in Nigeria (1,903), the Niger (239) and Cameroon (57). In 2017, the Nigerian authorities released 1,190 children, leaving 713 children in military detention at the time of reporting.

225. The United Nations verified a total of 881 children killed (570) and maimed (311) in Nigeria, attributed to Boko Haram (620) and to Nigerian Security Forces (NSF) (261). Almost half of all casualties resulted from suicide attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram (including the use of children as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices) (411). With regard to NSF, casualties were caused by aerial bombardments (235) and the targeting of children suspected to be carrying person-borne improvised explosive devices (26).

226. A worrying trend was the continued use of children by Boko Haram as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices, with 146 cases documented in Nigeria and 57 in Cameroon. Almost three quarters of the children used were girls (145).

227. The United Nations verified 45 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, affecting 131 children, including 9 boys. Cases were attributed to Boko Haram (9 boys, 116 girls) and NSF (6 girls). All child victims attributed to Boko Haram were abducted, raped or forcibly married to members of the group.

228. The United Nations verified four attacks on schools and one attack on a hospital in Nigeria attributed to Boko Haram (4) and NSF (1). Furthermore, two schools were attacked in far north Cameroon, eight hospitals in the Diffa region of the Niger and one hospital in far north Cameroon. At the time of writing, 14 schools continued to be used for military purposes by NSF in Nigeria, 10 in Borno State and 4 in Yobe State.

229. Boko Haram abducted 189 children (107 boys, 79 girls, 3 sex unknown). Between July and October, 90 children were abducted by Boko Haram during raids on villages across the borders of Nigeria with Cameroon and the Niger. In addition, 1,456 children in north-east Nigeria were verified as having been abducted by Boko

Haram during previous years. 82 of the Chibok schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram in April 2014 were released as a result of internationally supported negotiations between Boko Haram and the Government, while 112 remain unaccounted for. On 19 February 2018, 105 girls were abducted from the Government Girls' Science Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State, by Boko Haram insurgents, further curtailing access to education for Nigerian girls.

230. Five incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, including ambushes and physical attacks on humanitarian workers. Four were attributed to Boko Haram and one to NSF.

#### *Developments and concerns*

231. **Measures put in place to improve the protection of children.** I commend CJTF for signing an action plan with the United Nations on 15 September to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and the important first steps taken for its implementation, including the promulgation of a standing order by CJTF to end and prevent child recruitment. I encourage CJTF to consolidate and to further accelerate the implementation of the action plan.

232. I remain concerned that children continued to be detained and urge the Government to release them and to swiftly adopt the handover protocol for children associated with armed groups, in line with international standards, and to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children. I also encourage the Government to cease the use of schools for military purposes, in line with the commitments in the Safe Schools Declaration, and to provide a protective educational environment for children, in particular for girls.

233. The continued number of violations by Boko Haram remains gravely disturbing, in particular the use of children as carriers of person-borne improvised explosive devices and the number of abductions, including the reported abduction of more than 100 girls in Dapchi, Yobe State, in 2018.

234. I am deeply concerned by the significant increase in the number of children killed and maimed and of cases of sexual violence and call on all parties to the conflict to take urgent action to improve the protection of children.

#### **Pakistan**

235. Since 2009, attacks by armed groups have progressively decreased, with 370 incidents reported in 2017. More than half of all incidents were attributed to Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and splinter groups, predominantly in Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Reports indicate an increasing presence of ISIL-KP, particularly in Balochistan and northern Sindh.

#### *Grave violations*

236. The United Nations continued to receive reports of the recruitment and use of children, including from madrasas, and allegations of the use of children by armed groups for suicide attacks. In January, TTP released a video showing children, including girls, being instructed in how to perpetrate suicide attacks.

237. Age-disaggregated data on civilian casualties are limited, but incidents of children killed and injured in attacks by armed groups continued to be reported. In February, at least 75 people, including 20 children, were reportedly killed in a suicide attack in Sehwan, Sindh Province. In April, 14 persons, including 4 children, were reportedly killed when a passenger vehicle struck a roadside bomb in the Gudar area, FATA. ISIL-KP and TTP-Jamaat-ul-Ahrar both claimed the attack.

238. Eight attacks on educational facilities and students were reported, four targeting girls' education. For example, in March, unidentified individuals vandalized the Oxford Public School, located in Ghizer Valley, Gilgit-Baltistan, and threatened to bomb the school if female teachers did not cover themselves. In the same month, a girls' school located in Qila Abdullah in Balochistan Province was damaged in an attack, through the use of improvised explosive devices.

239. Attacks on health-care facilities and staff by armed groups continued in 2017, including 113 direct attacks (three personnel killed) or threats against polio vaccinators.

#### *Developments and concerns*

240. I am concerned by the continued attacks on schools by armed groups, particularly the targeting of girls' education. In this regard, I take note of ongoing efforts to review national policies on child rights, and encourage the Government to prioritize measures to deter future attacks on schools.

### **Philippines**

241. The reporting period was marked by the five-month Marawi siege and the related military operation against the Maute Group, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF), resulting in the enactment of martial law in Mindanao. In addition, the United Nations continued to document low-intensity armed engagements between Government forces, occasionally in coordination with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in territory controlled by the group, and armed groups, predominantly in Mindanao. Conflict-related incidents between the New People's Army (NPA) and Government forces supported by pro-government armed groups intensified, following the termination of the ceasefire agreement and the subsequent collapse of peace talks.

#### *Grave violations*

242. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 30 children (6 girls, 8 boys, 16 sex unknown) by armed groups. 16 children were used as human shields by BIFF in a single incident; 6 were recruited and used by NPA; and 8 by the Maute Group. Children were recruited and used for combat, as part of medical squads, as cooks and to extract gunpowder from firecrackers. The United Nations received additional unverified reports of the large-scale recruitment and use of children by the Maute Group during the Marawi siege and of nine children recruited by NPA, indicating that the actual number of violations is likely higher. Some of the children were reportedly killed in combat.

243. The United Nations documented the detention of 12 children for their alleged association with armed groups, none of whom were formally charged. For example, four boys were arrested and detained by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) for their alleged association with ASG. The boys were blindfolded, handcuffed and beaten during their detention and subsequently taken to a hospital for medical treatment.

244. The United Nations verified the killing and maiming of 33 children (16 killed, 17 injured; 21 boys, 12 girls). 12 cases were attributed to AFP and 1 to NPA and included incidents of indiscriminate attacks. For instance, on 12 July, two boys and one girl, reportedly associated with NPA, were killed during an encounter with AFP in Compostela Valley province. 20 cases could not be attributed and included casualties caused by explosive remnants of war (10) and crossfire (8). In addition, an undetermined number of children were killed and injured during the Marawi siege.



245. Three cases of the rape of girls aged as young as 14 by the Maute Group were verified. The Government is following up on these cases. Additional cases were reported in the context of the Marawi siege.

246. The United Nations verified 60 attacks on schools and educational personnel (24) and health-care facilities (36) signifying a substantial increase compared to 2016 (12 attacks). Almost all cases (56) were the result of armed engagements, including bombardments, in the context of the Marawi siege. Many of the structures were occupied by the Maute Group at the time of attacks. Threats by AFP and pro-government armed groups against educational personnel working for schools run by non-governmental organizations in indigenous peoples' communities continued to be reported. In addition, the military use of six schools and one hospital was verified (AFP four, Philippine National Police one, BIFF one, Maute Group one). In addition to being used as bases during armed clashes, schools were frequently used as sites to provide services by the AFP in the context of civil-military operations.

247. Five incidents of abduction, involving seven children, were verified, including one abduction of a 7-year-old boy by ASG for a period of seven months, in Sulu province and of two 14-year-old girls by the Maute Group for four months.

#### *Developments and concerns*

248. In a positive development, the Government of the Philippines revived formal coordination meetings with the United Nations on incidents of grave violations against children, with a view to facilitating appropriate response to these cases. Notwithstanding this progress, I urge the Government to intensify engagement with the United Nations to address ongoing violations against children, ensure consistent application of its national child protection procedures and guidelines and facilitate access to conflict-affected areas for child protection actors.

249. I am deeply concerned by the increase in the number of grave violations against children in 2017, particularly in Mindanao, and remind all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international law and to prevent the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. I furthermore call upon armed groups that are recruiting and using children to take immediate steps to end and prevent the practice and to engage with the United Nations to develop action plans.

#### **Thailand**

250. Sporadic clashes between security forces and armed groups, as well as attacks by armed groups on civilian targets, continued in Thailand's southern border provinces.

#### *Grave violations*

251. The United Nations documented the lowest number of children killed (1) and injured (16) recorded in the past 14 years. Incidents resulted from attacks with the use of improvised explosive device and shooting. According to data from the Ministry of Education, no attacks on schools were perpetrated during the reporting period.

#### *Developments and concerns*

252. The security situation further improved in the southern border provinces in 2017, and I am encouraged by the cooperation on child protection issues between the Government and various partners, including the United Nations. I call upon the Government to take appropriate measures to prevent future violations, including by inviting the United Nations to conduct regular monitoring of grave violations against

children, and to enable programmatic prevention activities in the southern border provinces, as well as by including child protection concerns in its ongoing talks with armed groups.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

**253. I am deeply concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations against children outlined in the present report, including high levels of killing and maiming, recruitment and use, sexual violence and abductions, and call upon all parties to immediately end and take all necessary measures to prevent such grave violations, including through ensuring accountability for perpetrators.**

**254. I urge Member States, whether acting alone or as part of coalitions or international forces, to ensure that their responses to all threats to peace and security are conducted in full compliance with international law. Children formerly associated with armed forces or groups should be seen primarily as victims and detention should only be used as a last resort, for the shortest period of time, and alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible.**

**255. I call upon Member States to continue supporting the implementation of action plans and other commitments aimed at strengthening the protection of children in armed conflict, including by facilitating the engagement of the United Nations with armed groups.**

**256. In view of the continuing high levels of cross-border recruitment and the subsequent challenges in terms of the repatriation and reintegration of children separated from armed forces or groups, I call upon Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage closely with the United Nations in order to ensure a coordinated response based on international law and keeping in mind the best interest of the child.**

**257. I encourage Member States, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to further strengthen dedicated child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations to prioritize the development of tools to forestall grave violations, including through the adoption of prevention plans aimed at systematizing preventive measures.**

**258. I call upon the Security Council to continue to support the children and armed conflict agenda by including provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peace operations and to request adequate child protection capacity in order to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and further strengthen monitoring and reporting.**

**259. I enjoin the donor community to engage in a discussion to address the funding gaps for the reintegration of children recruited and used and to support the establishment of a multi-year funding mechanism, thereby allowing child protection actors to react swiftly to the release of children and put in place long-term viable alternatives to military life, notably by placing a specific focus on girls, on psychosocial support and on education programmes and vocational training.**

**260. I welcome all steps taken to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, and call upon Member States to further strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict, including through ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict as well as**

**the endorsement and implementation of the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or groups, the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles) and the Safe Schools Declaration.**

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

261. Regarding new listings, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Bana Mura militias perpetrated incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence and abduction, and the Kamuina Nsapu perpetrated high levels of recruitment and use of children, attacks on schools and hospitals and abductions. Both groups have been listed for those respective violations. In Mali, the Platform, which includes the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés and the self-defence groups Ganda Izo and Ganda Koy, has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. Similarly, in Yemen, the Security Belt Forces have been listed for the recruitment and use of children.

262. Other previously listed parties to conflict have had additional violations added, on the basis of incidents that occurred in 2017. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, several armed groups have engaged in patterns of abductions, including the Mai-Mai Mazembe, Nyatura and Raia Mutomboki and have been listed for such violations. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, have been listed for killing and maiming and rape and other forms of sexual violence, in the light of verified cases in northern Rakhine State. In Somalia, Al-Shabaab has been listed for rape and other forms of sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals. In South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army has been listed for attacks on schools and hospitals.

263. In terms of delisting, in Colombia, following the transformation of FARC-EP into a political party, the group ended all child recruitment, released 135 children and has been delisted for ceasing recruitment and use. In the Sudan, the Government security forces took all necessary steps in its action plan pertaining to ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, and that party has been delisted. In Yemen, a significant decrease in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals by the coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen and preventive measures that have been put in place have led to its delisting for that violation. In the Sudan, pro-government militias ceased to exist and were removed from the list.

264. Other modifications to the list are the result of changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In that regard, in Afghanistan, the name of the Taliban has been amended. In the Central African Republic, the name of the former Séléka coalition was amended to reflect its core membership. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the name of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and of the Nduma and Mai-Mai Cheka have been adapted. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi put in place measures to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and will be listed in section B of annex I to the present report for that violation. Similarly, the Kachin Independence Army, the Karenni Army, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and the Shan State Army have been also been listed in section B of annex I for measures they have taken. In Iraq, given that the popular mobilization forces have been placed under the direct command of the Iraqi armed forces and that the Government has put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children, the popular mobilization forces have been listed under "State actors" in section B of annex I. In South Sudan, the split of the former Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition is reflected in annex I. In

the Syrian Arab Republic, the name of the Army of Islam and the Nusrah Front were modified to reflect changes on the ground. In Yemen, following renewed engagement with the United Nations, the Government put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children, and the Government forces will therefore be listed in section B of annex I.

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
3. ISIL-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups, including the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
2. Bana Mura militias<sup>c,e</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
5. Kamuina Nsapu<sup>a,d,e</sup>

\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that perpetrates rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

6. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
7. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>
8. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine)<sup>a</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e</sup>
10. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
11. Mai-Mai Kata Katanga<sup>a</sup>
12. Nduma défense du Congo<sup>a,b</sup>
13. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b</sup>
14. Nyatura<sup>a,e</sup>
15. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

1. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>b,c</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
2. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Army<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition — pro-Machar<sup>a,b,f</sup>
2. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition — pro-Taban Deng<sup>a,b,f</sup>
3. White Army<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in the Sudan**

*Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army/Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>

**Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

*State actors*

1. Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Jaysh al-Islam<sup>a</sup>
5. Nusrah Front-led Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
6. People's Protection Units<sup>a</sup>

**Parties in Yemen**

*Non-State actors*

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>
4. Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Afghanistan**

*State actors*

1. Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police<sup>a,f</sup>

**Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

*State actors*

1. Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *State actors*

1. Popular mobilization forces<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

1. Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *State actors*

1. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Sudan**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *State actors*

1. Government forces, including the Yemeni Armed Forces<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen<sup>b</sup>



## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

### **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Civilian Joint Task Force<sup>a,f</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that perpetrates rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Seventy-fourth year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, which covers the period from January to December 2018, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The preparation of the report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, in the field and at Headquarters, and with relevant Member States. It highlights global trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and provides information on violations committed from January to December 2018, as well as related protection concerns. Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and, pursuant to resolutions of the Council, the annexes to the present report include a list of parties that, in violation of international law, engage in the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel,<sup>1</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. All the information contained in the report has been vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. In situations where the ability to verify information was hampered by factors such as insecurity or access restrictions, it is qualified as such. In this regard, the information contained in the report is only indicative and does not represent the full scale of violations committed in 2018. In addition, some incidents, in particular instances of the recruitment and use of children, abduction and sexual violence committed against children, were verified in 2018 but may have commenced earlier.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and in identifying situations that fall within the scope of the mandate, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has adopted a pragmatic approach aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal

<sup>1</sup> Under the terms of Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#) and [2143 \(2014\)](#), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



determination and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the present report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by conflict are considered to be of such gravity as to warrant international concern. In characterizing the facts described below as grave violations, it is the aim of my Special Representative to bring these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility of providing effective protection and relief to all affected children, and to encourage Governments to take remedial measures.

4. Where significant progress was achieved and measures taken by listed parties positively affected the protection of children or where ongoing conduct gave rise to concern, this is highlighted in the country-specific sections. On the basis of the approach of enhanced engagement with Member States to prevent violations against children, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and parties that have not.

## **II. Addressing the impact of armed conflict on children**

### **A. Overview of the situation of children and armed conflict**

5. Continued fighting between parties to conflict, new conflict dynamics and operational tactics, combined with widespread disregard for international law, had a devastating effect on children in 2018. More than 24,000 grave violations<sup>2</sup> against children were verified by the United Nations in 20 country situations. While the number of violations attributed to non-State actors remained steady, there was an alarming increase in the number of violations attributed to State actors and to international forces compared with 2017 (see [A/72/865-S/2018/465](#)).

6. Verified cases of the killing and maiming of children reached record levels globally since the creation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#). In Afghanistan, the number of child casualties remained the highest such number in the present report (3,062) and children accounted for 28 per cent of all civilian casualties. In the Syrian Arab Republic, air strikes, barrel bombs and cluster munitions resulted in 1,854 child casualties, and in Yemen, 1,689 children bore the brunt of ground fighting and other offensives.

7. Some 13,600 children benefited from release and reintegration worldwide. However, children continued to be forced to take an active part in hostilities, including to carry out suicide bombings against civilians. Others were used in support roles, for example as sexual slaves or as human shields. Somalia remained the country with the highest number of cases of the recruitment and use of children (2,300) followed by Nigeria (1,947).

8. Attacks on schools and hospitals had a devastating effect on access to education and to health services for thousands of children, with a total of 1,023 verified attacks. In the Syrian Arab Republic, 2018 witnessed the highest numbers of attacks on schools and medical facilities (225) recorded since the beginning of the conflict. In Afghanistan, schools and hospitals (254) were increasingly targeted. Increased numbers of attacks were also verified in the Central African Republic, Colombia, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, the Sudan and Yemen.

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<sup>2</sup> The use of the term “grave violations” or “violations” refer to each individual child affected by recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence and abductions, while the number of incidents is used for attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access.

9. In 2018, 933 cases of sexual violence against children were verified. The highest verified figures for violations relating to sexual violence continue to be documented in Somalia (331) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (277). Cases of violations relating to sexual violence remained significantly underreported, in particular when perpetrated against boys, owing to stigma, the lack of services and concerns for the protection of victims (for more information, see the annual report on conflict-related sexual violence, [S/2019/280](#)). Impunity for sexual violence against girls and boys by parties to conflict remained endemic.

10. Some 2,493 children were abducted in 2018. The highest numbers were verified in Somalia (1,609), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (367) and Nigeria (180). Increased numbers of abductions were verified in South Sudan (109), the Syrian Arab Republic (69), the Central African Republic (62), the Sudan (22) and the Philippines (13). Children were abducted from homes, schools and public spaces by parties to conflict, often as a precursor to other grave violations, notably recruitment and use, and sexual abuse, including sexual slavery, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and the Syrian Arab Republic.

11. In times of armed conflict, throughout the world, millions of people, children foremost among them, have inadequate access to or have been denied assistance that is essential for their survival and well-being. In 2018, only 795 incidents of denial of humanitarian access could be verified, compared with 1,213 in 2017. The decrease could be explained by restricted access to information, rather than an improvement of the situation. The shrinking of humanitarian space translated into widespread insecurity, severe and persistent constraints on humanitarian access, threats and the perpetration of violence against humanitarian personnel and civilian infrastructure, thereby preventing child protection actors and humanitarian actors from gaining access to information.

## **B. Challenges in ensuring a child-rights based response**

12. Consent of the child is not a valid defence for the crime of recruiting and using children in war. Children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, must be treated primarily as victims. These groups have abducted, recruited and used children nationally or transnationally. The children affected have been exposed to the highest degrees of violence and exploitation, leaving a severe impact on their physical and mental well-being.

13. Thousands of children actually or allegedly associated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and affiliated groups, as well as children born of sexual violence, were deprived of their liberty, with limited or no parental care, access to food, medical and psychosocial support, and no access to legal or consular services. In December 2018, 1,248 children of 46 nationalities from areas formerly controlled by ISIL, mainly under the age of 5, were deprived of their liberty in internally displaced persons' sites in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic. In Iraq, 902 children remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their association or alleged association with ISIL. Similarly, 418 children were deprived of liberty in Nigeria for their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram and 375 children were detained in Somalia for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab. The deprivation of liberty of children for their actual or alleged association with groups designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time.

14. The best interests of the child must be given primary consideration in all actions affecting their lives, with no exception. All children below the age of 18 have specific

rights to protection and should be treated first and foremost as victims. Member States must take responsibility for their nationals, including the children of their nationals who are deprived of their liberty in Iraq and in the Syrian Arab Republic for their alleged or actual association with these groups. The reintegration of all children affected by armed conflict must be prioritized through a comprehensive, coordinated and child rights-based approach so as to prevent recurring cycles of violence and to build sustainable peace for all children.

### **C. The way forward: prevention and reintegration**

15. The prevention of violence against children in armed conflict is a crucial element in building and sustaining peace, as well as in ensuring that children and youth realize their rights and tap into their potential as agents of change, as identified in “Youth 2030 – The United Nations Strategy on Youth”. The development of national, subregional or regional prevention plans covering all violations, as called for in Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#), would both sustain the gains made through action plans, beyond the duration of those plans, and systematize preventive measures across regions. My Special Representative launched a process of proactive engagement with national, subregional and regional actors in order to develop prevention initiatives to prevent violations against children affected by armed conflict, in support of my vision on prevention, the Sustainable Development Goals and the sustaining peace resolutions, Security Council resolution [2282 \(2016\)](#) and General Assembly resolution [70/262](#).

16. Member States have a central role in providing long-term and sustainable reintegration programmes, including providing predictable funding for such programmes. Such support is crucial for ensuring the well-being of children and sustaining peace and security. Reintegration programmes must include mental health and psychosocial support, education and vocational training, as well as community-based interventions and access to a civil registry and to justice, taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys, including children with disabilities, so as to enable all children affected by armed conflict to return to their communities and regain their childhood. The role of Member States is now supported by the creation of the Global Coalition for the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers, which was established and is co-led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and aims to further explore and address existing gaps and needs for the reintegration of all children affected by conflict.

## **III. Information on 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**

#### **Afghanistan**

17. Children continued to bear the brunt of the conflict, accounting for 28 per cent of all civilian casualties, with 3,062 verified cases of children who were killed and maimed in 2018, with the number of children killed (927) being the highest number ever recorded in Afghanistan. In addition, in response to the 2018 parliamentary elections, armed groups attacked election sites, more than half of which were based

in schools. Also of concern was the Taliban's use of indirect fire systems such as mortars, grenades and rockets in and from civilian-populated areas on election days, which had indiscriminate effects and contributed to child casualties.

#### *Grave violations*

18. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 45 boys and 1 girl, with some of the children recruited as young as 8, who were used for combat, at checkpoints, to plant improvised explosive devices, to carry out suicide attacks or other violations, or for sexual exploitation. At least 22 boys were killed during their association. Of those violations, 67 per cent of the instances of recruitment and use were attributed to armed groups (31), including Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (17 boys in one incident), Taliban (11), Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) (2) and an unidentified armed group (1). On 14 March, in Dehe Bala District, Nangarhar Province, ISIL-KP used two boys to publicly execute three men accused of being associated with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces. The 15 remaining children were recruited and used by Afghan local police (6), Afghan National Police (1) and pro-government militias (8).

19. As at December 2018, the Government reported that 205 boys were detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges.

20. The United Nations verified 3,062 child casualties (927 killed, 2,135 maimed), including 831 girls. The leading causes were ground engagements (276 killed, 916 maimed) and non-suicide improvised explosive devices (129 killed, 388 maimed), followed by aerial operations (236 killed, 256 maimed), which represented an increase compared with 2017.

21. Armed groups were responsible for 44 per cent of child casualties (1,343), including the Taliban (997), ISIL-KP (217), unidentified armed groups (114), self-proclaimed ISIL-KP (7) and jointly to different armed groups (8). The United Nations attributed 34 per cent of child casualties (1,051) to government and pro-government forces, including the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (629) – mainly the Afghan National Army (467) – international forces<sup>3</sup> (286), pro-government militias (56), joint operations of government and pro-government forces (58) and undetermined government and pro-government forces (22). Another 15 per cent of the child casualties were jointly attributed to government and pro-government forces and armed groups. Some 6 per cent of the casualties could not be attributed to a specific party to the conflict and 1 per cent was caused by cross-border shelling.

22. The United Nations verified four cases of sexual violence, affecting two boys and two girls, perpetrated by the Afghan National Police (3) and the Afghan local police (1). The two boys were used as *bacha bazi*.

23. A total of 192 attacks against schools and protected personnel were verified. Of those attacks, 92 per cent were attributed to armed groups, mainly the Taliban (123) and ISIL-KP (42). Attacks were also attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (6), pro-government militias (3), international forces (1), and jointly to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and armed groups (3). During the parliamentary elections held in October, more than half of the voter registration and polling sites were located in schools, which were targeted in 92 election-related attacks mostly attributed to the Taliban (85). An additional cause for concern is the emerging trend of attacks and threats by armed groups against education facilities, perpetrated in particular by ISIL-KP, which led to widespread school closures and

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<sup>3</sup> The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is part of the international forces and leads the Resolute Support Mission, a non-combat operation with the mandate to train, advise and assist Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and institutions.

many casualties. ISIL-KP expressly declared its intention to target schools, specifically girls' schools.

24. A total of 62 attacks on hospitals and protected personnel were verified, 74 per cent of which were attributed to armed groups, including the Taliban (30), ISIL-KP (11), self-proclaimed ISIL-KP (3) and unidentified armed groups (2). The remaining attacks were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (5), international forces (4), pro-government militias (2) and 1 to an undetermined pro-government force. Four attacks were jointly attributed to different parties.

25. The United Nations verified the military use of five schools by the Afghan National Army (4) and ISIL-KP (1) and of two medical facilities by the ANDSF (1) and by both the Taliban and the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (1).

26. Similar to the numbers reported in 2017, the abduction of 42 boys and 1 girl was verified, mostly by armed groups: the Taliban (36), ISIL-KP (3), self-proclaimed ISIL-KP, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Hizb-i Islami (1 each). The abduction and sexual exploitation of one girl by an Afghan local police commander was verified.

27. The United Nations verified 44 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, mainly attributed to armed groups: the Taliban (27), ISIL-KP (10) and self-proclaimed ISIL-KP (2). The 5 remaining incidents were attributed to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (3) and pro-government militias (2). Of particular concern is the fact that these groups have also hindered demining activities and vaccination campaigns, especially vaccination against polio, reportedly preventing 840,000 children from receiving immunizations. In addition, the number of instances of violence against humanitarian personnel remained high, with 28 aid workers killed, 53 injured and 88 abducted during the reporting period.

#### *Developments and concerns*

28. I note the significant reduction in the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan Security Forces and commend the measures taken by the Government to better protect children affected by armed conflict, including through the child protection units in the Afghan National Police recruitment centres, which now cover all 34 provinces of Afghanistan, and the entry into force of the revised Penal Code, which explicitly criminalizes the recruitment and use of children, including *bacha bazi* and falsification of *tazkeras* (identity documents). I call for the full application of the revised Code. Notwithstanding those developments, the use of children, including *bacha bazi*, remains an issue of concern. I urge the Government to address remaining gaps, specifically the lack of screening mechanisms within the Afghan local police and the use of children at police checkpoints, and to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of grave violations against children.

29. I call on the Government to release children allegedly or currently associated with parties to conflict from detention facilities in accordance with the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Paris Principles), which were endorsed by Afghanistan in 2017. In addition, children detained on national-security related charges need to be transferred to juvenile rehabilitation centres and have access to all services, in line with international juvenile justice standards.

30. I remain extremely concerned about the continuous high numbers of children killed and maimed by all parties, notably the record high number of children killed in 2018. I note the decrease of child casualties attributed to the Afghan security forces, and the measures taken by the Government to mitigate child casualties. I commend the ongoing implementation of the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation, adopted in October 2017, as well as the entry into force of the

Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V), in February 2018, and the revision of the aerial targeting protocols, and encourage the Government to continue the inclusion of legal advisers in targeting processes. I strongly encourage the Government to include aspects relating to ending and preventing killing and maiming in the existing action plan. I am also alarmed by the increase in the number of children killed and maimed by international forces, especially in aerial operations. I welcome the precautionary measures to mitigate civilian and child casualties in military operations, including the designation by the United States of America Department of Defense of a senior civilian responsible for coordinating compliance with policies relating to non-combatant casualties in United States military operations. I also note the role of the Senior Child Protection Adviser of the Resolute Support Mission in protecting children in armed conflict. I request my Special Representative to engage proactively and follow up on the implementation of all measures taken by the Government and international forces to mitigate child casualties. I strongly urge the Government and international forces to immediately take additional extraordinary measures to protect children during military operations, including during aerial operations, and to continue to abide by their obligations under international law. I reiterate my call on armed groups to immediately cease the killing and maiming of children.

31. I am concerned about the continued recruitment and use of children by armed groups, including for combat roles, as well as about attacks that affect access to education and health, including during elections, demining activities and vaccination campaigns, and demand that concerned parties, notably the Taliban and ISIL-KP, put an immediate halt to such actions. I strongly encourage the Government to prioritize the protection of schools and hospitals during elections. I urge listed parties to conflict to engage with the United Nations so as to elaborate action plans.

### **Central African Republic**

32. Violence between armed and criminal groups for the control of strategic sites and economic resources, and intercommunal tensions, including between Muslim and Christian communities, remained the primary source of insecurity and threats against civilians. Serious incidents, mostly related to transhumance and access to mining sites, occurred at the end 2018 in Ouaka, Haut-Mbomou and Ouham Prefectures. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic facilitated local peace processes, involving armed groups and community leaders, in order to reduce violence and increase humanitarian space. The peace process culminated in the signing on 6 February 2019 of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic between the Government and 14 armed groups.

#### *Grave violations*

33. A total of 75 children (14 girls, 61 boys), some as young as 6, were recruited and used by anti-balaka (34); former Séléka factions (27), including Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNL) (14), Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (10), Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) (2) and Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (1); Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (10); PK5 groups (3); and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (1). Children were used as combatants, informants, porters, cooks, servants and for sexual purposes.

34. One girl and seven boys were detained by the national authorities for association with anti-balaka (six); FPRC and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (one



each). All were released except for the boy associated with UPC, whose case is still pending before the court.

35. A total of 114 children (38 girls, 76 boys) were verified as having been killed (71) and maimed (43), a slight increase compared with 2017. The victims, some as young as four months, were affected as a result of shootings (92), the use of machetes (12), arson (8) and stabbing (2), during attacks on their communities. The majority of child casualties were attributed to former Séléka factions (63), followed by anti-balaka (20) and PK5 groups (9). Ouaka and Nana-Grébizi were the most affected prefectures. In October, anti-balaka elements killed 12 children by machete outside Zemio, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture, in an indiscriminate attack against two Fulani families.

36. The United Nations verified incidents of sexual violence affecting 58 girls and 1 boy, some as young as 8. A total of 18 girls were gang-raped, and 14 girls were victims of sexual violence during their association with armed groups. The main perpetrators were anti-balaka and former Séléka factions (18 each). One anti-balaka element, a member of FPRC and a police auxiliary were arrested and detained for the rape of children. The anti-balaka member was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

37. A total of 34 attacks against schools and 22 attacks against hospitals were verified, a 21 per cent increase as relates to schools and 16 per cent increase as relates to hospitals, compared with 2017. The main perpetrators were former Séléka factions (36) followed by anti-balaka (6). The United Nations verified the military use of seven schools by FPRC (four), 3R (two) and anti-balaka (one).

38. A total of 62 children (28 girls, 34 boys), some as young as one, were abducted, mostly for purposes of recruitment (57). Former Séléka factions accounted for the highest number of such abductions (35) (MNLC (25); FPRC (6); MPC (2) and FPRC/MPC (2)); followed by LRA (10) and anti-balaka (9).

39. There was an increase in the number of incidents of denial of humanitarian access (120) compared with 2017 (101), which included the killing (6), injuring (23) and abduction (5) of humanitarian workers. Those incidents were predominantly perpetrated by unidentified armed individuals (57), followed by former Séléka factions (33), anti-balaka (29), and LRA (1). The Prefectures of Ouham and Nana-Grébizi were the most affected.

#### *Developments and concerns*

40. I commend the Government for fighting against impunity. Two anti-balaka leaders were arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court for crimes including the recruitment and use of children under 15 years of age. I encourage the Special Criminal Court to prioritize crimes against children in their prosecution.

41. I welcome the signature of an action plan by MPC, on 30 May 2018, to end and prevent grave violations, and the appointment of four commanders to serve as child protection focal points, as well as the engagement with FPRC, leading to the signature of an action plan on 24 June 2019. I now urge MPC and FPRC to swiftly implement their action plans. I also call upon the leadership of UPC to adopt an action plan.

42. Dialogue with armed groups enabled the separation of 205 girls and 364 boys from FPRC (314), anti-balaka (248) and Séléka rénovée (7). In addition, 216 self-demobilized children were identified in Paoua (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture) and benefited from reintegration support from UNICEF. As part of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme initiated at the end of 2018 in Paoua, 389 children were confirmed to have been associated with both factions of Révolution et justice (RJ). However, UNICEF and partners faced challenges in implementing reintegration programmes owing to a lack of funds and

the volatile environment. I urge the Government to adopt a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to child protection actors, to adopt the draft child protection code criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, to pass a decree protecting associated children from prosecution, and to consider a national prevention plan, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2427 (2018).

43. I remain deeply concerned about grave violations against children, including an increase in the killing and maiming of children and in the number of attacks against schools and hospitals by armed groups, as well as abductions attributed to former Séléka elements. I urge armed groups to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international law.

### **Colombia**

44. The new Government took office in August 2018 and while the President, Iván Duque Márquez, affirmed his commitment to implementing the peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia–People’s Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo) (FARC-EP), he also reiterated intentions to secure a consensual modification to certain controversial parts of the Agreement. Limited implementation of the peace agreement in some regions led to frustrations among communities, and in some cases, to the strengthening of non-State armed groups in former FARC-EP areas, thus exposing children to grave violations.

45. In August, the Government conditioned continued dialogue with the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) on the release of all victims of kidnapping and the cessation of criminal activity. Those conditions were not met. Negotiations were formally discontinued by the Government following the attack on the General Santander National Police Academy in January 2019, which was claimed by ELN.

46. More than 4,800 children were forcibly displaced in the Departments of Chocó, Nariño, Cauca, Antioquia, Norte de Santander, Valle del Cauca, Arauca and Boyacá owing to clashes and threats of child recruitment. According to the Government, by 31 December 2018, more than 1 million people from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had entered Colombia. Refugee and migrant children are at risk of recruitment and use and sexual violence.

#### *Grave violations*

47. A total of 120 incidents of recruitment and use, which affected 293 children, some as young as 14, were verified, a sharp increase compared with 169 children in 2017. Dissident FARC-EP groups<sup>4</sup> were the main perpetrators (82 children) followed by the ELN (69) and Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) also known as Clan del Golfo (12). According to the Government, 196 children (105 boys; 91 girls) who were separated from non-State armed groups entered the demobilization programme of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute in 2018.

48. The United Nations verified 89 incidents of killing and maiming, which affected 108 children, some as young as eight (34 girls, 60 boys, 14 sex unknown), a sharp increase since 2017 (53), resulting from clashes between armed groups, crossfire, bombing and anti-personnel mines. The perpetrators were unidentified armed groups (63 child casualties), ELN (14), dissident FARC-EP groups (11), AGC (8) and Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) (1). There were 11 child casualties resulting from Colombian Armed Forces operations against armed groups. According to

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the report, dissident FARC-EP groups should be understood as including groups that did not adhere to the peace agreement and former FARC-EP repeat offenders who abandoned their commitments under the peace agreement.

government data, 22 of the child casualties in 2018 were caused by anti-personnel mines.

49. Incidents of sexual violence, which affected nine girls, were verified and attributed to dissident FARC-EP groups (five girls) and AGC (four). For example, in Putumayo Department, a 17-year-old indigenous girl was sexually abused by a member of Frente Primero, a dissident FARC-EP group, and forced to use injectable contraceptive methods.

50. A total of 13 attacks on schools and protected personnel were verified in Nariño, Norte de Santander, Chocó, Valle del Cauca and Arauca, 2 perpetrated by dissident FARC-EP groups and 11 by unidentified non-State armed groups, which disrupted school classes. Incidents included the killing of a teacher, threats and the destruction of school premises.

51. Six children aged between 14 and 16 (including three girls) were abducted by ELN (two), dissident FARC-EP groups (one) and unidentified armed elements (three).

52. Two incidents of denial of humanitarian access, perpetrated by ELN, were verified in the Department of Arauca. In one instance, ELN imposed restrictions on movement for three days and forbade any type of activity, including school classes.

#### *Developments and concerns*

53. In August 2018, Decree 1434 was issued, adopting public policy guidance on the prevention of recruitment and use of children and of sexual violence against children by non-State armed groups. I welcome this positive development and encourage the Government to strengthen institutions and programmes to prevent recruitment and use. I call on the Government to prioritize the prevention of sexual violence against children in the context of armed conflict and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

54. I am deeply concerned about the high number of instances of the recruitment and use of children by dissident FARC-EP groups and urge them to immediately release children and end this practice. I remain concerned by the continuing recruitment and use of children by ELN and by the increase in the killing and maiming of children by armed groups. I call upon these groups to end and prevent such violations.

55. As highlighted in my report on the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia ([S/2018/1159](#)), I am concerned about those children included in the programme “Camino diferencial de vida” who have not yet received reparations, and about the lack of adequate resources for the programme. I urge the Government to implement a reintegration process for newly identified children, who have been released through informal processes, and to reinforce security guarantees for programme participants.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

56. The weak presence of state authority in some areas of the country, tensions linked to the delayed elections, which were held in December 2018, the multiplication and fragmentation of armed groups, intercommunal clashes between the Hema and Lendu communities in Ituri and violence in the East and the Kasais all affected children. Armed groups remained the perpetrators of the vast majority of grave violations. The United Nations documented a decrease in grave violations against children, owing mostly to the reduction of conflict in the Kasais.

*Grave violations*

57. A total of 631 children (91 girls, 540 boys) were recruited during 2018. Mai-Mai Mazembe (170) and Nyatura (150) accounted for half of the new recruitments, followed by other armed groups. North Kivu remained the epicentre of child recruitment and use, with more than 70 per cent of all cases, followed by the Greater Kasai region (16 per cent) and South Kivu (10 per cent). Nine children were used in support functions for periods ranging between one and two months, by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) (7 boys; 1 girl) and the Congolese National Police (1 boy), seven of whom were recruited and separated in 2018. For example, four boys were used by FARDC to carry looted goods for five days in Ituri, while one boy was used by the Congolese National Police in Shabunda Territory to perform police duties.

58. A total of 2,253 children (including 267 girls) were separated from 39 parties to conflict, including Nyatura (532), Mai-Mai Mazembe (417), Kamuina Nsapu (335), Raia Mutomboki (175), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (128), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (75) and Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) and Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (57 each). Almost half of the children were below the age of 15 when recruited (1,067) and 45 per cent were used as combatants (1,014). Following United Nations advocacy, 25 per cent of those children were voluntarily released by the commanders of armed groups.

59. Some 125 children (including six girls) were deprived of liberty by Government forces, owing to their alleged association with armed groups, and were released after periods ranging from 3 to 48 days. In addition, 21 boys who were arrested for their suspected association with Kamuina Nsapu, some since September 2016, continued to be detained in Kananga prison, Kasai Province.

60. There were 169 child casualties, with 77 killed (39 girls, 38 boys) and 92 maimed (29 girls, 63 boys). Of those casualties, 36 were attributed to FARDC (33) and the Congolese National Police (3), mostly in the context of operations in the east. The remaining casualties were attributed to armed groups, including Kamuina Nsapu (45) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (9), to unidentified armed elements (47), and 18 were caused by unexploded ordnance.

61. Sexual violence affected 277 girls in North Kivu (107), the Kasais (55), Ituri (36), South Kivu (31), Tanganyika (11) and other provinces (37). Government forces were responsible for 50 per cent of the cases, including FARDC (85), the Congolese National Police (51) and Agence nationale de renseignements (ANR) (5), more than double the number attributed to government forces in 2017. Eight suspected perpetrators were arrested and await trial, while five were given sanctions by their hierarchy. Other perpetrators included Nyatura (24), Raia Mutomboki (17), Conseil national de la résistance pour la démocratie (CNRD), FRPI and unidentified Mai-Mai groups (14 each), Mai-Mai Mazembe (8) and Kamuina Nsapu (7).

62. A total of 87 attacks on schools and 10 attacks on hospitals were verified, a significant decrease since 2017, which is explained by the reduction in violence in the Kasais, where institutions were no longer targeted. Most attacks occurred in the context of intercommunal clashes in Djugu Territory, Ituri (75). In total, 43 schools (42) and hospitals (1) were deliberately burned or damaged, another 51 schools (42) and hospitals (9) were looted and school personnel were attacked (3). Armed groups were responsible for most of the attacks. Three attacks were attributed to FARDC.

63. Three schools and one hospital used for military purposes by FARDC (3) and Nyatura (1) in North Kivu (3) and the Kasais (1) were vacated following United Nations advocacy.

64. The number of abductions decreased to 367 (270 boys; 97 girls) and occurred mainly in North Kivu (291), South Kivu (51) and the Kasais (17). Main perpetrators included Nyatura (91), Mai-Mai Mazembe (69), ADF (47), Raia Mutomboki (46), FDLR-FOCA (24), CNRD (14) and Kamuina Nsapu (10). Seven girls and one boy were abducted by FARDC mostly for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Children were mostly abducted for the purpose of recruitment (209). A total of 62 children were subjected to sexual violence during their association. In addition, a total of 151 children (95 girls; 56 boys), who have been abducted by the Bana Mura militia in the Kasai region since 2017 and subjected to forced labour and sexual violence, remain in captivity while 62 children (41 girls; 21 boys) returned to their families. United Nations advocacy with the Government for the release of the remaining abductees yielded limited results.

65. Four incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children were verified, all in South Kivu. For example, Raia Mutomboki attacked and abducted aid workers, hindering the distribution of vaccines to at least 5,000 children. Other incidents involved attacks by unidentified armed elements on humanitarian convoys carrying health supplies. However, the volatile security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo affected tens of thousands of children and hindered the environment in which humanitarian personnel operate.

#### *Developments and concerns*

66. I welcome the screening to determine the age of children during FARDC recruitment campaigns, as a result of which 146 children were separated before their enrolment. Standard operating procedures for age assessment screening were continuously disseminated across the FARDC and PNC.

67. The United Nations increased its efforts to encourage armed groups to cease grave violations. Eight armed group commanders signed a unilateral declaration committing to end and prevent child recruitment and use, as well as other grave violations. Awareness-raising sessions regarding grave violations were conducted with focal points from nine armed groups and community mediators. As armed groups lay down their arms, I urge the Government to ensure that protection and screening measures are in place to identify and separate children and ensure their access to reintegration services.

68. The United Nations supported the implementation of the 2009 Child Protection Act, punishing child recruitment by up to 10 years' imprisonment, including through support to military justice, lawyers and non-governmental organizations. For the first time, two armed groups commanders were sentenced to life in prison for charges including child recruitment. The trial of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, former commander of Nduma défense du Congo-Sheka, and two of his commanders, on charges of war crimes, including child recruitment and use, and sexual violence, started in November 2018. Child victims and witnesses were identified, with support from the United Nations for those efforts.

69. I commend the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for sustaining the gains of its action plan on child recruitment and use, but I am concerned by the persistent number of violations involving sexual violence being committed by security forces and call upon the Government to expedite aspects of the plan relating to sexual violence against children. I urge the Government to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations are held accountable and to prioritize the prevention of violations against children. Moreover, I call upon the Government to ensure that the children abducted by the Bana Mura militia since 2017 are immediately released and returned to their families.

## Iraq

70. The security situation in the country improved following the military defeat of ISIL in late 2017, resulting in improved access for the monitoring and verifying of grave violations, including those which occurred prior to 2018. Despite the loss of territory, ISIL continued to pose a threat to security forces and civilians, including children, by carrying out deadly attacks in Ninawa, Kirkuk, Anbar, Diyala and Baghdad. Demonstrations, which resulted in violent incidents, including killing and arson, were verified.

### *Grave violations*

71. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 39 children by parties to conflict, including five boys between the ages of 12 and 15, used by the Iraqi Federal Police in Ninawa Governorate to fortify a checkpoint, and one 15-year-old boy used by ISIL in Anbar Governorate to drive a car bomb into Fallujah city. In addition, 33 Yazidi boys between the ages of 15 and 17 were rescued after being abducted in Iraq in 2014 by ISIL and trained and deployed to fight in the Syrian Arab Republic.

72. As of December, at least 902 children (850 boys and 52 girls) between the ages of 15 and 18 remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual and alleged association with armed groups, primarily ISIL.

73. The United Nations verified the killing (48) and maiming (84) of 132 children (105 boys, 27 girls), an 82 per cent decrease compared with 2017, mainly due to a significant reduction in military operations against ISIL. A number of casualties were attributed to ISIL (38) and the Iraqi Security Forces (1), while responsibility could not be attributed for the remaining casualties.

74. Almost half of the child casualties (61) were caused by explosive remnants of war found mainly in areas previously under ISIL control, in the Governorates of Ninawa, Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din. Among those casualties, 28 child casualties resulted from improvised explosive devices, including children used for carrying and detonating improvised explosive devices, and 19 resulted from indirect attacks with small arms and light weapons, mainly in Ninawa, Kirkuk, Diyala and Salah al-Din. Among the remaining casualties, 16 child casualties were a result of targeted killings and ill-treatment. In addition, two explosions in weapons and ammunition storage facilities belonging to popular mobilization forces (PMF) occurred near or in residential areas, in Karbala' and Salah al-Din governorates, injuring eight children.

75. As a result of stigma and fear of retribution, among other issues, the United Nations did not verify any cases of sexual violence against children.

76. The United Nations verified 24 attacks on schools (21) and hospitals (3). All attacks on schools resulted from crossfire between ISF and ISIL during 2016 and 2017, in areas that only became accessible for verification in 2018, mainly in Kirkuk Governorate. The three attacks against hospitals and medical personnel were attributed to ISIL and comprised the killing of one member of medical staff in Diyala, an attack on a medical centre in Kirkuk and the looting of supplies from Dara medical centre in Kirkuk.

77. A total of 48 incidents of the military use of schools by ISIL were verified in areas previously under ISIL control in Kirkuk, between 2014 and 2017, which became accessible for verification in 2018. Of concern was also the temporary presence of members of the Iraqi Security Forces inside schools in Ninawa, Salah al-Din and Diyala, prior to and during the election period, to provide security to the Independent High Electoral Commission.

78. The United Nations verified two abductions of children. In one incident, a 16-year-old girl was abducted by an unidentified armed man in Mosul. In the other case, a 14-year-old Yazidi girl was abducted by ISIL in 2015 and later sold. Both girls were rescued by the Iraqi Security Forces in 2018.

79. While no incident of denial of humanitarian access was verified in 2018, humanitarian actors faced bureaucratic impediments, which translated into restriction of movement. Families with perceived affiliation with ISIL continued to face challenges in obtaining the necessary security clearance to gain access to basic services, including education and health, as well as restrictions on their freedom of movement to leave areas or camp settings in order to seek medical assistance.

#### *Developments and concerns*

80. I welcome the ongoing discussions with the Government of Iraq on developing an action plan to prevent child recruitment and use by PMF and encourage its forces' screening. I call on the InterMinisterial Committee on Monitoring and Reporting to resume regular consultations with the United Nations in order to proceed with its signature and implementation.

81. I welcome the release of 40 boys by tribal armed groups, with the support of the United Nations, which assisted in their reintegration.

82. I am deeply concerned about the situation of children held in detention on security-related charges and emphasize the need to treat children primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. I further call for detention to be a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and for the respect of due process. The restriction of movement imposed on civilians with suspected links to ISIL in camps for internally displaced persons is of concern, as is their physical security upon return to their areas of origin. I reiterate the willingness of the United Nations to support the Government in prioritizing the reintegration of children formerly associated with parties to conflict.

83. I call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the repatriation of foreign women and children actually and allegedly affiliated with ISIL, in line with the guiding principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child.

#### **Israel and State of Palestine**

84. Palestinian and Israeli children continued to be severely affected by the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In 2018, the United Nations verified the highest number of Palestinian children killed (59) and injured (2,756) since 2014. Six Israeli children were verified as having been injured.

#### *Grave violations*

85. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of three 17-year-old boys in Gaza (two) and the West Bank (one) by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades and an unidentified Palestinian armed group (one each). The United Nations received testimony from three children, between the ages of 15 and 16, that Israeli forces attempted to recruit them as informants.

86. As of December, 203 Palestinian children were held over security offences by the Israeli forces, including 114 in pretrial detention and/or being detained during trial, and 87 serving a sentence. The United Nations received affidavits from 127 Palestinian boys who, during interviews with the United Nations, reported ill-treatment and breaches of due process during their arrest, transfer and detention. The United Nations documented four cases of the administrative detention of Palestinian children in 2018.

87. A total of 59 Palestinian children (57 boys, 2 girls), some as young as 18 months old, were killed in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem (8) and Gaza (51), with most of the casualties attributed to Israeli forces (56) and one to an Israeli settler. In addition, one child was killed by the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, and one boy was killed by an improvised explosive device accidentally detonated at his home by his father, an Al-Aqsa Brigade member. Of these 59 children, 33 boys and 1 girl were killed by Israeli forces during demonstrations at the Gaza fence, 88 per cent of whom (30) were shot by live ammunition to the upper body, while reportedly posing no imminent threat of death or serious injury to Israeli forces, and another 2 boys died after being struck in the head by tear gas canisters. Three children were killed by Israeli forces air strikes in Gaza. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, eight boys were killed by Israeli forces, five of whom were shot during demonstrations and clashes.

88. The United Nations verified that 2,756 Palestinian children were injured (2,514 boys, 242 girls) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, an increase compared with 2017 (1,160), owing to injuries sustained during the Great March of Return. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 1,421 were injured by Israeli forces (1,398) and settlers (23) in the context of demonstrations, clashes and search and arrest operations, including 988 injured as a result of inhaling tear gas, subsequently requiring medical treatment. Three boys were injured while committing or allegedly attempting to commit stabbing attacks against Israelis. In Gaza, 1,335 child casualties were attributed to Israeli forces, 1,276 of whom were injured between March and December during demonstrations at the Gaza fence, 62 per cent injured by live ammunition (629) or shrapnel (167) and 35 per cent by tear gas inhalation (443). Twenty children had limbs amputated.

89. Six Israeli children were injured, including two girls injured in their home by a rocket fired indiscriminately by a Palestinian armed group.

90. Two schools in Gaza were damaged during ground attacks by Israeli forces, and a further four schools were damaged during air strikes by Israeli forces. A mortar launched by Palestinian armed groups from Gaza exploded in the yard of a kindergarten near Sderot, a town located in southern Israel. No injuries were reported in connection with those attacks.

91. The United Nations verified 118 incidents of interference with education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory by Israeli forces (113) and Israeli settlers (5), affecting 23,188 children. Among those were two verified incidents of the military use of a school by Israeli forces. More than half of verified interferences involved Israeli forces firing live ammunition, tear gas or sound grenades in and around schools, mostly in the context of clashes or military operations. Of particular concern is the fact that Israeli forces did not always intervene when settlers entered Urif village and attacked the secondary school. Attacks on the school in Urif have been verified since 2012.

92. Conflict escalations also caused significant disruptions to children's education in Gaza and southern Israel, when schools were closed for the safety of students and educators as a result of air strikes by Israeli forces and indiscriminate rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups. For example, school closures affected an estimated 63,000 children in southern Israel and 637,195 children in Gaza during escalations of conflict on 12 and 13 November.

93. Three health facilities were damaged in Israeli forces air strikes. Three members of medical personnel were killed and a further 553 injured by Israeli forces, including 375 by tear gas inhalation, while providing medical services during Gaza demonstrations. Seven interferences with health services were documented in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, due to Israeli forces incursions into or clashes



near health facilities, as well as attacks by Israeli settlers on medical vehicles and personnel.

94. With respect to applications to Israeli authorities for children to cross into Israel for medical treatment outside Gaza, approval for 24 per cent of such applications was reported as having been delayed, affecting 1,079 boys and 689 girls. Applications on behalf of children injured in Gaza demonstrations were approved at a very low rate (22 per cent approval compared with the average of 75 per cent for other cases involving children).

#### *Developments and concerns*

95. I am extremely concerned by the significant rise in the maiming of and injuries caused to children across Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including by tear gas inhalation requiring medical treatment. I request my Special Representative to further examine the cases of maiming and injuries caused by Israeli forces, and urge Israel to immediately put in place preventive and protective measures to end the excessive use of force. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, as well as to cease the use of administrative detention for children and end all forms of ill-treatment in detention, and to cease any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants.

96. I urge all parties to apply all feasible measures to ensure the protection of and care for children affected by armed conflict and to refrain from the excessive use of force. I call on all parties to engage constructively with the United Nations to prevent future violations.

97. I urge all Palestinian actors to refrain from encouraging children's participation in violence. I call upon the al-Quds and al-Qassam Brigades to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children, and I further request my Special Representative to further examine recruitment and use by armed groups.

#### **Lebanon**

98. Armed clashes in camps for Palestinian refugees, sporadic armed violence and the presence of mines and other explosive devices negatively affected children throughout the country.

#### *Grave violations*

99. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups continued, with 22 children (21 boys, 1 girl) verified as associated with the Ansarullah Movement (Ansar Allah) (5), Hizbullah (1) or unidentified militia (16). They were mostly used as guards or in support roles, for carrying weapons or food. For example, five boys associated with Ansar Allah, between the ages of 14 and 17, were trained to use weapons, wore military uniforms and held Kalashnikov rifles in Mieh Mieh camp for Palestinian refugees in Sidon in October.

100. Children continued to be arrested and prosecuted in relation to terrorism charges as part of military justice processes, with 20 new arrests in 2018 for alleged association with ISIL. As of December, 16 children remained in detention on such charges, 9 of whom were in pretrial detention and 7 of whom were detained following sentencing.

101. A total of 14 child casualties (13 boys, 1 girl) were verified, resulting from unattributed mine explosions (6) or crossfire (8), mainly in North Bija', Akkar and the south.

102. Marking an increase compared with 2017, five United Nations facilities in Palestinian refugee camps (3 schools, 2 health centres) sustained damage from crossfire between armed actors in three camps for Palestinian refugees. For example, two schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) were damaged by shrapnel in Ein El Hilweh in October. In addition, armed clashes in camps for Palestinian refugees disrupted educational activities in UNRWA schools, with more than 11,000 students deprived of at least one day of school in Ein El Hilweh and Shatila camps and over 400 students deprived of 20 consecutive school days in Mieh Mieh camp. Two United Nations clinics had to close for 2 days and 19 days in Shatila and Mieh Mieh camps, respectively, affecting approximately 200 patients a day.

#### *Developments and concerns*

103. I am concerned about armed clashes in camps for Palestinian refugees and about the recruitment and use of children. I am also concerned about attacks on schools and the impact thereof on children's well-being and access to education. I reiterate my call for the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Children associated with armed groups should be treated primarily as victims, detained only as a last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and be promptly referred to reintegration programmes. I call on armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

#### **Libya**

104. The ceasefire agreement brokered by the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) in September 2018 led to a decrease in hostilities in Tripoli. However, sporadic fighting continued in parts of Libya and children fell victim to indiscriminate attacks, including during exchanges of crossfire in densely populated areas. The lack of access for monitoring actors, owing to the security situation, severely inhibited the verification of grave violations against children.

#### *Grave violations*

105. The United Nations received reports of the increased recruitment and use of children, yet information could not be verified owing to security and access restrictions. Communities are also believed not to have reported incidents, out of fear of repercussions.

106. Children were deprived of liberty by the Libyan National Army for their alleged association with the Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) in the context of clashes in the oil crescent region. The United Nations also received reports of refugee and migrant children held by criminal networks allegedly associated with armed groups.

107. The United Nations verified the killing (30) and maiming (44) of 74 children by unidentified armed elements. Child casualties resulted from air strikes, shelling in urban areas, small arms fire as well as from improvised explosive devices and unexploded ordnance, mainly in Tripoli, Benghazi and in southern Libya. Children fell victim to clashes, including between the Libyan National Army and the Darnah Protection Force (DPF) in Darnah, between the Libyan National Army and PFG forces in the oil crescent region, and between tribal groups in Sabha.

108. The United Nations was unable to verify any case of sexual violence against children. However, refugee and migrant children were reportedly subjected to sexual abuse, including forced prostitution and sexual exploitation, in conditions that could amount to sexual slavery, by traffickers or criminal networks allegedly associated with armed groups.

109. The United Nations verified attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (37), mostly in the context of clashes between armed groups including shelling and crossfire, including in Sabha, Darnah and Tripoli. Attacks on schools were attributed to Ahmad al-Dabbashi (1) and the Abu Salim brigade (1) while three remained unattributed. The attacks on hospitals, all of which were unattributed, included the killing and maiming of 12 members of health-care personnel and of three patients.

110. While no incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, humanitarian actors in Libya continued to face restrictions, including administrative and bureaucratic impediments in providing humanitarian assistance to civilians, including children, who were also denied access to appropriate health care.

#### *Developments and concerns*

111. I welcome the collaboration between the United Nations and local authorities in the area of Zintan on the reintegration of children and the engagement with armed groups to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. I urge all parties to engage with the United Nations to strengthen the protection and the prevention of violations against children.

112. I am deeply concerned about the levels of child casualties, often owing to indiscriminate shelling and crossfire in urban areas. The abuse of refugee and migrant children, including through trafficking, deprivation of liberty and sexual abuse, is abhorrent and I call upon the Government of National Accord to swiftly act to protect children and prevent them from being subjected to these violations.

#### **Mali**

113. The security situation in northern and central Mali remained volatile, marked by military operations and attacks by armed groups against Malian Defence and Security Forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and armed groups signatories to the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, resulting in civilian casualties. The Central region was caught in a spiral of violence with the rise of self-defence groups and intercommunal conflict triggering killings and forced displacement, as well as affecting children's welfare. Previously peaceful western regions also witnessed instability.

#### *Grave violations*

114. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 109 boys and 5 girls. The main perpetrators were Platform (57) (including the Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (27), Ganda Lassale Izo (24) and other Platform members (6)), and the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (23) (including the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (12), the Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (9) and other CMA members (2)). At least 31 children were used as combatants, 3 of whom were children between the ages of 14 and 17 who were associated with Congrès pour la justice dans l'Azawad and were killed by CMA at a checkpoint in Timbuktu region.

115. A total of 13 boys arrested by the Malian Defence and Security Forces for their alleged association with armed groups or on national security charges were released after between 5 days and 60 days in detention, including 5 boys who were ill-treated while detained. Three other children were deprived of their liberty in Ménaka by GATIA, the Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) and by joint GATIA/MSA forces (one each).

116. A total of 77 children (13 girls, 64 boys) were killed and 52 maimed (16 girls, 36 boys) as a result of intercommunal conflict, crossfire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. Responsibility for the majority of the child casualties could not be attributed, except for 16 casualties attributed to the Group of Support to Islam and Muslims (Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin) (GSIM) and another 16 to traditional hunters of Dan Na Ambassagou. The regions most affected were Mopti and Gao.

117. Sexual violence continued to be highly underreported. A total of 20 girls between the ages of 12 and 17 were victims of rape and sexual violence perpetrated by unidentified armed groups (18), Forces armées maliennes and GATIA (1 each).

118. A total of 81 attacks on schools were verified, which doubled from the number verified in 2017 (41). The responsibility for most incidents was unattributed, except for two attacks perpetrated by GSIM. At least 40 schools closed following direct threats made to teachers. Other incidents included the burning of schools and physical attacks on school personnel. The most affected regions were Mopti (50) and Koulikoro (20) in the centre and the west/south of the country. As of December, 827 schools remained closed, leaving more than 244,000 children with no access to education. The United Nations verified 21 attacks against hospitals, all unattributed, in Mopti (12), Timbuktu (7) and Gao (2) regions, involving abductions of protected personnel and the carjacking of health centres' vehicles and ambulances.

119. Eight boys and one girl were abducted by unidentified traditional hunters (two), Islamic State in Greater Sahara and GATIA (one each) and unidentified armed groups (five). The girl abducted by GATIA in Gao region was subjected to sexual violence.

120. A total of 170 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified, the responsibility for which was unattributed except for incidents attributed to Dan Na Ambassagou (two), GATIA and Malian Defence and Security Forces (one each). Most incidents occurred in Timbuktu (41), Gao (36), Mopti (30), Kidal (26) and Ménaka (24) regions resulting in the disruption of the provision of humanitarian assistance to children, such as health care, vaccination and food distribution.

#### *Developments and concerns*

121. Following the adoption of the Safe Schools Declaration in February, I encourage the Government to continue its implementation, including the mapping of schools closed as a result of direct threats and insecurity

122. A joint United Nations-CMA-Government coordination mechanism was established for the implementation of the 2017 action plan. However, the implementation has been slow, and I am concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children. I urge CMA to implement the action plan without delay. In 2018, 102 boys and 5 girls formerly associated with armed groups received reintegration support from UNICEF and partners.

123. The United Nations continued engagement with French forces from Operation Barkhane on the protection of children during military operations. Twelve children captured by Barkhane during military operations were handed over to civilian child protection actors. Three children captured by MINUSMA were transferred to the Gendarmerie before their handover to civilian authorities. Dialogue was initiated with the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel to mainstream child protection in their operations. I welcome the adoption of a compliance framework by the Joint Force and encourage the Force to implement the child protection aspects therein, including the handover of children.

124. In the framework of the accelerated disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and integration process in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, nine individuals,

who were presumed to be children, were identified during the screening of combatants but were not released, as they presented adult identity cards, which had been issued a few days prior to the screening. I am concerned by these reports and urge all parties to facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of all associated children. I am also concerned by the increasing number of child casualties, in particular resulting from an intercommunal conflict in central Mali, including by Dan Na Ambassagou, which further deteriorated in early 2019. I am concerned about the continuing high numbers of children recruited and used by the Platform and urge it to develop an action plan with the support of the United Nations to release children and end this practice.

## **Myanmar**

125. Armed conflict continued to take place both between the Tatmadaw and armed groups, and among armed groups, notably in Shan, Kachin and Rakhine States. In the last quarter of the year, fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army intensified in central Rakhine and southern Chin States. Attacks by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army elements against Government forces were also registered. This resulted in the continuous displacement of civilians across the two states. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya, half of whom are children, remained in Rakhine State, and those displaced in Shan and Kachin States continue to face serious hardships.

### *Grave violations*

126. The United Nations verified 7 children having been recruited and 64 children having been used by the Tatmadaw in 2018. In addition, the past recruitment of 26 boys by the Tatmadaw was verified in 2018.

127. The United Nations verified 11 incidents of the recruitment and use of 17 children (14 boys and 3 girls) by armed groups. Nine incidents were attributed to the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), one to Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and one to Karen National Liberation Army. In addition, two incidents were documented involving United Wa State Army (UWSA).

128. The United Nations documented the detention of five suspected minors, who had been recruited by the Tatmadaw and held for desertion, and advocated their release. They were placed on light duty in their regiments, pending assessment of their ages. In addition, despite United Nations advocacy, an appeal remains ongoing regarding the charges against the former child soldier Aung Ko Htwe, who was forcibly recruited by the Tatmadaw in 2005 and sentenced to two years imprisonment for sharing his experience with the media. As of December, he remained in detention. Furthermore, the United Nations sent 12 advocacy letters to the Tatmadaw regarding the assignment to the front lines of 11 suspected minors, who were returned to rear bases, pending verification of their ages.

129. The United Nations verified 34 incidents of the killing and maiming of children, resulting in the death of 16 children and injury to 39 children, mainly caused by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices (24), crossfire (4), air strikes by the Tatmadaw (2), gunshots by Border Guard Police (BGP) (2) and unidentified elements (1), and mortar shells launched by an unknown armed element (1).

130. The United Nations documented eight incidents of attacks against schools (five) and hospitals (three) in Kachin (six) and Shan (two) States, attributed to Tatmadaw (two), KIA (two), Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) (one) and unidentified elements (three).

131. The United Nations received 32 reports of the military use of schools (30) and hospitals (2) in Rakhine (30) and Kachin (2) States, attributed to the Tatmadaw (21), BGP (7), and jointly to the Tatmadaw and BGP (4). In one incident in Kachin State, a hospital was used as a military base for 13 days, denying the local population access thereto.

132. The United Nations verified three incidents of abduction affecting nine boys, attributed to Tatmadaw (two) and KIA (one). Another six incidents were documented reportedly affecting 36 children, attributed to the KIA (four), the TNLA (one) and the UWSA (one).

133. Humanitarian access, particularly in Kachin, Shan and Rakhine States, continued to deteriorate. International humanitarian organizations have not been able to deliver relief supplies in areas beyond the Government's control since 2016 owing to denial of travel authorizations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

134. I am encouraged by the Government's formation of an interministerial committee to prevent all six grave violations and discuss action plans on ending and preventing sexual violence and killing and maiming, following their listing in my previous report, and hope for progress in granting access to conflict-affected areas of Myanmar and holding perpetrators accountable. I reiterate my call for the Government to fully comply with and to finalize action plans on ending and preventing the two remaining violations, with the United Nations, as a priority and encourage the Government to adopt a law on child rights. I remain concerned about the ongoing recruitment and use of children and detention of children by the Government.

135. In 2018, the United Nations engaged with all listed armed groups, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, except for UWSA, and commitments are being sought from RCSS/SSA, Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council and Karen National Union. I strongly encourage listed parties to remain engaged with the United Nations in adopting concrete commitments, and to take action to prevent and address the recruitment of children with immediate effect.

136. During her visit to Myanmar in May 2018, my Special Representative stressed to the Government the need for accelerated implementation of the joint action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children. She urged the Government to ensure no new violations would occur with respect to child recruitment and use, to expedite the age assessment of recruits, to release suspected minors whose cases are pending, and to cease the detention of children for desertion or for being absent without leave. Though efforts are under way, full compliance is yet to be achieved and aggravated cases of new recruitment occurred in 2018, with no progress on accountability. However, 75 children and young people recruited as children were released from the Tatmadaw in 2018 and there has been steady progress in addressing the backlog of cases from previous years.

137. I am concerned about the levels of recruitment and use, and of the killing and maiming of children, notably caused by landmines, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, and condemn grave violations committed by all parties.

#### **Somalia**

138. The political and security situation in Somalia was marked by tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia and federal member states, with the latter

breaking off relations with the Federal Government in September. The situation improved from December onwards, when the Federal Government engaged federal member states to normalize relations. Al-Shabaab continued its attacks against the Somali National Army and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and used improvised explosive devices against civilians, often with children as victims. In 2018, the number of children affected by grave violations increased by 23 per cent compared with 2017.

*Grave violations*

139. A total of 2,228 boys and 72 girls, some as young as 8, were recruited and used by parties to conflict. The recruitment of children by Al-Shabaab significantly increased (1,865) compared with 2017 as the group sustained its recruitment drive, including by forcing clan elders and parents to provide children or face reprisal. Other perpetrators included the Somali National Army (155), Somali police (93), Galmudug forces (67), Jubbaland forces (56), clan militias (24), Puntland forces (20) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ) (14).

140. The detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab remained a serious concern, with 360 boys and 15 girls affected. Children were detained by the Somali National Army (168), Somali police (145), Jubbaland forces (20), National Intelligence and Security Agency (18), Galmudug forces and AMISOM (3 each), clan militia and "Somaliland" elements (2 each) and ASWJ (1). Al-Shabaab held 13 children for failing to respect their rules.

141. A total of 781 boys and 260 girls were killed and maimed by Al-Shabaab (437), unidentified armed elements (344), Somali National Army (113), clan militias (36), Somali police (26), Jubbaland forces (24), Galmudug forces (19), AMISOM (15), Southwest forces (10), unidentified air strikes (8), Puntland forces (6), Ethiopian Liyu Police, Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Kenya Defence Forces (1 each). Most child casualties resulted from crossfire, targeted killings, aerial bombardments, improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks.

142. The United Nations verified incidents of sexual violence affecting 328 girls and 3 boys, attributed to unidentified armed elements (114), Somali National Army (50), Al-Shabaab (46), clan militias (42), Jubbaland forces (31), Galmudug forces (14), Somali police (13), Southwest forces (10), Ethiopian Liyu Police (6), Puntland forces (3), and Ethiopian National Defence Forces (2).

143. A total of 77 attacks on schools were verified, the majority (61) attributed to Al-Shabaab. Incidents included killing, abduction and threats against teachers, destruction and looting. On 9 June, a Koranic school teacher was forced to leave Galharur village, Aden Yabal district, Shabelle Dhexe Region, after receiving threats for not teaching according to Al-Shabaab's curriculum. A total of 14 attacks on hospitals were verified and attributed to Al-Shabaab (7), Galmudug forces (4) and unidentified armed elements, clan militias and the Somali National Army (1 each).

144. A total of 1,609 children (1,479 boys, 130 girls), some as young as 8, were verified as abducted, 97 per cent of them by Al-Shabaab (1,590) mainly for the purpose of recruitment and use. On 13 October, three boys between the ages of 11 and 16 were abducted by Al-Shabaab from a local madrasa in Howlwadaag village, Bu'aale district, Juba Dhexe Region. The children were taken to a training facility for indoctrination and subsequent recruitment.

145. A total of 74 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified by the United Nations, a sharp increase from 2017 (37). Most incidents were attributed to Al-Shabaab (41).

*Developments and concerns*

146. The Federal Government elaborated a road map to expedite the implementation of the two action plans signed in 2012. I welcome this positive development and call for its swift implementation by all Government security forces, including the Somali National Army and the Somali police. I also commend the drafting of the Child Rights Bill, which incorporates the Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic law, and urge its speedy enactment. The Sexual Offence Bill is also a positive development and I call for its enactment.

147. I welcome the decree signed by the President of Puntland on 20 August pardoning 34 children who had previously received heavy sentences and been imprisoned since 2016 for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab.

148. During 2018, 74 children were released from the Puntland forces, 17 of whom separated during the screening of those Forces earmarked for integration into the Somali National Army. In addition, the Somali National Army rescued 36 boys, some as young as 7, from an Al-Shabaab training centre in Shabelle Hoose Region. All children were handed over to UNICEF and partners for reintegration support. Overall, 1,179 children formerly associated with armed forces and groups received reintegration support in 2018.

149. I am very concerned by the increase in the recruitment and use, and killing and maiming of children, and in the number of children who have been subjected to sexual violence, the perpetration of which is attributed to the Somali National Army and the Somali police. I am also preoccupied by the steady increase in grave violations by regional forces, in particular Galmudug and Jubbaland forces, and strongly encourage them to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations.

150. I remain severely concerned by the increased recruitment and use, and the continuous abductions of children by Al-Shabaab. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent all violations against children. I also remain concerned by the detention of children for their alleged association with Al-Shabaab and call on authorities to treat these children primarily as victims, to prioritize their reintegration in line with their best interests, and to respect due process and international juvenile justice standards.

**South Sudan**

151. The signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan in September 2018 resulted in a decrease in hostilities and a slight improvement in humanitarian access to children. However, the parties made modest progress on the implementation of the peace agreement and spikes in abductions and sexual violence against children were noted after the signing of the agreement. The greater Equatoria region remained the epicentre of grave violations with 50 per cent of the total number of incidents.

*Grave violations*

152. The United Nations verified 102 incidents of recruitment or use affecting 453 children (365 boys, 88 girls), 14 per cent of whom were under 15 years of age at the time of their recruitment. Almost half of the cases were attributed to the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (SSNLM) (224 children), followed by the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO) (84) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) (2), with some cases relating to children who had been recruited in previous years. Close to 30 per cent of the children were recruited and used by Government Security Forces (143), including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) (94), Taban Deng-allied SSPDF (46), the South Sudan



National Police Service (SSNPS) (2) and the National Prison Service of South Sudan (NPSSS) (1). In addition, 955 children were released by the SSNLM (629), Taban Deng-allied SSPDF (318) and NAS (8).

153. A total of 125 children (69 boys, 45 girls, 11 sex unknown) were verified as having been killed and maimed by Government Security Forces (75), including the SSPDF (66), the SSNPS (8) and the South Sudan National Fire Brigade (1). The pro-Machar SPLA-IO was responsible for the killing and maiming of five children. Fifteen children were affected by crossfire between SSPDF and pro-Machar SPLA-IO, and crossfire between the South Sudan National Movement for Change (SSNMC) and pro-Machar SPLA-IO affected seven children. Children also continued to be affected by unexploded ordnance (23).

154. A total of 72 children, including 1 boy, were subjected to sexual violence, 33 of whom were under 15 years of age and 8 of whom were gang-raped. The majority of cases were attributed to the Government Security Forces (57), including SSPDF (47 children, including 1 boy), SSNPS (6), Taban Deng-allied SSPDF (2), and to NPSSS and the National Security Service (1 each). The pro-Machar SPLA-IO was responsible for perpetrating sexual violence against 14 girls and responsibility for one case was attributed to unidentified armed elements. In addition, a spike in cases of sexual violence in northern Unity was reported by the United Nations in the last quarter of 2018.

155. A total of 30 attacks on schools (18) and hospitals (12) were verified and attributed to Government Security Forces (11), including SSPDF (10) and the Taban Deng-allied SSPDF (1), as well as to pro-Machar SPLA-IO (15), NAS (1) and to crossfire incidents between SSPDF and pro-Machar SPLA-IO (3). Attacks predominantly involved the destruction and looting of educational or medical facilities.

156. In addition, 33 schools (26) and hospitals (7) were used for military purposes, the majority by Government Security Forces (27), including SSPDF (25) and Taban Deng-allied SSPDF (2), followed by pro-Machar SPLA-IO (5) and SSNMC (1).

157. A total of 109 children (49 boys, 51 girls, 9 sex unknown) were verified as having been abducted. The pro-Machar SPLA-IO was responsible for a large majority of those cases (92), often for the purpose of rape and other forms of sexual violence and for the recruitment and use of children. SSPDF was responsible for the abduction of 17 children.

158. A total of 14 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified in a context that continued to be challenging for humanitarian actors. Incidents were attributed to pro-Machar SPLA-IO (10), SSPDF (3), and NAS (1) and involved attacks, the abduction of humanitarian personnel and the looting of humanitarian aid intended for children. For instance, in April 2018, pro-Machar SPLA-IO held 10 humanitarian workers for five days in Central Equatoria.

#### *Developments and concerns*

159. I welcome South Sudan's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in September 2018, following the mission of my Special Representative to South Sudan, and the release of 955 children (including 317 girls) by armed groups that integrated SSPDF in 2018, including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF and SSNLM. I am encouraged by the willingness of the Government to engage with the United Nations on the development of a comprehensive action plan for ending and preventing all grave violations against children. The elaboration of a draft, together with the United Nations, in February 2019 is a welcome first step and I encourage the Government

and allied parties to finalize the action plan without delay. Within the framework of the existing action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use, signed in 2012 and recommitted to in 2014, the SSPDF appointed child protection focal points across its divisions, organized trainings on child protection jointly with the United Nations and granted access for the United Nations to conduct screenings in Bentiu military barracks.

160. I am seriously concerned about the ongoing impunity for violations against children and urge the Government to ensure accountability, in particular for sexual violence. I urge the Government to ensure that the protection of children is addressed in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement, including by ensuring that crimes against children are not amnestied. I further urge the Government to cease attacks on schools and the military use thereof, in line with its endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration. In addition, I am extremely concerned about the increase in abductions, often for the purpose of sexual violence and recruitment, and urge the pro-Machar SPLA-IO faction to engage with the United Nations on the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and the killing and maiming of children signed in 2016.

### **The Sudan**

161. While fighting subsided in large parts of Darfur, sporadic clashes between Government forces and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) continued in the Jebel Marra area, resulting in the displacement of civilians and in an upsurge in killing and maiming of children, the number of children subjected to sexual violence and in the number of children abducted. Progress in implementing the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur remained limited, as did political dialogue between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM/N). While unilateral ceasefires were extended in Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan and Darfur, violations were reported in the Blue Nile, as were clashes between factions of SPLM/N. The ability of the United Nations to monitor and report on grave violations was hampered by access restrictions and reduced child protection capacity.

#### *Grave violations: Darfur*

162. No cases of the recruitment and use of children were verified in 2018, although allegations thereof were received.

163. The United Nations verified a total of 77 incidents of killing and maiming affecting 186 children (121 boys, 65 girls), a 27 per cent increase compared with 2017 (146). Child casualties were attributed to Government Security Forces (98), including the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (33), the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) (57) and the Sudan Police Force (8), often occurring in the context of military operations in the Jebel Marra area. Remaining casualties were attributed to unidentified armed elements (16), SLA/AW (9) and SLA/General Leadership (1). More than a third of incidents (62 children) were caused by unexploded ordnance.

164. The United Nations verified that 68 girls were subjected to sexual violence, a 55 per cent increase compared with 2017 (44). Cases were attributed to Government Security Forces (39), including RSF (20), SAF (17), the Sudan Police Force (1), the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) (1), followed by unidentified armed elements (29). The majority of cases occurred in the context of clashes in the Jebel Marra area.

165. A total of 17 attacks on schools (14) and hospitals (3) were verified and attributed to Government Security Forces (12), including RSF (7) and SAF (5), followed by unidentified armed elements (5). In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of one school by SAF in West Darfur, which was vacated during the

year. A school used for military purposes by SAF in Laiba, East Jebel Marra, reported on previously, remained occupied at the time of writing.

166. A total of 22 children (17 boys, 5 girls) were verified as having been abducted by the Government Security Forces (14), including RSF (9), SAF (2), the Border Guards (2) and the Popular Police Force (1), and most of those abductions were followed by arrests. Unidentified armed elements were responsible for the abduction of eight children.

167. While no incident of denial of humanitarian access was verified, the prevailing security situation and access restrictions imposed by parties to conflict largely complicated humanitarian access to children.

*Grave violations: Southern Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

168. During the reporting period, access restrictions hindered monitoring and reporting by the United Nations on grave violations committed against children.

169. The killing of a boy by unexploded ordnance was verified in Southern Kordofan.

170. Three schools and one health clinic in Blue Nile, which had been used for military purposes since 2011, were vacated by the Government in June 2018.

*Developments and concerns*

171. Major political developments in April 2019 resulted in the removal of the President of the Sudan and his Government. I welcome efforts made to sustain the gains of the action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use, which was completed in 2018, including by preserving institutional structures at the national and state levels and taking steps to develop, with the United Nations, a national plan for the prevention of violations against children. I am encouraged by the continued collaboration between the Government and the United Nations in the training of security forces, local authorities, community members and community-based child protection networks on child protection and child rights, in particular at the state level, and I encourage these areas of collaboration to be further reinforced in all parts of Darfur. I also welcome the vacating by military authorities of schools and health facilities and encourage the authorities to continue to demilitarize schools, in line with the Safe Schools Declaration. I further encourage the authorities to operationalize the complaint mechanism manual for reporting child recruitment, to disseminate the standard operating procedures on the release and handover of children associated with armed groups among all Government security forces and to roll out the national awareness-raising campaign for preventing violations against children.

172. I am, however, concerned about the elevated numbers of cases of killing and maiming, sexual violence and abductions perpetrated against children in the context of clashes in the Jebel Marra area. I remind all parties to abide by their obligations under international law to protect children, including by respecting the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and by ensuring the accountability of all perpetrators. I am further concerned about the lack of access for the United Nations to areas under SPLM/N control and call on the group to allow and facilitate safe and unimpeded access to verify the implementation of its 2016 action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

173. The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued throughout 2018, with an increasing number of grave violations (3,021), the highest number of violations ever verified in the country, despite security and access restrictions. In addition, 934 violations that took place in 2017 and in previous years were also verified. In January,

the Government of Turkey officially launched Operation “Olive Branch” in support of groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) in northern Syrian Arab Republic. Following a five-year-long besiegement, pro-Government forces regained control over the previously besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah. April witnessed the launch of the Government’s military operations against armed groups in southern Damascus. In July, fighting between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by the international counter-ISIL coalition, and ISIL in Hajin and Dashishah, Dayr al-Zawr, intensified, with air strikes and ground operations.

#### *Grave violations*

174. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 806 children (670 boys, 136 girls), 22 per cent of whom were under 15 years of age (179), and 94 per cent of whom were used in combat roles (754). The majority of the children were recruited and used by YPG/YPJ (313) operating under the umbrella of SDF, followed by Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusra Front (Levant Liberation Organization) (187), groups self-affiliated with the FSA (170), Ahrar al-Sham (34), ISIL (30), Army of Islam (17), Nur al-Din al-Zanki (16), Syrian Government forces (10), and unidentified armed elements (29). More than 40 per cent of the children recruited by the YPG/YPJ (126) were girls, 20 of whom were below the age of 15 and 119 of whom served in combat roles. The majority of cases were verified in Idlib, Aleppo and Raqqah. At least 25 child casualties resulted from combat and there were cases of children switching association after new groups gained control of territory.

175. The United Nations verified the deprivation of liberty of 51 children (50 boys, 1 girl) for their alleged association with parties to conflict, the majority by YPG/YPJ (40), followed by groups self-affiliated with FSA (8), Syrian Government forces (2) and Ahrar al-Sham (1). Some were subject to ill-treatment, torture or rape. In addition, at least 1,248 children, mainly under the age of 5 and of multiple nationalities, were deprived of their liberty in sites for internally displaced persons across the north-east of the country. The camps were managed by local authorities and YPG/YPJ.

176. The United Nations verified the killing (1,106) and maiming (748) of 1,854 children by Syrian Government and pro-government air forces (888), Syrian Government forces (148), pro-Government forces (96), ISIL (70), groups self-affiliated with FSA and Operation “Olive Branch” (54), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusra Front (25), YPG/YPJ (10), Army of Islam (7), the international counter-ISIL coalition (4), Ahrar al-Sham (2) and by unidentified armed elements (550). The majority of child casualties occurred in Idlib, Rif Dimashq and Aleppo and more than half of the casualties resulted from air strikes (987), including the use of barrel bombs and cluster munitions, followed by unexploded ordnance (434) and shelling (118). For instance, in January, Syrian Government forces dropped a barrel bomb on a residential area in Armanaz town, Idlib, resulting in the killing of 15 children.

177. The United Nations verified 38 incidents of sexual violence perpetrated against children by ISIL (30), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusra Front (5), FSA-affiliated Faylaq al-Sham (2) and Syrian Government forces (1), 30 of which occurred in previous years. Incidents included forced marriage, rape, trafficking and sexual violence while children were deprived of liberty. Sexual violence remained underreported owing to access restrictions, the lack of access to services for victims and stigma.

178. The United Nations verified 113 attacks on schools, a 69 per cent increase compared with 2017, and 112 attacks on hospitals, the highest number recorded since the beginning of the conflict. Attacks on schools were attributed to government and pro-government air forces (60), Syrian Government forces (24), pro-government forces and militia (12), ISIL (2), YPG/YPJ (2), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusra Front (1) and unidentified elements (12). Attacks on hospitals were attributed to

government and pro-government air forces (82), Syrian Government forces (5), pro-government forces and militia (6), ISIL (1), the international counter-ISIL coalition (1) and unidentified armed elements (17). Child casualties resulted from attacks on schools (96) and hospitals (55). Close to 70 per cent of the attacks on schools and hospitals were caused by air strikes, including the use of barrel bombs, followed by shelling and the use of improvised explosive devices. Education and medical personnel were killed and maimed (48) and education personnel were detained (9).

179. The United Nations verified the military use of 24 schools and three hospitals, used as ammunition storage, military bases and as detention facilities. Schools were used by YPG/YPJ (14), groups self-affiliated with FSA and Operation “Olive Branch” (7), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (2) and ISIL (1). Hospitals were occupied by ISIL (1), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (1) and unidentified armed elements (1). Two health facilities and three schools were attacked following the military use thereof.

180. The United Nations verified the abduction of 69 children (40 boys, 24 girls, 5 sex unknown), some as young as two years old, by ISIL (44), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (8), FSA-affiliated Rahman Corps (4), YPG/YPJ (3), Army of Islam (2), Ahrar al-Sham (1) and unidentified armed elements (7). Children were primarily abducted because of the alleged affiliation of relatives with parties to the conflict (32), for recruitment (25) and forced marriage (12). One in five children abducted was subjected to ill-treatment, torture, rape or execution.

181. The United Nations verified 59 incidents of denial of humanitarian access involving attacks and threats of attack on humanitarian facilities (37), humanitarian transport and personnel, and the removal or blocking of humanitarian supplies (22). The attacks resulted in the killing and maiming of humanitarian workers (18), and deprivation of liberty (23). Main perpetrators included the Government and pro-government air forces (13), Syrian Government forces (8), pro-government forces (3) and pro-government militia (1), YPG/YPJ (9), ISIL (2), Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (2), groups self-affiliated with FSA (2), and unidentified armed elements (19). Several children in Rukban have died from preventable conditions as a result of the lack of access to adequate health care.

#### *Developments and concerns*

182. I note the United Nations dialogue with the Government on child protection, including on the reintegration of children. I encourage the Government to put in place long-term preventive measures on the protection of children, including by prioritizing the implementation of the national workplan on ending and preventing child recruitment by the national committee. I note a significant reduction in the recruitment and use of children in 2018. I further call for the adoption of an action plan on ending and preventing the grave violations for which it is listed.

183. I welcome the engagement of SDF, including YPG/YPJ, with my Special Representative, leading to the development and adoption of an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in 2019. I urge SDF to expedite its implementation, notably the screening of all children within their ranks, including their swift handover to civilian authorities, the implementation of awareness-raising activities and the establishment of a public complaint procedure to report the recruitment and use of children.

184. I note the engagement by groups self-affiliated with FSA, and by Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, as regards training, as well as the commitments made regarding child protection. I am encouraged by the issuance of a military order by Army of Islam setting 18 as the minimum age of recruitment and call for its swift implementation.

The cases that occurred in the context of Operation Olive Branch are currently under investigation.

185. I am seriously concerned about the increasing number of grave violations verified by the United Nations in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular, the elevated numbers of child casualties and attacks against schools and hospitals. I remain deeply concerned about the detention of children on security-related charges.

186. I call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the repatriation of foreign women and children actually and allegedly affiliated with ISIL, in line with the guiding principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child.

## **Yemen**

187. The conflict in Yemen entered its fifth year, with further deterioration in the dire humanitarian situation. Throughout the year, the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen continued air strikes, the Houthis continued to fire missiles into Saudi Arabia, and ground fighting intensified throughout the country. Air strikes attributed to the Coalition affected the majority of governorates, in particular Hudaydah, Sa'dah and Hajjah. In June, Government forces, backed by the Coalition, launched an offensive against the Houthis in Hudaydah Governorate. In December, the intra-Yemeni consultations convened by my Special Envoy for Yemen resulted in the Stockholm Agreement, followed by the establishment by the Security Council of a monitoring mission, the United Nations Mission to Support the Hudaydah Agreement, to support its implementation. The capacity of the United Nations to monitor and verify grave violations was significantly impeded by threats and by monitors being deprived of their liberty by parties to conflict. A detailed account of the impact of armed conflict on children in Yemen is available in my country report ([S/2019/453](#)).

### *Grave violations*

188. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 370 children, attributed to Houthis (170), Yemeni Government forces (111), Security Belt Forces (44), Shabwani Elite Forces (23), Popular Resistance (17), Hadrami Elite Forces (4) and forces loyal to the Southern Transitional Council (1). The decrease compared with 2017 (842) is mainly a result of access and security restrictions, the fear experienced by communities, should they report, owing to the risk of repercussions, and cases of the deprivation of liberty of monitors. Of the total number, 37 per cent of the children (138) were used in active combat, at least 50 per cent of whom (70) were below the age of 15. Large-scale child recruitment reportedly took place in schools, orphanages and communities.

189. For the first time, the United Nations verified the recruitment of 16 girls between the ages of 15 and 17 by the Houthis in Sa'dah. The girls were used to encourage male members of their families to join the Houthis and to mobilize other women and girls to do the same. Some were also trained in the use of weapons. Boys were recruited and used as combatants and in various support roles, including as porters, guards, for patrolling and to assist in intelligence gathering.

190. The United Nations verified the deprivation of liberty of 96 boys by parties to conflict for alleged association with opposing parties, marking a substantial increase compared with 2017 (23). The majority of the children were held by the Houthis for their alleged association with the Yemeni Government Forces and were subsequently released (53). The Coalition captured 42 boys and Yemeni Government Forces held them in Ma'rib Governorate for their alleged association with the Houthis, 27 of those boys were released in February and reportedly reunified with their families. At the time of writing, the remaining 15 children were still held in Ma'rib. Lastly, one boy was held by the Popular Resistance for his alleged association with the Houthis.

191. The United Nations verified 1,689 child casualties, including the killing of 576 children (430 boys, 143 girls, 3 unknown sex) and maiming of 1,113 children (815 boys, 298 girls). The majority of child casualties resulted from ground fighting (755), followed by air strikes (685) and unexploded ordnance (223). A total of 43 per cent of child casualties were attributed to the Coalition (729) of which 684 were due to air strikes and 45 to ground fighting, followed by the Houthis (398), the Yemeni Government Forces (58) and the Popular Resistance (48), among other parties. Child casualties attributed to the Coalition remained high throughout the year, with a decrease during the last quarter of 2018. Of the total child casualties, 30 per cent occurred during offensives in Hudaydah (507), 267 of which were due to ground fighting and 181 to air strikes. The second highest number of child casualties was verified in Sa'dah Governorate (354), followed by Ta'izz Governorate (341).

192. The United Nations verified the perpetration of sexual violence against nine children (7 boys, 2 girls) between the ages of 9 and 17, attributed to the Yemeni armed forces (6), the Popular Resistance (2) and the Houthis (1).

193. The United Nations verified 44 attacks against schools (28) and hospitals (16), an increase compared with 2017, 84 per cent of which caused the partial or complete destruction of the facilities. Attacks on schools were attributed to the Coalition (12), the Houthis (12) and unidentified parties (4). Attacks on hospitals were attributed to the Popular Resistance (5), the Coalition (3), the Houthis (3), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (2) and unidentified armed elements (3). One third of the attacks occurred in Ta'izz (14), followed by Sa'dah (10) and Hudaydah (7).

194. The United Nations verified 32 military uses of schools, a fourfold increase compared with 2017, attributed to the Houthis (28), Yemeni Government Forces (3) and Security Belt Forces (1). At least 20 schools were used by the Houthis to mobilize and train children and 4 were used for recruiting and mobilizing girls. Three military use of hospitals were attributed to the Houthis (2) and the Popular Resistance (1). The majority of cases took place in Sa'dah, Mahwit and Hudaydah.

195. The United Nations verified 275 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including restrictions of movement (177), interference in the implementation of humanitarian assistance (49), violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (44) and attacks on humanitarian water facilities (5). The incidents were mainly attributed to the Houthis (206), the Coalition (41) and the Yemeni Government Forces (7), among other parties, and were concentrated in Hudaydah, Sana'a and Sa'dah. Access to areas along the frontlines was particularly difficult, with limited presence of humanitarian actors in the most affected districts and with the Houthis often requesting humanitarian organizations to share beneficiary lists and project details as a precondition to implementing humanitarian activities in areas under their control.

#### *Developments and concerns*

196. I welcome the endorsement of a road map by the Government in December 2018 to expedite the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent recruitment and use of children of 2014 and call for the immediate release of all children from its ranks, as well as for the provision of unimpeded access to civilian child protection actors to children deprived of liberty for their alleged association with armed groups. I count on the Government to follow through with commitments made.

197. I am encouraged by engagements with the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen, including the signing of a memorandum of understanding in March 2019 to enhance the protection of children, which provides a framework for the development of a workplan with my Special Representative. I look forward to the implementation of the memorandum of understanding and further steps to strengthen child protection.

198. I condemn the increasing number of child casualties, which are often a result of attacks in densely populated areas and against civilian objects, including schools and hospitals. The rise in the number of child casualties attributed to the Government Forces and the Coalition and the persistent killing and maiming of children by the Popular Resistance are increasingly worrying. I renew my call for all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to ensure that military operations are conducted in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution.

199. I strongly condemn violations against children committed by armed groups and I am particularly concerned about the persistently high levels of the recruitment and use, and killing and maiming of children and of denial of humanitarian access and by the increase in the attacks on schools and hospitals committed by the Houthis. I call on the Houthis to meaningfully engage with the United Nations to conclude an action plan.

200. I also call upon all parties to the conflict to enhance engagement with the United Nations to develop standard operating procedures on the release and reintegration of children associated with parties.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **India**

201. Children continued to be affected by incidents of violence between armed groups and the Government, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir and in the context of the Naxalite insurgency.

#### *Grave violations*

202. The United Nations received reports of child recruitment and use in Jammu and Kashmir. Five children, some as young as 14, were reportedly recruited by militant groups, including by Hizbul Mujahideen (two) and Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind (one). The two other children joined Lashkar-e-Tayyiba and were reportedly killed in an encounter with the government forces on 9 December. In addition, reports of the systematic recruitment of children by Naxalites continued to be received.

203. Children continued to be reportedly killed and injured in operations by the government security forces against Naxalites in the States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Odisha. For example, on 22 April, eight children were reportedly killed during an attack on Naxalites in the district of Garhchiroli, Maharashtra, where the C-60 district-level special forces claimed to have killed at least 40 Naxalites. In Jammu and Kashmir, 31 children between the ages of 7 and 17 were allegedly killed, including during Government armed forces operations. At least 150 children, some as young as 1, were reportedly injured, mostly by pellet bullets used by the security forces.

204. Allegations of the perpetration of sexual violence against girls by the security forces in Kashmir were reported. For instance, an 8-year-old girl was reportedly abducted, drugged, raped for three days and murdered in Kathua district by special police officers.

#### *Developments and concerns*

205. I welcome the Government's measures to provide protection to children, notably through the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, but remain concerned by the reported child casualties and the recruitment and use of children in



some areas of the country. I encourage the Government to put in place prevention and accountability measures to hold perpetrators of grave violations to account in view of ending and preventing grave violations against children.

## **Nigeria**

206. The Boko Haram crisis was marked by attacks across the Lake Chad Basin and by increased attacks on hospitals in north-east Nigeria. The abduction of children, in particular girls, often for the purpose of sexual abuse, forced marriage or used to bear improvised explosive devices continued at elevated levels. In 2018, the United Nations faced significant access restrictions to conflict-affected areas, impeding its ability to verify grave violations and to deliver life-saving aid to children.

### *Grave violations*

207. A total of 1,947 children (1,596 boys, 351 girls) were verified as having been recruited and used in Nigeria, 1,646 by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and 301 by Boko Haram. No new recruitment and use by CJTF was verified in 2018 and all cases verified occurred in previous years. 833 children (694 boys, 139 girls) were formally separated from the group during 2018 as a result of the action plan. Boko Haram continued to recruit children and used 48 (38 girls) for the purpose of bearing and detonating improvised explosive devices in north-east Nigeria, 30 in Cameroon, 24 in Chad and 10 in the Niger.

208. In 2018, 418 children were deprived of liberty in Nigeria for their or their parents' alleged association with Boko Haram (304 boys, 86 girls, 28 unknown sex). The majority (52 per cent) of the children had been in detention for over two years. In 2018, the Nigerian authorities released 241 children from detention. In addition, 125 children were held in detention for alleged association with Boko Haram in the Niger, Cameroon (57) and Chad (18).

209. The United Nations verified 432 children killed (175) and maimed (257), attributed to Boko Haram (405), Nigerian Security Forces (NSF) (16), CJTF (1) and unattributed incidents of unexploded ordnance (10). Of the total child casualties attributed to Boko Haram, 58 per cent (234) were due to explosions of improvised explosive devices borne by civilians, including 48 children directly used as carriers of improvised explosive devices. Cases attributed to NSF occurred during the course of their response to Boko Haram offensives.

210. A total of 43 girls were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence by Boko Haram (40) and NSF (3). Cases attributed to Boko Haram involved subjecting girls to sexual abuse and forced marriage while in captivity.

211. Attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (10) were verified in north-east Nigeria and attributed to Boko Haram (14) and NSF (1). Furthermore, one hospital in the Far North Region of Cameroon and two schools in the Diffa region of the Niger were attacked by Boko Haram. In addition, NSF used four schools in north-east Nigeria for military purposes.

212. Boko Haram abducted 180 children (45 boys, 135 girls), often for the purpose of recruitment, sexual abuse, forced marriage or for use as carriers of improvised explosive devices. In February 2018, Boko Haram abducted 111 children (110 girls) from a girls' school in Dapchi, Yobe State. Five of the girls died during the abduction, 104 girls were eventually released, and one girl remains in captivity. More than 100 of the Chibok girls abducted in 2014 remain in captivity or missing. In addition, Boko Haram abducted 28 children in Cameroon, 23 in the Niger and 9 in Chad.

213. The number of denials of humanitarian access increased, from 5 in 2017 to 33 in 2018, in an environment where humanitarians face restrictions on movement

imposed by parties to conflict. Most cases were attributed to NSF (23) and Boko Haram (10) and took place in areas where the humanitarian needs of children were dire.

#### *Developments and concerns*

214. The United Nations continued engagement with CJTF within the framework of the action plan to end and prevent child recruitment and use, signed in September 2017, and 833 children were formally separated from CJTF in 2018. I welcome this development and call on CJTF to continue the implementation of the plan with the United Nations. I take note of the constructive role played by the Government in support of this process and of the reintegration of released children.

215. While the release by the Nigerian authorities of 241 children from detention is encouraging, I remain concerned about children remaining in detention owing to their alleged association with Boko Haram. I call on the authorities to release all children, ensure their sustainable reintegration, swiftly adopt a handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, in line with international standards, and provide access to the United Nations to all children deprived of liberty. I also urge the Government to avoid impinging on students' safety and education, in line with its commitments in the Safe Schools Declaration, and to swiftly endorse the Paris Principles.

216. The scale and brutality of grave violations perpetrated by Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria and the subregion remain a serious concern, notably the continued use of children, in particular girls, as carriers of improvised explosive devices and the targeting of girls' education, including through abductions and attacks on schools. I call upon the group to immediately cease all violations and abide by its obligations under international law.

#### **Pakistan**

217. Elections to the Senate and general elections, tensions between neighbouring countries and the emergence of new groups and continued threats from militant groups affected the security situation, including children's rights and protection. Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Newly Merged Districts remained the main geographical areas of concern.

#### *Grave violations*

218. The United Nations received reports of 36 incidents which resulted in the killing (7) and maiming (56) of 63 children. Of those incidents, 20 were attributed to armed groups, including attacks claimed by Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan in Balochistan (2) and Killa Abdullah (1) and the Islamic State in Quetta (1). Ten of the reported incidents involved the use of improvised explosive devices disguised as toys and resulted in the maiming of 19 children, mainly in Bannu, North Waziristan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Newly Merged Districts. The remaining 16 incidents involved cross-border attacks between Pakistan and India and reportedly killed (4) and maimed (18) 22 children.

219. A total of 34 attacks on schools, injuring 26 students, were reported. Among those, 14 attacks, which targeted girls' education, occurred during a single day in August in Chilas in Gilgit-Baltistan. Some attacks involved explosions and the use of improvised explosive devices and grenades. In addition, personnel of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative reported over 300 attacks in 2018.

220. During the General Election, on 25 July, 8 schools were reportedly used as polling stations and half of them were attacked with grenades. For example,

unidentified elements allegedly threw a hand grenade at a girls' primary school in Kushak Village, before polling started.

*Developments and concerns*

221. I am seriously concerned by the reported spike in the number of child casualties and attacks on schools, including the targeting of girls' education, as well as attacks relating to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. I welcome the Government's efforts to protect workers conducting the polio campaign and call on the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and take preventive measures to protect schools.

**Philippines**

222. Although the Marawi siege ended in October 2017, military operations continued throughout 2018 against remaining members of the Maute Group, the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) and other Islamic State-affiliated groups. Additionally, conflict-related incidents between the New People's Army (NPA) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines, who were supported by pro-government paramilitary groups, intensified after the President, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, declared the Communist Party of the Philippines-NPA a terrorist organization, in December 2017, and after the cessation of formal peace talks in June 2018. Those operations resulted in the displacement of over 212,000 people, half of whom were children, the prolongation of martial law until December 2019 and access restrictions for the monitoring and verification of grave violations.

*Grave violations*

223. The United Nations verified 69 grave violations against children, 26 of which took place in 2017 but could only be verified in 2018, mainly owing to restricted access to Marawi after the siege.

224. The recruitment and use of 19 children (10 boys, 9 girls) by armed groups (18) and armed forces (1) were verified. The Maute Group used 13 children as human shields, to extract gunpowder from firecrackers or to ransack houses during the Marawi siege in 2017. NPA used five children in combat or support roles, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines used one boy to provide support in a military camp. The United Nations received additional allegations of the recruitment and use of children by NPA (eight), Maute Group (four) and ASG (one).

225. The United Nations verified the detention of four children (including one girl), between the ages of 16 and 17, by security forces for their alleged association with armed groups, for periods ranging from two days to one month.

226. The United Nations verified the killing (16) and maiming (41) of 57 children (33 boys, 24 girls). Child casualties were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (8), NPA (3), Maute Group and ASG (1 each). Responsibility in 10 cases was attributed to armed groups allegedly influenced by Islamic State, and in 34 cases, responsibility could not be attributed. Half of the total casualties were caused by explosive remnants of war (17) and improvised explosive devices (12). For instance, on 2 September, in Isulan city, Sultan Kudarat, the explosion of an improvised explosive device resulted in the killing of a girl and the maiming of four boys, some as young as 5.

227. Three cases of the rape of girls, some as young as 14, perpetrated by the Maute Group, were verified. The girls had been raped or forced to marry Maute Group members during the Marawi siege in 2017.

228. The United Nations verified attacks, including threats of attacks, on schools and protected personnel, which affected two schools and 23 teachers, who were threatened mainly because they were suspected to be supportive of NPA. Those violations were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (18), the Maute Group (5) and unidentified armed elements (2). In addition, two schools were used for up to a week by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as bases during military operations.

229. The United Nations verified the abduction of 13 children (6 boys, 7 girls) by the Maute Group (10), during the Marawi siege, and by ASG (3). For instance, a 16-year-old girl was abducted by the Maute Group, was raped twice and was assigned to extract gunpowder from firecrackers and to take care of Maute Group members' children. On 16 October 2017, she managed to escape, together with other hostages, but was injured by a bullet.

#### *Developments and concerns*

230. I welcome the establishment of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority and reaffirm the readiness of the United Nations to help build its capacity to achieve peace, democratic governance and respect for human and children's rights. I commend the Government for the enactment of the Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Bill into national law on 10 January 2019, for the signing of the implementing rules and regulations of this law, and for its continuous commitment to the finalization of the national policy framework on schools as zones of peace. I trust that it will strengthen the protection of children and prevent further threats or attacks on indigenous communities' schools from the Armed Forces of the Philippines and pro-government paramilitary groups, and I call on the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

231. I am encouraged by the decrease in the number of grave violations but remain deeply concerned regarding the increased number of child casualties caused by explosive remnants of war, and by the lack of access for humanitarian actors to monitor, verify and provide appropriate response to the victims of the Marawi siege. I am concerned about the lack of due process for children arrested and detained by security forces for their alleged association with armed groups and would like to remind the Government that children demobilized from armed groups, against whom charges have been brought, are protected under the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act.

#### **Thailand**

232. 2018 saw a continued decline in the number of violent incidents in the southern border provinces of Thailand. Talks between the Government and the umbrella MARA Patani continued at a slow pace. The Government proposed to pilot, with the collaboration of non-State armed groups, a "safety zone" in one district that would have aimed to reduce attacks on civilians. The concept never truly advanced, in part owing to a reported lack of full commitment by the Barisan Revolusi Nasional, the main non-State armed group operating in the border provinces.

#### *Grave violations*

233. Children continued to be victims of shootings and of the use of improvised explosive devices. Reportedly, one child was killed and at least five children were maimed during the year. For instance, on 6 February, 50m from Baan Siyoh School in Yala's Yaha district, an attack using improvised explosive devices, allegedly targeting security forces who were part of a teacher protection unit, injured two 12-year-old girls.

234. One attack against a school was documented, although additional attacks were launched near schools, including attacks on security forces who were guarding teachers.

*Developments and concerns*

235. A technical mission was conducted in January 2019 by the office of my Special Representative and UNICEF, with the aim of further strengthening Government and civil society efforts to better protect children and schools from attack in the southern border provinces. Findings included the need to highlight good practices and potential gaps in the Government's efforts to protect schools and the need for further specialized training of the security forces. The strengthening of child protection capacity in the Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre is a key positive development in this regard and I call on the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and take preventive measures to protect schools. Thailand endorsed the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and is welcomed as a centre of excellence in this regard.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

236. I am deeply concerned by the scale and severity of the grave violations committed against children in 2018, notably the record high number of casualties as a result of killing and maiming and the increase in the number of violations attributed to international forces. I call upon all parties to immediately end and take all necessary measures to prevent such grave violations, including through ensuring mitigation measures and enhancing training on preventing the six grave violations, as well as by ensuring strong accountability measures for the perpetrators of crimes against children.

237. I urge Member States, including when acting as part of international forces, to ensure that their responses to all threats to peace and security are conducted in full compliance with international law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and military necessity. I request my Special Representative to engage proactively with all parties referred to in the present report to end and prevent further grave violations against children.

238. The detention of children remained an issue of concern and I reiterate that this measure should only be used as a last resort, for the shortest period of time, and that alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible. Moreover, I urge Member States to treat children allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including groups designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims.

239. In line with Security Council resolution [2417 \(2018\)](#), I call upon Member States to allow safe, timely and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance and the protection of humanitarian personnel and assets. Parties to conflict should disseminate clear orders specifying that humanitarian assistance for children be facilitated.

240. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue supporting the implementation of action plans and other commitments aimed at strengthening the protection of children in armed conflict, including by facilitating the engagement of the United Nations with armed groups.

241. I encourage Member States, regional and subregional organizations to strengthen dedicated child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations to development prevention initiatives in order to forestall grave violations.

242. I reiterate my call upon the Security Council to ensure that provisions for the protection of children are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peace operations and to request adequate child protection capacity so as to mainstream child protection, conduct dialogue on action plans, release and reintegrate children and further strengthen monitoring and reporting.

243. I enjoin the donor community to engage in a discussion to better address the funding gaps for the reintegration of children, thereby allowing child protection actors to react swiftly to the release of children and put in place long-term viable alternatives to military life, notably by placing a specific focus on girls, in particular on psychosocial support and on education programmes and vocational training for girls.

244. I call on Member States to engage closely with the United Nations to facilitate the return or relocation of foreign children and women actually or allegedly affiliated with groups designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, and to ensure a coordinated response on the basis of international law and children's rights, bearing in mind their best interests.

245. I welcome national and international efforts to hold perpetrators accountable for crimes against children in situations of armed conflict and encourage Member States to play a further proactive role in ensuring an international response where national accountability efforts are unsuccessful, so that impunity can end and cycles of violence can be broken.

246. I welcome all steps taken to ensure full compliance with international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, and call on Member States to further strengthen the protection of children in armed conflict, including through the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the endorsement and implementation of the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

247. No new listings were added for 2018, but a number of previously listed parties to conflict have had additional violations added, on the basis of incidents verified in 2018. In Afghanistan, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) continued to commit attacks against schools and hospitals and has therefore been listed for this violation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nyatura has been listed as a result of the group continuing to perpetrate incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence. In South Sudan, the pro-Machar Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition (pro-Machar SPLA-IO) has been listed for abduction.

248. There will be no delisting for 2018, except for two technical delistings. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mai-Mai Kata Katanga has been removed, as the group ceased to exist when its leader surrendered in October 2016. In South Sudan, the White Army has been removed, as the group no longer showed evidence of clear leadership or structure and ceased to exist.

249. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In this regard, in the Central African Republic, the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), as part of the former Séléka coalition, signed an action plan and will be listed in section B of annex I with respect to measures put in place. Similarly, in South Sudan, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) will be listed in section B of annex I, with regard to recruitment and use only. Lastly, in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Kurdish People's Protection Units

(YPG/YPJ) will be listed in section B of annex I as a result of their enhanced engagement, which led to the signature of an action plan in 2019. On the other hand, in the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM/N) will fall back to section A of annex I owing to the lack of action in support of the action plan during 2018.

250. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulted from some political changes on the ground. In South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is now listed as South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF). In addition, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition – pro Taban Deng is now listed as Taban Deng-allied SSPDF. They are now included as part of SSPDF and therefore listed as State actors. In Yemen, the Houthis/Ansar Allah will be listed as Houthis, and Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula/Ansar al-Sharia will be listed as Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen also changed to be listed as the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen. Lastly, in the Syrian Arab Republic, the People's Protection Units will be listed as Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) to reflect changes on the ground.

251. In view of the preventive and protective measures taken by the Government to better protect children over the past number of years, Thailand will be removed from the report in 2020.

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b,d</sup>
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Former Séléka coalition and associated armed groups, including the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
2. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
2. Bana Mura militias<sup>c,e</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



5. Kamuina Nsapu<sup>a,d,e</sup>
6. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
7. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>
8. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine)<sup>a</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e</sup>
10. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
11. Nduma défense du Congo<sup>a,b</sup>
12. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b</sup>
13. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
14. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *Non-State actors*

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated Border Guard forces<sup>b,c</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
2. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (ASWJ)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Sudan**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>
5. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (Levant Liberation Organization)<sup>a,b</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Houthis<sup>a,b,d</sup>
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>
4. Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

## **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

### **Parties in Afghanistan**

#### *State actors*

Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### *State actors*

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

## **Iraq**

### *State actors*

Popular mobilization forces<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in Mali**

### *Non-State actors*

Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>

## **Parties in Myanmar**

### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated Border Guard forces<sup>a,f</sup>

### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in Somalia**

### *State actors*

Somali National Army<sup>a,b,f</sup>

## **Parties in South Sudan**

### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), including Taban Deng-allied SSPDF<sup>a,f</sup>

## **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

### *Non-State actors*

Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in Yemen**

### *State actors*

1. Government forces, including the Yemeni armed forces<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen<sup>b</sup>

## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

**A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

**Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Civilian Joint Task Force<sup>a,f</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Seventy-fifth year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2019, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) and presents trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected personnel,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but only verified in 2019, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information presented does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on access. The report presents trends and patterns of violations, in order to effect a change in behaviour by parties, contribute to facilitating engagement with parties responsible for violations, promote accountability and include child protection issues in peace processes. Attacks or threats of attacks on community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in the Central African Republic ([S/2019/852](#)), Colombia ([S/2019/1017](#)), Iraq ([S/2019/984](#)) and Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council ([A/HRC/43/38](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Under the terms of Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#) and [2143 \(2014\)](#), protected persons are considered to be teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



violations against children is a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to ensure broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures. Where measures undertaken by listed parties had a positive impact on children or where ongoing conduct is of concern, this is highlighted. On the basis of enhanced engagement with Member States, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children, during the reporting period, and parties that have not.

## II. Situation of children and armed conflict

4. Increased engagement by my Special Representative and the country task forces on monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict resulted in the signing of new concrete time-bound action plans and commitments by listed parties with the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> Coupled with the implementation of action plans and commitments in several situations, these engagements yielded positive change for children, including thousands of children separated from armed groups and armed forces, and in some areas resulted in greater access for humanitarian and child protection actors. Engagement with governments and armed groups led to improvements in age screening procedures and the introduction of legislation to better protect child rights. United Nations advocacy, including the “Act to Protect children affected by conflict” campaign, national political talks or peace processes, and the reduction of conflict, in some of the situations, were beneficial to the protection of children in armed conflict.

### A. Overview of trends and patterns

5. The United Nations verified over 25,000 grave violations<sup>4</sup> against children in 19 situations, more than half committed by non-State actors, and a third by government and international forces. Overall, 24,422 violations were committed or continued to be during the reporting period, and 1,241 were committed previously and verified in 2019.

6. Some 7,747 children, some as young as 6, were verified as having been recruited and used. Among those, 90 per cent were used by non-State actors. Some action plans led to increased access for the United Nations and its partners to verify violations and release children. In Nigeria and Mali, the late verification of cases attributed to the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and Coordination des mouvements de l’Azawad (CMA) respectively reflect their willingness to implement action plans. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo or the Central African Republic, the increase in numbers is due to the high numbers of previous recruitments verified upon separation in 2019, following engagement on actions plans or other commitments. Notable

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<sup>3</sup> An exhaustive list of action plans signed between parties to the conflict and the United Nations can be found at: <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/action-plans/>.

<sup>4</sup> The use of the term “grave violations” or “violations” refer to each individual child affected by recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence and abductions, while the number of incidents is used for attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access.

decreases in the recruitment and use of children occurred in Colombia and Iraq, although monitoring was challenged by security conditions.

7. Some 10,173 children were verified as having been killed (4,019) and maimed (6,154). While a general decrease in the number of verified child casualties was observed, the number of incidents of the killing and maiming of children remains the highest verified violation, which underlines the serious concerns about the violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, about the lack of capacity and of measures to mitigate harm, and about warfare in densely populated areas. Causes of casualties include crossfire, small arms and light weapons (see [S/2019/1011](#)), ground engagement between parties, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and the excessive use of force by State actors. Afghanistan remained the deadliest conflict for children, with a 67 per cent increase in suicide and complex attacks<sup>5</sup> affecting children, outweighing the decrease in casualties from aerial attacks. In Mali, an unprecedented number of child casualties was verified, 91 per cent of which were in Mopti region. In Myanmar, intensified fighting in Rakhine State caused a threefold increase of child casualties. Among the casualties, 25 per cent were caused by explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and anti-personnel mines. Iraq and the Philippines had the highest prevalence of such casualties.

8. The United Nations verified 927 attacks on schools (494) and hospitals (433), including on protected persons. The highest numbers were verified in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Afghanistan and Somalia. Globally, attacks on schools and hospitals committed by State actors (503) nearly doubled. In Gaza and Israel, conflict escalation, notably air strikes by Israeli forces and rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups, continued to significantly disrupt children's education. Schools continued to be used for military purposes, eroding their sanctity as safe spaces and exposing schools, teachers and students to attack. When they were not cancelled indefinitely, classes have been suspended for weeks or longer.

9. Some 4,400 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access to children<sup>6</sup> were verified, the highest increase in the number of incidents verified for any violation, compared with 2018. Overwhelmingly, non-State actors were responsible for such incidents, notably in Yemen, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Syrian Arab Republic. Some 2,127 children were delayed and/or denied access to specialized medical care outside of Gaza. Violence against humanitarian workers and assets, including killings, assaults and arbitrary detention, and the military use of humanitarian premises, attacks on essential civilian infrastructure, bureaucratic impediments and restrictions on movements, seriously disrupted humanitarian activities. In some contexts, humanitarian operations were also constrained by groups designated as terrorist by the United Nations and by counter-terrorism measures.

10. Rape and other forms of sexual violence continued to be vastly underreported, with 735 verified cases. Cases were prevalent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Central African Republic, the Sudan and South Sudan. Cases attributed to State actors nearly doubled, reinforcing the fear of retaliations and of stigma for children and families willing to report sexual violence. Sexual violence,

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<sup>5</sup> A deliberate and coordinated attack that includes all of the three following elements: a suicide device, more than one attacker and more than one type of device, as defined in the annual report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

<sup>6</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not necessarily give an exhaustive view of the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage, remains a tactic of war and a taboo subject, disproportionately affecting girls. The adoption of strong legislation is essential to ending such practices. The lack of protection, of holistic services for survivors and of accountability mechanisms disincentivize survivors, their families and witnesses from reporting violations, namely by reinforcing the stigmatization of survivors and their families and by discouraging male survivors from disclosing violations and accessing assistance and justice (S/2020/487).

11. The United Nations verified the abduction of 1,683 children, with over 95 per cent of cases perpetrated by non-State actors, mainly in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Nigeria. Often combined with other violations, the abduction of children, although a feature of other violations, is possibly underreported. Children were abducted for recruitment and use and sexual violence or ransom.

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

12. A total of 13,200 children were separated from non-State actors and armed forces globally in 2019. Fundamental challenges hindered the successful and sustainable reintegration of these children, as well as at-risk children who were protected from recruitment through action plans or other measures, and of children released from detention for actual or alleged association with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist by the United Nations. Reintegration programmes must be gender-responsive, include mental health and psychosocial support, education and vocational training, and access to civil registry, identification documents and to justice. Without comprehensive programmes, poverty, the lack of opportunities and stigmatization may result in the recruitment and re-recruitment of children.

13. The scale of the situation regarding children deprived of liberty for their actual or alleged association with opposing parties continued unabated, with over 2,500 children held. Detained children are critically vulnerable and at heightened risk of violence, including sexual violence, torture, exploitation and neglect. Children deprived of liberty need to urgently benefit from individualized care and protection, including nutrition, medical and psychosocial care, and access fundamental rights, including to due process. Children actually or allegedly associated with armed groups, including with United Nations-designated terrorist groups, should be detained only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and their reintegration must be prioritized. The adoption of national protocols has mitigated this issue in some situations.

14. Cross-border dynamics of conflict and intercommunal conflict affecting children are another issue of concern, particularly in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin regions. Insecurity, violence and military operations, including counter-terrorism operations, have hindered access for child protection actors. It is urgent that the children affected by such factors be provided with assistance and protection.

15. Peace remains the most powerful means to reduce violations against children. Governments and non-State actors, in a quarter of the situations outlined in the present report, engaged in some efforts relating to a peace process, whether by initiating negotiations or implementing peace agreements. Child protection should be prioritized in engaging with parties to conflict and in peace processes. The children and armed conflict agenda is central to protection, peacebuilding and prevention efforts. My Special Representative developed the “Practical guidance for mediators to protect children in situations of armed conflict”, which I launched on 12 February 2020.



### III. Information on grave violations

#### A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council

##### Afghanistan

16. The United Nations verified 3,410 grave violations against 3,245 children (2,317 boys, 915 girls, 13 sex unknown).

17. A total of 64 boys, some as young as 10, were recruited and used by the Taliban (58), Afghan National Police (3), Afghan Local Police, pro-government militia, and by Afghan Local Police and pro-government militias (1 each). Children were used for combat, support roles and sexual purposes, including *bacha bazi*.<sup>7</sup>

18. The Government reported that 146 boys were detained in juvenile rehabilitation centres on national security-related charges.

19. Of concern, reports currently being verified indicate that among the 506 children, reportedly including foreigners, who surrendered with the thousands of individuals allegedly associated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP),<sup>8</sup> all children over the age of 12 were transferred to the Kabul juvenile rehabilitation centre.

20. A total of 3,149 children (2,226 boys, 910 girls, 13 sex unknown) were killed (874 children) and maimed (2,275 children), mainly as a result of ground engagements (1,213), by non-suicide attacks with the use of improvised explosive devices (575), and suicide and complex attacks (460). Additionally, explosive remnants of war and aerial attacks caused 403 and 341 casualties, respectively. The remaining 157 casualties resulted mostly from search operations, targeted or deliberate killings, and escalation of force. Armed groups caused 1,535 casualties, which were attributed to the Taliban (1,238), ISIL-KP (242) and unidentified armed groups (55). Government and pro-government forces were responsible for 1,032 casualties, including the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (610) (mainly Afghan National Army (491), the National Directorate of Security (38) and Afghan National Police (30)), international forces (248), pro-government militia (45), joint operations of government and pro-government forces (117) and undetermined government and pro-government forces (12). Another 403 casualties were jointly attributed to government and pro-government forces and armed groups, responsibility for 140 casualties was unattributed, and 39 casualties resulted from cross-border engagements at the border with Pakistan.

21. Sexual violence affecting 18 children (13 boys, 5 girls) was attributed to the Taliban (14), Afghan National Police (3) and one incident was jointly attributed to Afghan Local Police and pro-government militia. Two boys were used as *bacha bazi*.

22. Some 145 attacks against schools (70), hospitals (75) and protected personnel were verified. Armed groups were responsible for 113 attacks, attributed to the Taliban (101), ISIL-KP (8) and unidentified armed groups (4). A total of 26 attacks were attributed to government and pro-government forces, including the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (20) (Afghan National Army (10), National Directorate of Security (8), Afghan National Police and Afghan Local Police (1 each))

<sup>7</sup> *Bacha bazi* is a harmful practice whereby boys are used by men for entertainment. The boys are made to dance at parties, and are often dressed in female clothes and subjected to sexual violence, as reported by UNAMA and OHCHR in their annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

<sup>8</sup> Additional information on Afghanistan is included in the twenty-fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities ([S/2020/53](#)).

and international forces (6). Five attacks were attributed both to government and pro-government forces and armed groups, and one consisted of cross-border shelling from the Pakistan territory. Among all the attacks, 24 attacks against schools (21) and hospitals (3) resulted from election-related violence. Other attacks included targeting or damaging facilities and the killing, injuring or abduction of protected personnel, or such personnel being subjected to threats.

23. The military use of six schools by the Afghan National Army and one school by government and pro-government forces was verified. Two medical facilities were used by the Afghan National Army, and jointly by the Afghan National Army, the Afghan Local Police and pro-government militia.

24. The abduction of 14 boys as young as 11, by the Taliban (12), Afghan National Police and pro-government militia (1 each), mostly for family association or alleged association with the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and in one case for sexual purposes, were verified.

25. A total of 20 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (13), ISIL-KP (4), unidentified armed groups (2) and international forces (1) were verified. Armed groups continued to intimidate, abduct, kill and injure humanitarian personnel, including polio vaccinators.

#### *Developments and concerns*

26. I commend the Government for progress in implementing the 2011 action plan and 2014 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, and for the presidential enactment of the Child Rights Protection Law in March 2019, prohibiting *bacha bazi* and the recruitment and use of children, and I call for its swift implementation, particularly in Logar Province. I note that child protection units within the Afghan National Police recruitment centres rejected 439 child applicants. I recommend the adoption of a standardized referral system for the reintegration of children who have been separated from parties to conflict, released from detention and/or rejected from recruitment centres.

27. I am extremely concerned about the increased number of children killed and maimed by all parties, in particular by the 67 per cent increase in incidents resulting from suicide attacks involving the use of improvised explosive devices and from complex attacks. I remain concerned about casualties caused by government and international forces, and I urge them to review, strengthen and implement current tactical protocols to prevent child casualties. I note the measures taken by the international forces and the decrease in the number of child casualties from aerial operations. I encourage the Government to engage with the United Nations to broaden the existing action plan and road map to end and prevent all grave violations by its forces. I request my Special Representative to continue to engage proactively and follow up on the implementation of all measures taken by the government and international forces to mitigate child casualties.

28. I am concerned that polio vaccinators are denied access by the Taliban and affiliated groups. I urge the Taliban to include child protection directives in their operational commands, in order to protect all children under the age of 18. I encourage them to sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent violations against children. I further urge all parties to cease the use of improvised explosive devices and complex attacks.

29. I welcome efforts to achieve a lasting political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan. I urge the Government and the Taliban to work with my Special Representative and the United Nations in considering the use of the “Practical guidance for mediators” in order to include child protection in the peace process.

**Central African Republic**

30. The United Nations verified 517 grave violations against 413 children (249 boys, 164 girls).

31. The recruitment and use of children was verified, affecting 208 children (165 boys, 43 girls) between the ages of 11 and 17. The children were recruited and used between 2016 and 2019, but the verification occurred in 2019, upon their separation. The perpetrators were anti-balaka (91), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (51), ex-Séléka factions (51) (Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (36), Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (14), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (1)), PK5 groups (11), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2), Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) (1 each). Some girls were used for sexual purposes.

32. Four boys detained by national authorities for association with armed groups were released with no charges.

33. A total of 96 children (68 boys, 28 girls), some as young as 6 months old, were killed (61) and maimed (35) by ex-Séléka factions (37), including UPC (20), Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) (10) and FPRC (7); unidentified armed elements (30); 3R (5); PK5 groups (4); anti-balaka (3); and LRA (1). Casualties also occurred during clashes between FPRC and MLCJ (8), anti-balaka and UPC (7), and anti-balaka and the national armed forces (1). Most child casualties resulted from shootings (81), including 14 boys killed or maimed during their association with armed groups. Ouaka and Vakaga Prefectures were the most affected, followed by Bangui.

34. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 76 girls, between the ages of 6 and 17, including one case which was verified at a later date. The main perpetrators were ex-Séléka factions (38), including FPRC (14), unidentified ex-Séléka (7), UPC (6), joint operations by FPRC and MPC (6) and MPC (5); unidentified armed elements (15); anti-balaka (10); the national armed forces (5); 3R (4); and Révolution et justice (RJ)-Sayo, LRA, Siriri, and PK5 groups (1 each). One RJ-Sayo element and one anti-balaka element were arrested for sexual violence.

35. A total of 33 children (16 boys, 17 girls), between the ages of 6 months and 16 years, were abducted by ex-Séléka (17), including FPRC (8), UPC (8) and MPC (1); unidentified armed elements (7); anti-balaka (3); FDPC (3); 3R (2); and LRA (1) for recruitment purposes (27) and ransom (6). Nine girls were raped in captivity.

36. A total of 14 attacks against schools (4) and hospitals (10) were attributed to ex-Séléka factions (6), including FPRC (4), MPC (1) and unidentified ex-Séléka (1); anti-balaka (5); unidentified armed elements, FDPC and internal security forces (1 each). Six incidents of the military use of schools were attributed to UPC (4), 3R and anti-balaka (1 each). Two schools continued to be used by UPC in Haut-Mbomou and Basse-Kotto Prefectures.

37. There were 90 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access. The main perpetrators were ex-Séléka factions (36), including UPC and FPRC (9 each), MPC (5) and other ex-Séléka factions (13); and anti-balaka (17). Nana-Grébizi, Ouham and Ouaka Prefectures were the most affected.

38. Dialogue with armed groups enabled the separation of 208 children. In addition, 647 self-demobilized children (437 boys, 210 girls) from RJ-Belanga, anti-balaka, FPRC, UPC and Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique

(RPRC) were identified, and 963 children (744 boys, 219 girls) entered reintegration programmes.

*Developments and concerns*

39. I welcome the signature of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic in February 2019 between the Government and armed groups. I encourage the Government, parties to the conflict and civil society to develop a national strategy to prevent grave violations against children. I welcome the adoption of the Child Protection Code in February 2020, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, and urge its implementation. I urge the adoption of the protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

40. I welcome the signing of action plans with FPRC and UPC. MPC and UPC issued command orders prohibiting grave violations. UPC appointed a child protection focal point for the implementation of the action plan. However, I remain concerned by continued violations against children by FPRC, UPC and MPC, and urge them to transfer perpetrators to competent authorities in order to ensure accountability and to implement their action plans. I note that dialogue with armed groups led to the release of 208 children. In addition, 647 self-demobilized children (437 boys, 210 girls) from RJ-Belanga, anti-balaka, FPRC, UPC and RPRC were identified and some 963 children (744 boys, 219 girls) accessed reintegration programmes.

41. I reiterate my recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic ([S/2019/852](#)).

**Colombia**

42. The United Nations verified 176 grave violations against 168 children (88 boys, 68 girls, 12 sex unknown).

43. The recruitment and use of children was verified, affecting 107 children (54 boys, 41 girls, 12 sex unknown) between the ages of 12 and 17. The perpetrators were the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (40), dissident groups of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) (40), unidentified armed groups (11), Los Caparrapos and Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (7 each), Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) (1), and the Colombian armed forces, who used a girl as an informant. According to the Government, 180 children (112 boys, 68 girls) were separated from armed groups and entered the protection programme of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

44. A total of 46 children (33 boys, 13 girls), between the ages of 5 and 17, were killed (23) and maimed (23). Casualties were attributed to ELN (9), the Colombian armed forces (8), AGC and dissident FARC-EP groups (6 each), EPL and Los Caparrapos (1 each), and unidentified armed groups (15). Children were mostly affected by anti-personnel mines and improvised explosive devices, crossfire and air strikes.

45. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affected 11 girls, between the ages of 13 and 16, with responsibility attributed to AGC, ELN and the Colombian armed forces (3 each), and dissident FARC-EP groups (2). The three cases attributed to the Armed Forces are under investigation.

46. Four children, between the ages of 2 and 15, were abducted (1 boy, 3 girls), with responsibility attributed to ELN (3) and dissident FARC-EP groups (1). All children were released from captivity, including one girl rescued by the Colombian armed forces.

47. Three attacks affected schools and related protected personnel. Two were attributed to unidentified armed groups and one occurred during crossfire between AGC and the Colombian armed forces, after the school was used by AGC.

48. There were five unattributed incidents of the denial of humanitarian access. The incidents involved restrictions to freedom of movement owing to the control of territory by armed groups and armed confrontations in Chocó, Cauca and Antioquia Departments. Several indigenous communities were confined, thereby restricting their access to crops, health and education services.

49. Monitoring and reporting remains challenging owing to security conditions in Chocó, Arauca, Norte de Santander and Putumayo Departments. Communities and victims also fear reporting violations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

50. I welcome the Government's efforts to end and prevent violations against children, notably the policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children, issued in November 2019 by the Presidential Council for Human Rights and International Affairs. I encourage the Government to develop plans of action to implement the policy at the local level and allocate adequate financial and human resources for their implementation in the areas most affected by the armed conflict, particularly in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

51. I remain concerned about the continuing recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular by ELN and dissident FARC-EP groups, and I urge all armed groups to adopt and implement commitments to end all grave violations, and to immediately release all children.

52. I encourage the National Reintegration Council to accelerate the response for the 218 young people identified by FARC-EP for inclusion in the dedicated reintegration programme entitled "A different path of life". I urge the Government to ensure the effective reintegration of all children who have left FARC-EP and to strengthen security measures for programme participants.

53. I reiterate my recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Colombia ([S/2019/1017](#)).

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

54. The United Nations verified 3,831 grave violations, affecting 3,796 children (2,908 boys, 888 girls).

55. The recruitment and use of children affected 601 children (533 boys, 68 girls), all of whom were recruited and separated in 2019, 30 per cent of whom were under the age of 15 at the time of recruitment. The perpetrators were Nyatura (167), Mai-Mai Mazembe (103), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (55), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (49), Kamuina Nsapu (37), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (22), Raia Mutomboki (18), Conseil national pour la renaissance et la démocratie (CNRD) and unidentified armed groups (17 each), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (13), and other armed groups (103). Most cases were verified in North Kivu, followed by South Kivu, Ituri and the Kasais. A total of 22 girls were used for sexual purposes, 204 children were used as combatants and others were used in support roles.

56. In addition, 2,506 children (2,062 boys, 444 girls) were recruited in 2008 or later, and used until their separation in 2019, by 38 armed groups, mainly by Kamuina Nsapu (1,102), Twa militias (280), CNRD (125), Mai-Mai Mazembe (101) and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1). The latter case refers to

a 15-year-old boy who participated in combat and was released, following an intervention by the United Nations, after one year. A total of 1,753 children were under the age of 15 when recruited, and 1,331 were used as combatants. Most children were separated during demobilization processes, others were voluntarily released, following engagement by the United Nations, or escaped from armed groups.

57. The armed forces and the Congolese National Police detained 111 children (106 boys, 5 girls) for alleged association with armed groups, 90 of whom were released. In addition, 21 children who had been detained since May 2018 for alleged association with Kamuina Nsapu, in Kasai Province, were released in 2019.

58. The United Nations verified the killing (68) and maiming (67) of 135 children (87 boys, 48 girls), in the majority of cases by armed groups (79) (ADF (35) and Lendu militia (26), Mai-Mai Omera (8), other groups (10)), followed by government forces (38) (armed forces (29) and national police (9)). Of the total number of child casualties, 18 resulted from anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war. All the casualties occurred during clashes, attacks on villages and intercommunal violence between Hema and Lendu communities in Ituri.

59. The perpetration of sexual violence affecting 249 girls was attributed to government forces (126) (armed forces (97), national police (25), Agence nationale de renseignements (4)); and armed groups (123) (Bantu and Twa militias (23 each), Raia Mutomboki (19), Nyatura (12), other armed groups (46)). The incidents occurred in North Kivu (64), South Kivu (50), Tanganyika (49), the Kasais (42) and other provinces (44). Almost half of the cases involving government forces were committed in the residences of the victim or the perpetrator; 26 per cent were attacks on girls returning from agricultural work; and 11 per cent occurred during military operations. Some 102 government elements were subsequently arrested. Among the 123 cases attributed to armed groups, 22 girls were used for sexual slavery and 101 girls were raped.

60. There were 30 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (10), mostly attributed to armed groups: Twa militia (8), Mai-Mai groups (6), ADF (5), Lendu militia (4), Raia Mutomboki (3), APCLS and Kamuina Nsapu (1 each). Two attacks were attributed to the armed forces. Most schools were deliberately burned and/or looted. A high number of reported attacks on schools (108) linked to the Hema-Lendu intercommunal violence could not be verified.

61. One school was used by the armed forces for the demobilization of the Twa militia, in Tanganyika Province, and vacated after two months.

62. A total of 305 children were abducted (226 boys, 79 girls). The main perpetrators included Nyatura (86), ADF (83) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (23). Government forces abducted four children for sexual purposes and ransom. In 69 per cent of the cases, children were abducted for recruitment purposes (209). Most abductions occurred in North Kivu (187), Ituri (63), Tanganyika (31) and South Kivu (21). The United Nations continued its advocacy for the release of children abducted by Bana Mura militias in 2017 and forced into labour and sexual slavery. While 56 children returned to their families in 2019, another 54 are still being held captive.

63. There were five incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by Twa militia (3), Mai-Mai Mazembe (1) and Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) (1).

*Developments and concerns*

64. I welcome the Government's continued efforts to prevent child recruitment and use. The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to screen new recruits and 141 children were identified and separated before enrolment. I commend the sentencing of two commanders of Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais and Nyatura armed groups, including for the recruitment and use of children, and the ongoing trials of commanders of Nduma défense du Congo, FRPI and Nyatura for child recruitment. I call upon the Government to pursue accountability efforts.

65. I am encouraged that the demobilization and surrender of several armed groups allowed for the release of children. I urge the Government to facilitate the access of child protection actors to all pre-cantonment and demobilization sites in order to separate children. The Government must guarantee that all surrendered combatants and their dependants, including children, are treated with dignity and receive support, including health care and nutrition, when hosted in camps under its care.

66. I welcome the engagement of armed groups with the United Nations to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations, with 21 new commanders signing commitments to protect children and the release of 920 children. I urge these armed groups, notably Kamuina Nsapu, Mai-Mai Mazembe, Raia Mutomboki and Nyatura, to expeditiously release any remaining children from their ranks and end other violations, and for other groups to engage with the United Nations.

67. I am concerned at the persistent high number of cases of sexual violence perpetrated by government forces. I urge the Government to continue to prioritize prevention and to continue its accountability efforts, and to continue providing medical support to survivors and expediting the implementation of its 2012 action plan and other commitments to end sexual violence.

**Iraq**

68. The United Nations verified 186 grave violations affecting 184 children (133 boys, 42 girls, 9 sex unknown).

69. Four boys were recruited and used by the Iraqi Security Forces (3), and by the Popular Mobilization Forces (1) in 2016, which was verified at a later date.

70. As at 31 December, 984 children (947 boys, 37 girls), some as young as 9, were detained on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

71. A total of 141 children were killed (61) and maimed (80) by ISIL (68), the Iraqi police (11), Iraqi Security Forces (5) and Operation Claw<sup>9</sup> (3), while responsibility for 54 casualties could not be attributed. Almost half of the casualties (67) were caused by explosive remnants of war in areas previously under ISIL control; most such casualties were attributed to ISIL (36), while the remainder were unattributed (31). In addition, 32 casualties resulted from the use of improvised explosive devices, with 12 of the casualties attributed to ISIL and the perpetrators of the others unknown. Indirect attacks or crossfire incidents resulted in the killing of 15 children and the maiming of 13 children. Among those casualties, 16 were attributed to ISIL, 5 to the Iraqi police, 5 to the Iraqi Security Forces, and 2 casualties were unattributed. A total of 14 children were killed (12) and maimed (2) in targeted attacks. Four of those casualties were attributed to ISIL, six to the Iraqi police, three to Operation Claw, and one remained unattributed.

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<sup>9</sup> Turkey launched "Operation Claw" in northern Iraq, in May 2019.

72. Incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence, which affected three girls and took place in 2014, were attributed to ISIL and were verified at a later date.

73. Two attacks, on a school and a hospital (1 each) resulted from the use of improvised explosive devices, and both remain unattributed. Four incidents of the military use of schools by the Popular Mobilization Forces were verified.

74. The abduction of 36 children was attributed to ISIL, including the late verification of 34 children between the ages of 6 and 13 (33 boys, 1 girl) who had been abducted between 2014 and 2018.

75. While no incident of the denial of humanitarian access was verified in 2019, humanitarian actors faced bureaucratic impediments and restrictions of movement.

#### *Developments and concerns*

76. I commend the Government of Iraq for its ongoing discussion with the United Nations on developing an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces, the implementation of which the United Nations is ready to support. I note that no new cases of recruitment and use by those Forces have been documented since 2016.

77. I note the finalization of a national child protection policy in December 2017 and call for its implementation. I urge the Government to adopt a comprehensive law on the rights of the child to criminalize the recruitment of individuals below the age of 18 and establishing the minimum age of criminal responsibility, in line with international juvenile justice standards.

78. I remain deeply concerned about the situation of children detained on security-related charges. Children must be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. Detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, with respect for due process. The United Nations is committed to supporting the Government in the reintegration of children formerly associated with parties to conflict within its mandate. I welcome the provision of reintegration programming by the Government, with United Nations support, for 100 boys separated from parties to conflict and urge the Government to develop and implement a national reintegration programme for children affected by armed conflict.

79. I welcome the efforts of the Government to facilitate the return of children actually or allegedly associated with ISIL, and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of these children, in line with international law principles, including the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child, and I commend those countries that have begun the voluntary repatriation of children.

80. I am concerned by the ongoing killing and maiming of children caused by landmines and explosive remnants of war. I urge the Government to fully implement international legal instruments on anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war, and to promote mine clearance, mine risk education, victim assistance and stockpile destruction.

81. I reiterate the recommendations included in my third report on children and armed conflict in Iraq ([S/2019/984](#)).

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine**

82. The United Nations verified 3,908 violations against 1,565 Palestinian and 6 Israeli children (1,486 boys, 85 girls).



83. No incidents of the recruitment and use of children were verified. Of concern, in Gaza, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades and Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades organized weeklong "summer camps" for adults and children as young as 14, exposing them to military content and activities. One child reported that the Israeli forces attempted to recruit him as an informant.

84. A total of 529 Palestinian children (528 boys, 1 girl) were detained for alleged security offences by Israeli forces (527) in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (527, including 374 in East Jerusalem), and by de facto authorities in Gaza (2). The United Nations received testimonies of 166 children who reported ill-treatment and breaches of due process by Israeli forces, including physical violence and one threat of sexual violence.

85. A total of 32 Palestinian children (29 boys, 3 girls) and 1 Israeli girl were killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (6), and the Gaza Strip (27). Most casualties were attributed to Israeli forces (29) and caused by live ammunition (15), air strikes (10) or tear-gas canisters (4). One case was attributed to a Palestinian armed group, while two children were killed in incidents involving explosive remnants of war. One Israeli girl was killed by an improvised explosive device in the occupied West Bank, attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

86. A total of 1,539 Palestinian children (1,460 boys, 79 girls) and 8 Israeli children (5 boys, 3 girls,) were maimed. Casualties were attributed to Israeli forces (1,496), Israeli settlers (19), Palestinian armed groups (7), Hamas (3), explosive remnants of war (17), unidentified perpetrators (3) and stabbing attacks not attributed to any party (2). The causes of maiming and injuries of children by Israeli forces were live ammunition (415), tear-gas inhalation (358), tear-gas canisters (311), rubber-coated metal bullets (229), ammunition shrapnel (121), air strikes (34), physical assault (22) and other causes (6). Children were maimed by Israeli forces during demonstrations (1,036) and other circumstances (1) at the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence, during air strikes by Israeli forces on Gaza (34) and on the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (425). Of the eight Israeli children maimed, three were injured in Hamas rocket attacks. The maiming or injuring of 532 additional children (510 boys, 22 girls) by Israeli forces during demonstrations in Gaza in 2018 was verified at a later date, in 2019.

87. Some 208 attacks on schools (15) and hospitals (193) and protected personnel, attributed to Israeli forces (201) and settlers (7), occurred in Gaza (168) and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (40), and involved hospitals being damaged by air strikes (1) or affected by tear gas disrupting their functioning (3), incidents of injuring or killing of medical personnel (189) and threats against teachers or students (15). The United Nations verified 4 incidents of the military use of schools by Israeli forces and 242 other interferences with education by Israeli forces (229) and Israeli settlers (13), affecting over 48,000 Palestinian children, mostly involving Israeli forces firing live ammunition, tear gas or sound grenades in and around schools. Conflict escalation significantly affected children's education: rocket fire by Palestinian armed groups, on the one hand, and air strikes by Israeli forces on Gaza, on the other, each caused school closures for five days, affecting 1.3 million children respectively. Incendiary balloons were launched from Gaza towards Israel, some of which reportedly landed near schools.

88. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces was verified in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, medical and other emergency services were prevented from reaching children injured in four incidents. As for Gaza, 23 per cent of applications to Israeli authorities to gain access to specialized medical treatment outside Gaza were delayed

until after the scheduled appointment and 5 per cent were denied, affecting 2,127 children (1,281 boys, 846 girls).

*Developments and concerns*

89. I note the decrease in the killing and maiming of children but remain extremely concerned by the high incidence of this violation in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. I welcome the increased dialogue on grave violations of Israel and the State of Palestine with my Special Representative and the United Nations on the ground, following my previous report, and request my Special Representative to continue her efforts to engage with all parties to end grave violations against children and to further examine grave violations against children, including recruitment and use by armed groups and killing and maiming by Israeli forces.

90. I urge all parties to end and prevent grave violations against children, in particular killing and maiming, and to apply all feasible measures to ensure the protection of, and care for, children affected by armed conflict.

91. I urge Israel to put in place measures to end any excessive use of force against children and to ensure accountability in all cases involving the killing and maiming of children. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, as well as to cease the use of administrative detention for children and end all forms of ill-treatment in detention or any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants, and I exhort Israel to better protect schools as places of learning.

92. I urge all Palestinian armed groups to uphold their responsibility to ensure the safety of children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence or by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes, including by exposing them to military content and activities. I call upon Hamas and other armed groups in Gaza to cease all indiscriminate launching of rockets, mortars and incendiary balloons.

**Lebanon**

93. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 43 children (42 boys, 1 girl), between the ages of 11 and 17, by unidentified armed groups (20), Bilal Badr (10), Fath al-Islam (9), Hizbullah and Al-Nasri Front (2 each). Four children were Lebanese and 39 were Palestinian. Five children were recruited as combatants and 38 were used in support roles.

94. Children continued to be detained for association with armed groups, with 20 new verified detentions of boys, between the ages of 15 and 17, of Palestinian (9), Syrian (7) and Lebanese (4) origin. As at 31 December 2019, nine children (6 Palestinian, 3 Syrian) remained in custody, with one serving a custodial sentence and eight in pretrial detention.

95. Three children between the ages of 7 and 13 were killed (1) and maimed (2) as a result of cluster munition or explosive remnants of war in southern Lebanon.

96. Sporadic armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps continued to disrupt education and health services, leading to temporary closures of schools and hospitals. Security concerns also limited the operations of humanitarian actors.

*Developments and concerns*

97. I welcome the issuance of the Code of Conduct and the Code of Ethics by the Palestinian National Security Forces in Lebanon to protect people living in Palestine refugee camps.

98. I am concerned about the detention of children for alleged association with armed groups and urge the Government to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims, detain them only as a measure of last resort for the shortest possible period of time and promptly refer them to reintegration programmes. I reiterate my call to the Government to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

99. I reiterate my concern about the recruitment and use of children and call upon armed groups to immediately cease this practice.

### **Libya**

100. No incidents of the recruitment and use of children were verified. The United Nations verified the arrest and ongoing detention of eight boys between the ages of 14 and 17 by the Government of National Accord for their association with the Libyan National Army (LNA).

101. A total of 77 children between the ages of 6 and 17 were killed (35) or maimed (42) (60 boys, 17 girls), with responsibility attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (50), unidentified armed groups (9), Tebu armed groups (5), forces affiliated with the Government of National Accord (2) and Tripoli-based armed groups (1). Child casualties occurred during clashes between LNA and forces affiliated with the Government of National Accord (10). The vast majority occurred during the offensive by LNA on Tripoli and were caused by artillery shelling, air strikes, including by uncrewed aerial vehicles, and explosive remnants of war.

102. Reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against refugee and migrant girls were received, including incidents of forced prostitution by criminal networks, some of which are associated with armed groups.

103. The United Nations verified 24 attacks on schools (9) and hospitals (15), all of which were unattributed. Unverified reports of a further 24 attacks on health facilities were received. The hostilities forced nearly 220 schools to close in and around Tripoli, depriving at least 116,000 children of their right to education.

104. A total of 12 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (5), Tripoli-based armed groups (3), the Seventh Brigade and affiliates (2), Tebu and Zawiyah armed groups (1 each). Access to Tripoli and southern Libya, where humanitarian needs are the greatest, remained restricted.

### *Developments and concerns*

105. I am concerned about the prevalence of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international law, particularly the principle of distinction between civilians and persons taking a direct part in hostilities and between civilian objects and military objectives.

106. I reiterate my concern about the abuse of refugee and migrant children, including through human trafficking, the deprivation of liberty, torture and sexual violence. I call upon the Government to end child detention and to pursue alternatives. The denial of humanitarian access to children, including those in detention, is worrisome.

107. I urge the Government to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations so as to adopt measures to end and prevent violations against children.

## Mali

108. The United Nations verified 745 grave violations against 547 children (381 boys, 139 girls, 27 sex unknown).

109. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 215 children (189 boys, 26 girls), between the ages of 9 and 17. In 140 of those incidents, it was verified at a later date that the victims had been recruited and used in previous years. Most children were recruited in Kidal (131) and Gao (49) Regions. The perpetrators were the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (136) (including Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (88), Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (30), Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (18)), Platform (27) (including Ganda Lassal Izo (12), Ganda Izo (8), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (5) and other Platform members (2)), Front de libération du Macina (FLM) (12), other armed groups (16), and the Malian armed forces (24) for the first time since 2014.

110. A total of 56 boys between the ages of 14 and 17 were captured by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (25), Operation Barkhane (18) and in joint operations of the Malian armed forces and Barkhane (13) for their alleged association with armed groups, including 10 children captured and handed over by Barkhane, who had identified them as adults to the anti-terrorism prosecutor in Bamako. Of the 56 children, 17 were still detained by the Government at the time of writing.

111. A total of 296 children (179 boys, 91 girls, 26 sex unknown), some as young as 2, were killed (185) and maimed (111), mostly in Mopti Region (269), resulting from intercommunal conflict, crossfire and improvised explosive devices. The perpetrators were dozo traditional hunters (147), unidentified armed elements (93), Fulani armed elements (31), other armed groups (17), Malian Defence and Security Forces (3) and Operation Barkhane (1). Four children were maimed during clashes between an unidentified armed group and Barkhane.

112. Sexual violence affected 19 girls, between the ages of 13 and 17, in incidents attributed to unidentified armed groups in Mopti (12), Gao (5), Ménaka and Timbuktu (1 each) Regions.

113. A total of 69 attacks on schools (55) and hospitals (14) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (66), Dan Nan Ambassagou (2) and FLM (1). The most affected regions were Timbuktu and Mopti (23 each). Attacks involved the destruction and burning of school premises and equipment, threats, and the abduction and killing of education and health personnel. As at 31 December, 1,113 schools remained closed, leaving more than 333,000 children out of school.

114. Eight cases of the military use of schools were verified in Mopti, Timbuktu and Gao Regions by the Malian armed forces (4), dozo traditional hunters, HCUA, Congrès pour la justice dans l'Azawad/MNLA, and MAA-Platform (1 each). Two schools continue to be used by the Malian armed forces at the time of writing.

115. A total of 17 children (13 boys, 3 girls, 1 sex unknown), some as young as 6, were abducted by unidentified armed groups (13), FLM (2), dozo traditional hunters and Fulani armed elements (1 each).

116. Responsibility for 129 incidents of denial of humanitarian access remained unattributed, except for one incident each by FLM, GATIA, CMA, the Malian Defence and Security Forces and dozo traditional hunters. Most of the incidents occurred in Gao (34), Mopti (34) and Timbuktu (27) Regions.

*Developments and concerns*

117. I encourage the Government to continue efforts to strengthen its national legal framework and to finalize the revision of the Child Protection Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of all children, including those between the ages of 15 and 18. I call upon the Government to reinforce national systems to prevent child recruitment and use in armed forces.

118. I commend the continued collaboration between CMA and the United Nations, including through meetings and workshops to accelerate the implementation by CMA of its action plan. I note that most incidents of child recruitment and use verified in 2019 and attributed to CMA had occurred in previous years. I welcome this and call upon CMA to continue implementing the action plan. I commend the ongoing dialogue between Platform and the United Nations and its commitment to adopt an action plan addressing the recruitment and use of children, as reiterated to my Special Representative, in July, and to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, in December. I urge the swift adoption and implementation of the plan.

119. I am extremely worried by the rise in child casualties, mostly in central Mali, and urge all parties to take all necessary measures to prevent the killing and maiming of children.

120. I welcome the continued cooperation between the United Nations and Operation Barkhane, and between the United Nations and the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel, on the protection of children during military operations.

121. I remain concerned by the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups and call upon national authorities and international forces to treat those children primarily as victims and for their detention to be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time.

**Myanmar**

122. The United Nations verified 432 grave violations against 420 children (351 boys, 67 girls, 2 sex unknown).

123. The recruitment and use of 50 children, between the ages of 12 and 17, mainly in Kachin and Shan States, was attributed to armed groups (33) (Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (30), United Wa State Army (2) and Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (1)) and the Tatmadaw (17). Of those recruited by the Tatmadaw, nine boys were recruited by the Tatmadaw between 2012 and 2017 and the incidents were verified at a later date, and eight boys were recruited in 2019.

124. The use of 197 children by the Tatmadaw, in functions such as camp maintenance, brick carrying and rice paddy harvesting, some of which were on an intermittent basis, were verified in Rakhine (196) and Kachin (1) States, mostly at the end of 2019.

125. The detention of 18 boys, between the ages of 15 and 17, by the Myanmar Police was verified, for alleged association with Arakan Army (16) in Rakhine State and with Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (2) in Shan State.

126. The killing (41) and maiming (120) of 161 children (108 boys, 51 girls, 2 sex unknown), some as young as 6 months, were verified. The total includes two child casualties from crossfire, which occurred prior to the reporting period and were verified at a later date. Child casualties occurred in Rakhine (95), Shan (50), Kachin (8), Kayah (4), Kayah and Chin (1 each) States, and in Mandalay and Magway Regions (1 each). While responsibility for 136 casualties was unattributed, 25 incidents were attributed to the Tatmadaw. Most of the casualties resulted from

crossfire (66), anti-personnel mines and explosive remnants of war (59), shooting (14) and artillery shelling (12).

127. There were 12 attacks on schools, including one attributed to the Tatmadaw that occurred prior to the reporting period and was verified at a later date, in Rakhine (7), Shan (3), Kachin and Chin (1 each) States. The attacks were attributed to the Tatmadaw (8) and the Arakan Army (2). Two attacks occurred during fighting between the Tatmadaw and TNLA. The attacks involved artillery shelling (5), crossfire and looting (3 each) and shooting (1). The United Nations also verified the military use of 51 schools in Rakhine (44) and Shan (7) States attributed to the Tatmadaw (44), a combined force of the Tatmadaw and Border Guard Police (5), and the Border Guard Police (2).

128. The United Nations verified the abduction of 12 children (6 boys, 6 girls), between the ages of 12 and 17, in Shan State by TNLA (6), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (3) and Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (1), and in Kachin State (2) by KIA.

129. Humanitarian access, particularly in Rakhine, Shan and Kachin States, continued to deteriorate owing to insecurity and unpredictable and onerous governmental travel authorization requirements and processes.

#### *Developments and concerns*

130. I welcome the adoption by the Government of the Child Rights Law, criminalizing the six grave violations against children, and the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I urge the Government to ensure their implementation. I note the efforts towards ending child recruitment by the Government, and the Government's initiative to create a national plan to prevent killing and maiming and sexual violence, but I urge the Government to address protection gaps by engaging with the country task force to develop a joint action plan, as requested by my Special Representative.

131. I welcome the release of 59 boys and young men and note the disciplinary action taken against 18 military personnel for not following proper recruitment procedures. I urge the Tatmadaw to continue to collaborate with the United Nations in releasing children in compliance with the joint action plan and in expediting the age verification of the remaining 125 recruits who are believed to be children, identified by the United Nations and the Tatmadaw in their joint action plan. I am concerned by the use of children in Rakhine State and call upon the Tatmadaw to immediately cease this practice. The detention for alleged association with armed groups in contravention of the Child Rights Law is concerning. I call upon the Government to treat children formerly associated with armed groups primarily as victims and detain them only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time.

132. As discussed by my Special Representative during her visit in January 2020, I am alarmed by the sharp increase in the number of incidents of killing and maiming, including by anti-personnel mines, and in the number of attacks on and incidents of the military use of schools. Ongoing grave violations against children are extremely worrisome and I call upon all parties to immediately end violations. I call upon the Government to sign the Safe Schools Declaration and to ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. I urge all parties to take all possible measures to protect civilians, including by demining and marking contaminated areas.

133. I welcome the engagement of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, KIA, the Karen National Liberation Army, Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation

Army Peace Council, and the Karenni Army and Shan State Army, with the United Nations, including the release of 25 children (17 boys, 8 girls) by KIA, and urge them to sign joint commitments to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

134. I am extremely worried by persistent access restrictions in some States and call upon all parties to allow access to the United Nations and child protection actors for humanitarian and monitoring purposes.

135. I urge all parties to engage in national peace dialogues and use the “Practical guidance for mediators” to place children at the heart of discussions.

### **Somalia**

136. The United Nations verified 3,709 grave violations against 2,959 children (2,436 boys, 523 girls).

137. The recruitment and use of 1,442 boys and 53 girls was verified, with some children as young as 8. Al-Shabaab remained the main perpetrator (1,169); followed by government security forces, including the Somali Police Force (100) and the Somali National Army (74); and regional forces, including Puntland forces (40), Galmudug forces (30), Jubbaland forces (19), Galmudug police (4) and Jubbaland police (1). Violations were also attributed to clan militia (56) and the Westland militia (2). A total of 300 children were used in support roles such as escorts, guards at checkpoints and for cleaning, and 269 children were used as fighters.

138. A total of 236 children, between the ages of 13 and 17, were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (164), the Somali National Army (37), Jubbaland forces (24), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (7) and Galmudug forces (4).

139. A total of 703 children were killed (222) or maimed (481) (518 boys, 185 girls). The casualties were attributed to Al-Shabaab (252); government security forces, including the Somali National Army (43) and the Somali Police Force (35); and regional forces, including Jubbaland forces (19), Galmudug forces (10), Puntland forces (5), Jubbaland police (3), Galmudug police (2) and Southwest forces (1). Violations were also attributed to clan militias (28), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (5), the Kenya Defence Forces (3), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (1) and unidentified armed elements (296). The main causes of child casualties were improvised explosive devices (158), crossfire between armed forces and armed groups (155), gun shots (127) and explosive remnants of war (54).

140. Responsibility for rape and other forms of sexual violence against 227 girls was attributed to government security forces, including the Somali National Army (25) and the Somali Police Force (14), and to regional forces including Jubbaland forces (16), Galmudug forces (5), Southwest forces (3) Puntland forces and Jubbaland police (1 each). Al-Shabaab (26), clan militias (17) and the Westland militia (1) were also responsible for violations. One violation each was attributed to the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and AMISOM, respectively. In 116 cases, perpetrators could not be identified. The cases of sexual violence included rape (148), attempted rape (42), forced marriage (19), sexual harassment (17) and sexual assault (1).

141. A total of 76 attacks on schools (64) and hospitals (12) were attributed to Al-Shabaab (60), government security forces (including Somali National Army (5) and Somali Police Force (1)), clan militia (4), Galmudug forces (2), AMISOM (1) and unidentified perpetrators (2). Incidents included the abduction of teachers and pupils, the killing of and threats against teachers, and the destruction and looting of facilities. In addition, one school was used for military purposes by the Somali Police Force and one health centre was used by clan militias.

142. A total of 1,158 children (1,065 boys, 93 girls) were abducted, the overwhelming majority by Al-Shabaab (1,142), mainly for the purpose of recruitment and use. Other perpetrators include unidentified armed elements (11), Westland militia (4) and clan militias (1).

143. Responsibility for 50 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to Al-Shabaab (22), clan militias (12), unidentified armed elements (6), Galmudug forces (4), Jubbaland forces (2), as well as the National Intelligence and Security Agency, Southwest forces, Puntland police and Puntland administration (1 each). Incidents included threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, the abduction or detention of personnel and beneficiaries, entry restrictions, disruption and looting.

#### *Developments and concerns*

144. I welcome the signature between the Federal Government and my Special Representative, in October, of a road map to expedite the implementation of the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children. It includes renewed commitments to protect children, and I call upon the Federal Government to fully implement the commitments, including at the level of the federal member states.

145. High numbers of grave violations committed against children by all parties to conflict in Somalia are concerning, in particular the staggering numbers of child abductions and the recruitment and use of children by Al-Shabaab. Also concerning is the growing number of violations attributed to government security forces, in particular the sharp increase in the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, as well as sexual violence perpetrated against children and attributed to the Somali Police Force and regional forces, and the detention of children for their actual or alleged association with armed groups. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

146. I urge the Federal Government to treat children formerly associated with armed groups primarily as victims in line with the best interests of the child, according to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), as endorsed by Somalia, and to fully apply the 2014 standard operating procedures for the handover of children, including at the federal member state level. I urge the Government to fast-track the adoption of legislation, including the child rights bill.

147. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)).

#### **South Sudan**

148. The United Nations verified 270 grave violations against 250 children (188 boys, 62 girls).

149. Responsibility for the recruitment and use of 161 children (149 boys, 12 girls) was attributed to the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA-IO) (80), government security forces (30), including the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (20), South Sudan National Police Service (6) and National Security Services (4). Violations were also attributed to the South Sudan United Front/Army (SSUF/A) (21), the National Salvation Front (NAS) (19), the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) (10) and the National Democratic Movement (NDM) (1).

150. A total of 51 children (39 boys, 12 girls) were killed (25) and maimed (26). Casualties were attributed to government security forces (12) (including South Sudan



People's Defence Forces (8), South Sudan National Police Service (3) and National Security Services (1)). Casualties were also attributed to NAS (8) and SPLA-IO (1). Among the casualties, 10 children were killed and maimed in crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and armed groups. Twenty children were affected by explosive remnants of war.

151. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 35 girls, and in three cases there were multiple perpetrators. Most of the violations were attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (23), followed by unknown armed elements (6), SPLA-IO (5) and NAS (1).

152. Three girls were abducted by NAS (2) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (1).

153. Among 14 attacks on schools (10) and hospitals (4), responsibility was attributed to SPLA-IO (5) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (1). Seven attacks occurred in the context of crossfire between SPLA-IO and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (6), and between NAS and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (1). The attacks mainly involved the destruction and looting of facilities. In addition, 18 schools and 3 hospitals were used for military purposes by government security forces (17) (including South Sudan People's Defence Forces (15) and National Security Services (2)), followed by SPLA-IO (3) and SSUF/A (1).

154. Six incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to SPLA-IO (3), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and unidentified armed elements (1 each). One incident occurred in the context of crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and NAS. The incidents involved the killing of humanitarian workers, harassment of humanitarian workers, the confiscation of humanitarian assets and the denial of access to clear landmines.

#### *Developments and concerns*

155. I welcome the signing by the Government and the United Nations, in February 2020, of the comprehensive action plan to end and prevent all six grave violations and note that in view of the unification of their forces with the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, foreseen in the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, SPLA-IO and SSOA have bound themselves to this action plan. I call for its full implementation. I welcome the establishment of a Joint Verification Committee in May 2019 composed of the United Nations, the Government, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, SPLA-IO and SSOA. The Committee conducted screenings to identify and release children associated with armed groups and armed forces and conducted awareness-raising on grave violations in 24 barracks of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, and in SPLA-IO and SSOA cantonments. In cooperation with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission and the parties to conflict, the United Nations supported the release and reintegration of 280 children, including 76 girls, from the South Sudan National Liberation Movement (201), SPLA-IO (58) and SSUF/A (21).

156. I commend the cooperation between parties to conflict and the United Nations on child protection and in the release of children. I call upon all parties to immediately release all children recruited or abducted and call upon the international community to continue supporting programmes for the reintegration of these children. I remain concerned about continuing grave violations committed in South Sudan, including by emerging armed groups and in the context of intercommunal fighting. I call upon all parties to end violations and urge the Government to ensure accountability.

## **The Sudan**

### *Darfur*

157. The United Nations verified 208 violations against 199 children (123 boys, 76 girls).

158. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of three boys by the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW). The United Nations is in the process of verifying 14 alleged cases of recruitment and use by the Rapid Support Forces.

159. Some 119 children were killed (38) and maimed (81) (103 boys, 16 girls) by unidentified armed elements (71), including 47 casualties caused by explosive remnants of war. The remaining casualties were attributed to government security forces (42) (Rapid Support Forces (19), the General Intelligence Service (formerly National Intelligence and Security Service) (13), joint Sudanese Armed Forces/Rapid Support Forces/Sudan Police Force operations (5) and Sudanese Armed Forces (5)), and SLA-AW (6). Most children were killed and maimed in the context of public demonstrations or during inter-factional fighting between SLA-AW splinter groups.

160. Incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against 59 children (2 boys, 57 girls) were attributed to government security forces (21) (Rapid Support Forces (9), Sudanese Armed Forces (8), Popular Defence Forces and Sudan Police Force (2 each)), the SLA-AW faction of Salih Borsa (4), and unidentified armed elements (34). Children living in camps for internally displaced persons and in remote areas in Jebel Marra remained vulnerable to sexual violence while carrying out livelihood activities, including farming, herding cattle or collecting firewood.

161. Six attacks on schools (2) and hospitals (4) were attributed to SLA-AW (4), joint operations by the Rapid Support Forces and Arab armed elements (1) and unidentified armed elements (1). The military use of nine schools by government security forces (6) (Sudanese Armed Forces (2), Rapid Support Forces (2), Sudan Police Force (1), National Intelligence and Security Service (1)) and by SLA-AW (3) was verified. Five schools that had been used by the Rapid Support Forces (2) and SLA-AW (3) were vacated following United Nations advocacy.

162. The abduction of 18 children (15 boys, 3 girls) was attributed to SLA-AW Salih Borsa (5) and unidentified armed elements (13). Among the armed elements, 11 were described as armed nomads, and they abducted children for ransom or to force them to work as cattle herders.

163. Three incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and SLA-AW Salih Borsa (1).

### *South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

164. Access restrictions hindered monitoring and reporting by the United Nations.

165. One baby was killed by unidentified armed elements in Abyei.

166. Two girls were raped by the Sudanese Armed Forces and unknown armed elements (1 each) in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. In the case attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces, the perpetrator was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

167. The military use by the Sudanese Armed Forces of two schools and one hospital in South Kordofan was verified.

*Developments and concerns*

168. I welcome the opening of humanitarian space from October 2019, thereby allowing the United Nations to visit areas that had been inaccessible since 2011, including areas of Jebel Marra or areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North.

169. I welcome the engagement by the Government with the United Nations for the screening of 1,346 Rapid Support Forces soldiers in South and West Darfur, during which no child was identified. I further note the command orders issued by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces prohibiting the recruitment of children.

170. I encourage the Government to further engage with the United Nations on preventative measures for the protection of children so as to sustain the gains of the action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children, which was completed in 2018. I call upon all parties listed in the annexes to the present report to engage with the United Nations on action plans or renew their engagement with the United Nations in order to continue the implementation of action plans, including through time-bound road maps. I call upon all parties to take into account child protection in the ongoing peace process.

171. I remain concerned about grave violations committed in the Sudan, especially incidents of killing and maiming and sexual violence. I call upon the Government to refrain from the excessive use of force against children, and to ensure accountability for the perpetrators of grave violations. I further encourage all parties to fully cooperate with demining efforts.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

172. The United Nations verified 2,638 violations affecting 2,292 children (1,612 boys, 401 girls, 279 sex unknown).

173. The recruitment and use of 820 children (765 boys, 55 girls) was verified, 798 of whom served in combat and 147 of whom were below the age of 15. Cases were attributed to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (283) under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (245), Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army)<sup>10</sup> (191), Ahrar al-Sham (26), other components of SDF (23), the Internal Security Forces (ISF) (22), unidentified armed groups (11), Syrian government forces (10), pro-government militia (5), Nur al-Din al-Zanki (3) and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (1). Most cases occurred in Aleppo, Idlib and Raqqah. In addition, within the framework of the action plan signed in June 2019 with SDF, 51 girls were released.

174. At least 218 children (216 boys, 2 girls) were detained or deprived of liberty for their alleged association with opposing parties, by YPG/YPJ (194) under the umbrella of SDF, ISF (20), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (2) and Syrian government forces (2). In October, the United Nations verified the deprivation of liberty of 150 boys, some as young as 9, of Syrian nationality and of at least 22 other nationalities, by YPG/YPJ under the umbrella of SDF, for alleged association with ISIL.

175. The killing (897) and maiming (557) of 1,454 children (834 boys, 342 girls, 278 sex unknown) were verified, with 678 of the violations occurring in Idlib. Half of the casualties were attributed to government and pro-government forces (723) (including government and pro-government air forces (487), government forces and

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<sup>10</sup> Formerly referred to as groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army.

pro-government militias (231) and government forces (5)), unidentified perpetrators (580), Operation Peace Spring<sup>11</sup> (65), YPG/YPJ (21) under the umbrella of SDF, ISIL (23), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (14), the international counter-ISIL coalition (11), Syrian armed opposition groups (10), other components of SDF (6) and ISF (1). The casualties mainly resulted from air strikes (515), shelling (332), unexploded ordnance (301) and attacks with the use of improvised explosive devices (165). The last quarter of 2019 witnessed a significant spike in the number of high-casualty incidents during military escalations in north-western and north-eastern parts of the country.

176. Sexual violence perpetrated against children and attributed to parties remained underreported. The United Nations verified 11 cases of sexual violence against girls in detention by government forces, which occurred in previous years and were verified at a later date.

177. There were a total of 262 attacks on schools (157) and hospitals (105), including on protected personnel, attributed to the Syrian government and pro-government forces (226) (including government and pro-government air forces (147), government forces and pro-government militias (75) and government forces (4)), unidentified perpetrators (14), Operation Peace Spring (6), Syrian armed opposition groups (5), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (5), ISIL (3), YPG/YPJ and other components of SDF (2), international counter-ISIL coalition (1). The majority of those attacks (192) occurred in Idlib, with most involving air strikes (158), shelling (50), explosions of unknown nature (34) and attacks using improvised explosive devices (6).

178. Some 32 schools and 2 medical facilities were used for military purposes by YPG/YPJ (17), government forces (10), ISF (3), other components of SDF (1) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1), mainly in Hasakah (22).

179. The abduction of 17 children (12 boys, 4 girls, 1 sex unknown) was attributed to YPG/YPJ (8), other components of SDF (1) and ISF (1), Syrian armed opposition groups (4) and government forces (3). In the majority of incidents, children were abducted owing to the alleged affiliation of relatives with opposing groups or as a precursor to their recruitment.

180. A total of 84 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access included attacks on water facilities (46), incidents of the removal or blocking of humanitarian supplies (21) and attacks on humanitarian facilities, transports and personnel (17). The incidents were attributed to government and pro-government forces (58) (including government forces and pro-government militias (30), government and pro-government air forces (26) and government forces (2)), unidentified perpetrators (10), YPG/YPJ (3), self-administration in northern and eastern Syrian Arab Republic (7), Operation Peace Spring (3), ISF (1), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1) and the Syrian Salvation Government (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

181. I welcome the commitment by SDF to the action plan signed in June 2019 with my Special Representative and the progress in its implementation, in particular the issuance of a military order reiterating the prohibition of recruitment of children, the establishment of an implementation committee, the training of 100 commanders, the appointment of senior focal points and the release of 30 children in 2019 and 51 girls in early 2020, as well as the separation of 18 boys awaiting formal release. I further welcome the fact that United Nations child protection partners were granted access to Centre Houry in Hasakah, which mainly houses Syrian children formerly associated

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<sup>11</sup> Turkish forces and Syrian armed groups operate in the context of Operation Peace Spring.

with ISIL as so-called “cubs of the caliphate”. I note that the start of Operation Peace Spring in October 2019 affected the implementation of the action plan.

182. I note the dialogue between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the United Nations on non-military use of schools to implement the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, including recommendations concerning the recruitment and use of children. I call upon the Government to engage with the United Nations in Damascus and with my Special Representative to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through the signature of dedicated joint action plans for which the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is listed.

183. I am appalled by the persistent high levels of all grave violations endured by children and perpetrated by all parties in the country, including by government and pro-government forces. I am particularly disturbed by the increase in the number of attacks against schools and hospitals. I am extremely concerned by the drastic increase in the detention of children on security-related charges. The rising number of incidents of the denial of humanitarian access and emerging trend of attacks on water facilities are also concerning. I urge all parties to take all necessary measures to better protect children in armed conflict, including precautionary measures to mitigate child casualties, and to protect schools and health facilities in the conduct of military operations.

184. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries that have not already done so, to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of foreign women and children with suspected family ties to ISIL who are currently in camps in the north-east of the country, in line with international law principles, including the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child.

## **Yemen**

185. The United Nations verified 4,042 grave violations against 2,159 children (1,708 boys, 451 girls).

186. The recruitment and use of 686 children (643 boys, 43 girls) was attributed to the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (482), Yemeni armed forces (136), Security Belt Forces (41), Shabwani Elite Forces (14), unidentified armed elements (7), popular committees (4), a Salafist armed group and Hirak Southern Movement (1 each). Most children served in combat roles (514), 19 per cent of whom were below the age of 15.

187. The United Nations verified the deprivation of liberty and/or detention of 97 boys between the ages of 12 and 16, by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (68), Yemeni armed forces (26) and the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (3) for their alleged association with opposing parties. Children were held for periods ranging from six months to three years. Among those children, 25 were captured and detained by the Coalition and handed over to the Government of Yemen, who further detained them before releasing them into an interim care centre in Ma'rib in October 2019. A total of 93 children were released as of January 2020, including the 68 who had been held by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis).

188. Killing (395) and maiming (1,052) of 1,447 children (1,041 boys, 406 girls) was attributed to the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (313), the Coalition (222), the Yemeni armed forces (96), popular committees (40), Security Belt Forces (11), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (5) and ISIL (2). Responsibility for 482 child casualties could not be attributed and a further 276 casualties occurred during crossfire between various parties to the conflict. Of the total number of casualties, 865 resulted from ground fighting, 306 from landmines and explosive

remnants of war, 171 from air strikes, and 68 from bombs, including suicide and attacks with the use of improvised explosive devices. Hudaydah, Ta'izz and Dali' Governorates were the most affected.

189. Incidents of sexual violence against three boys by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) and one girl by the Yemeni armed forces, between the ages of 12 and 16, were verified. The lack of access to conflict-affected areas, stigma and the fear of retaliation remain reasons for underreporting of this violation.

190. There were 35 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (15). The attacks were attributed to the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (15), the Yemeni armed forces (6), the Coalition (4), Security Belt Forces (2) and Shabwani Elite Forces (1). Responsibility for four attacks could not be attributed and three occurred in the context of confrontations between the Yemeni armed forces and popular committees (2) and between the Yemeni armed forces and the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (1). Most attacks occurred in Dali' (15) and Ta'izz (13) Governorates.

191. The military use of 37 schools was attributed to the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (35), the popular committees (1) and an unidentified armed group (1). The military use of three hospitals by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (2) and the Yemeni armed forces (1) was also verified.

192. The United Nations verified the abduction of 22 children (21 boys, 1 girl) by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (19), Security Belt Forces (2) and popular committees (1). In most cases, children were used for recruitment, while the girl was abducted for marriage.

193. A total of 1,848 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) (1,553), the Coalition (186) and the Yemeni armed forces and other components of the Government (109). This represents a dramatic increase from the figure recorded for 2018 and involved restrictions of movements within the country, interference with the delivery of humanitarian assistance, violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities, and restrictions of movement into the country. Denials were prevalent in Sana'a and Amanat Al-Asimah Governorates, followed by governorates adjacent to active frontlines, including Hudaydah, Ibb, Hajjah and Sa'dah.

#### *Developments and concerns*

194. I welcome the continued commitment of the Government of Yemen to protect conflict-affected children, including through its interim care centre in Ma'rib, through which children are reunited with their families, and I encourage further efforts, including the adoption of a handover protocol on the release of children. The implementation of its action plan and road map progressed in the first half of 2019, with the appointment of 90 child protection focal points within the Yemeni armed forces, 40 of whom were trained to identify associated children. That progress stalled, however, in August 2019, with tensions erupting between the Government and the southern transitional council. In this context, the political directive issued by the President in February 2020, instructing all forces to comply with the action plan and road map, is welcomed.

195. I commend the endorsement of a programme of time-bound activities by the Coalition, through an exchange of letters with my Special Representative, in order to support the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2019. I am encouraged by the efforts demonstrated in the context of the memorandum and call upon the Coalition to expedite the implementation of agreed activities, including accountability provisions. I note the decrease in child casualties attributed to the Coalition in 2019.

196. I am encouraged by the ongoing dialogue with the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) to develop an action plan to end and prevent violations for which they are listed, and the military use of schools. I note that a senior focal point and technical committee were appointed and that a directive for the handover of children captured and/or detained during military operations was signed in April 2020. I welcome the release of 68 children detained for association with opposition parties by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) in early 2020 and urge that their reintegration be prioritized.

197. I am extremely worried, however, about the rise in the overall number of grave violations, including the continued recruitment of children by parties to conflict, and in particular by the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis), and the shrinking space for humanitarians in Yemen.

198. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations and responsibilities under international law and to take all measures necessary to end and prevent violations and facilitate humanitarian access to children.

199. I welcome the progress made towards ending the conflict that is the cause of this suffering. I urge all parties to continue their negotiations to bring lasting peace to Yemen.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **India**

200. The United Nations verified the killing (8) and maiming (7) of 15 children (13 boys, 2 girls), between the ages of 1 and 17, by or during joint operations of the Central Reserve Police Force, the Indian Army (Rashtriya Rifles) and the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police (10), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (1), unidentified armed elements (1), or during shelling across the line of control (3). The casualties that occurred in Jammu and Kashmir were mainly caused by torture in detention, shootings, including from pellet guns, and cross-border shelling.

201. The United Nations verified attacks on nine schools in Jammu and Kashmir by unidentified elements.

202. Of concern, 68 children between the ages of 9 and 17 have been detained by Indian security services in Jammu and Kashmir on national security-related charges, including 1 for actual or alleged association with armed groups.

203. In Jharkhand State, approximately 10 children were reportedly rescued by Indian police from Naxalite insurgency groups, who allegedly abducted them or used them in support or combat capacities.

### *Developments and concerns*

204. I remain concerned by child casualties in Jammu and Kashmir and call upon the Government to take preventive measures to protect children, including by ending the use of pellets against children. I am concerned by the detention of children, including their arrest during night raids, internment at army camps, torture in detention and detention without charge or due process, and urge the Government to immediately end this practice. I note that the Government conducted age verification for some detainees and urge for its systematization. I note the decline, as a result of government efforts, in the number of reports of child recruitment and of the killing and maiming of children relating to the Naxalite insurgency. However, children's access to education and health services continues to be of concern owing to this insurgency, in

particular in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand States. I am concerned by attacks on schools, yet I am encouraged that the Government has commenced legal proceedings against the perpetrators.

205. I reiterate my encouragement to the Government to put in place national preventive and accountability measures for all grave violations, as soon as possible.

### **Nigeria**

206. The United Nations verified 788 grave violations against 733 children (596 boys, 131 girls, 6 sex unknown).

207. Responsibility for the recruitment and use of 46 children (28 boys, 18 girls), between the ages of 13 and 17, was attributed to Boko Haram (33) and the Nigerian Security Forces (13). The Nigerian Security Forces used children for menial jobs at military checkpoints. In addition, 516 children (458 boys, 58 girls) were verified at a later date as having been recruited and used by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) between 2013 and 2017. No new recruitment and use by CJTF has verified beyond 2017, when the action plan was signed with the United Nations. Furthermore, Boko Haram recruited and used 71 children in the Far North Region of Cameroon, 36 in the Niger and 8 in Chad.

208. The Nigerian authorities released 160 children (158 boys, 2 girls) from military detention following their arrest for alleged association with Boko Haram. The United Nations was unable to verify the number of children still in detention, as access to detention facilities was denied.

209. A total of 120 children (95 boys, 25 girls), between the ages of 11 and 17, were killed (56) and maimed (64) by Boko Haram (105), unidentified perpetrators (7), the Islamic State West Africa Province and the Nigerian Security Forces (3 each) and CJTF (1). One casualty occurred during crossfire between the Nigerian Security Forces and Boko Haram. Of the total child casualties attributed to Boko Haram, 41 were due to explosions of improvised explosive devices borne by civilians, including 9 children who were used as carriers. In addition, 103 child casualties in the Far North Region of Cameroon, 13 in the Niger and 3 in Chad were attributed to Boko Haram (109), government forces (9) and unidentified armed elements (1).

210. Sexual violence perpetrated by Boko Haram affected 30 girls, between the ages of 12 and 16, including 23 who were abducted and subsequently raped or forcibly married to Boko Haram elements. Furthermore, five girls were subjected to sexual violence in Chad and the Niger, two of whom were attacked by Boko Haram.

211. A total of 15 attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (11) were attributed to Boko Haram in Nigeria. Furthermore, Boko Haram attacked one school and seven hospitals in the Diffa Region of the Niger, and one school and one hospital in the Far North Region of Cameroon. Unidentified armed elements attacked one hospital in the Niger.

212. Responsibility for the abduction of 44 children (15 boys, 23 girls, 6 sex unknown), between the ages of 11 and 17, was attributed to Boko Haram. In addition, children were abducted in the Niger (67), Cameroon (49) and Chad (5) by Boko Haram (104) and unidentified perpetrators (17).

213. There were 17 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to Boko Haram (12), Islamic State West Africa Province (3) and the Nigerian Security Forces (2). Incidents included the killing and abduction of humanitarians by Boko Haram. Separately, two unattributed incidents were verified in the Niger.



*Developments and concerns*

214. I welcome the constructive role played by the Government in support of the United Nations engagement with CJTF under the 2017 action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children. As a result, of the thousands of children released from CJTF, 1,355 children (1,138 boys, 217 girls) attended ceremonies marking their separation from the group in 2019. I encourage the authorities to ensure the reintegration of released children and further encourage CJTF to complete the implementation of its action plan.

215. While the release of 160 children from detention is encouraging, I am concerned about the children remaining in detention for their alleged association with Boko Haram. I reiterate my call upon Nigerian authorities to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups as victims, with detention as a last resort, and to release all children in its custody. I urge the Nigerian authorities to adopt a handover protocol for the handing over of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, and to provide access for the United Nations to all detained children.

216. The brutality of grave violations perpetrated by Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region remains a grave concern, notably the continued use of children, particularly girls, as carriers of improvised explosive devices, and I request my Special Representative to promote enhanced monitoring capacity in the Lake Chad Basin. I urge Boko Haram to immediately cease all violations against children.

**Pakistan**

217. A total of 23 children (2 boys, 4 girls, 17 sex unknown) were reportedly killed (5) and injured (18) during armed clashes or by shelling or targeted fire across the line of control (10), by improvised explosive devices (3) and explosive remnants of war (10) in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces. Responsibility could not be attributed for any of those casualties.

218. Three attacks against schools (2) and hospitals (1) were reported, but responsibility was not attributed. The two schools in Pakistan-administered Kashmir were reportedly attacked across the line of control. The hospital in Balochistan Province was attacked with the use of an improvised explosive device. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative reported over 660 attacks or threats of attacks against its staff and facilities, mostly in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces.

*Developments and concerns*

219. I welcome the Government's continued efforts to protect the workers who are conducting the polio campaign. I note the decrease in the number of attacks against schools and in the number of child casualties, but call upon the Government to continue preventive measures to protect children, especially around the line of control. I reiterate my call for the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and to protect schools.

**Philippines**

220. The United Nations verified 79 grave violations against 67 children (42 boys, 25 girls).

221. The recruitment and use of 18 children (14 boys, 4 girls), between the ages of 15 and 17, were attributed to armed groups, namely the New People's Army (NPA)

(12), ISIL-inspired armed groups (5) and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (1), in Maguindanao, Quezon and North Cotabato Provinces.

222. The United Nations verified the detention of 35 children (13 boys, 22 girls), some as young as 11, arrested by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (5), the Philippine National Police (2) and during joint operations of the armed forces and the police (28), for alleged association with armed groups, and detained for periods ranging from 1 day to 10 months. Two boys aged 15 and 16 were still in police custody as at December 2019, having been arrested in August and September 2019 in Basilan and North Cotabato Provinces.

223. The killing (12) and maiming (37) of 49 children (28 boys, 21 girls), some as young as 1 year old, were attributed to Abu Sayyaf Group (10), Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (15) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (4), including in Maguindanao and Sulu (18 each), North Cotabato (4), Negros Occidental, Basilan, Lanao del Sur and Sorsogon (2 each) and Misamis Oriental (1) Provinces. Responsibility for 20 casualties could not be attributed. Over half of the children were victims of explosive remnants of war and the use of improvised explosive devices (25) in Cotabato City and Sulu Province.

224. No incidents of rape or other forms of sexual violence could be verified, although information was received pertaining to such incidents.

225. There were 12 attacks on schools and protected personnel, as well as threats against 20 teachers, including an indigenous teacher. Attacks were attributed to the Philippine National Police (3), unidentified armed elements (2) and NPA (1), while 6 attacks occurred during crossfire between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and NPA (4) and between the armed forces and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (2). In addition, two schools and one health centre were used by the armed forces during military operations in Maguindanao Province. Of concern, threats against schools run by non-governmental organizations in indigenous communities and harassment of their personnel and students by government security forces and paramilitary groups triggered an escalation of violence, notably in Mindanao, North Cotabato and Davao del Norte Provinces.

226. No incidents of the abduction of children nor of the denial of humanitarian access were verified. The monitoring and verification of violations was impeded by access restrictions, due to the volatile security situation and restricted freedom of movement imposed under martial law in Mindanao, thrice extended since 2017. Verification in some areas was limited owing to a lack of trained capacity.

#### *Developments and concerns*

227. I commend the adoption in June 2019 by the Government of the Implementing Rules and Regulations for the Law on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict. I urge the Government to swiftly disseminate and implement those domestic legal obligations. I am concerned about the increased detention of children due to joint operations of the armed forces and the police and I urge the Government to implement existing national protocols and standards on children arrested and detained for alleged association with armed groups.

228. I am encouraged by the inauguration of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority in March 2019, marking the culmination of the peace process between the Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. I call upon the Bangsamoro Transition Authority to continue to implement the peace agreement and use the lessons learned and best practices collected by the United Nations Children's Fund in the Philippines and by my Special Representative to end and prevent violations against children. I welcome the lifting of martial law in the region after almost three years.

229. Improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war continue to kill and maim children. I call upon the Government to implement the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction and to prioritize the drafting of legislation providing compensation for destroyed and damaged houses.

230. I remain concerned about persistent attacks and threats on schools and protected personnel, particularly in indigenous communities. I urge the Government to comply with the “National policy framework on learners and schools as zones of peace” issued in November 2019 by the Department of Education. I reiterate my call upon the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

231. I welcome the enhanced engagement by parties to conflict, notably Governments and non-State actors, with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and other commitments to protect children in armed conflict. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue supporting the implementation of action plans and commitments, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations operations, including peacekeeping and special political missions. I request my Special Representative to engage with parties on action plans and strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in coordination with United Nations system entities.

232. I call upon Member States to respect the rights of the child, including through accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so, and the endorsement and implementation of the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

233. I am concerned by the continued high level of verified grave violations committed against children. I call upon all parties to fully comply with international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. I call upon all parties to immediately end and prevent grave violations, including through mitigation measures, appropriate orders and training on preventing violations.

234. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation to criminalize grave violations against children. I encourage Member States to proactively ensure strong national accountability measures, and to cooperate with relevant international accountability mechanisms. I call for the inclusion of accountability provisions in action plans signed between the United Nations and parties listed in the annexes, and for the implementation thereof.

235. I am deeply concerned at the growing number of children in detention, and I reiterate that this should only be used as a measure of last resort, and for the shortest possible period of time, and that alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible. I urge Member States to treat children allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including groups designated as terrorist by the United Nations, primarily as victims, and to give child protection actors full access to these children. I call upon all concerned Member States that have not already done so to take steps for the voluntary repatriation of children stranded in conflict zones, in line with international law principles and standards. I encourage parties to adopt standard

operating procedures for the handover and release of all children detained in order to facilitate their reintegration and, when applicable, repatriation.

236. I call upon all parties to allow safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, in order to provide assistance to children, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. Parties to conflict should order that humanitarian assistance and protection services for children be allowed and facilitated, and humanitarian deliveries protected.

237. I enjoin the donor community to address funding gaps for the reintegration of children, including by ensuring long-term alternatives to military life, providing education and long-term reintegration support, including psychosocial and mental health services, as well as funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children. I further ask that the specific needs of girls and of children with disabilities be prioritized in such programmes.

238. I encourage Member States and regional organizations to strengthen child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations in order to develop strategies to prevent grave violations.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

239. There will be no new listing for 2019. In my previous report ([A/73/907-S/2019/509](#)), I requested my Special Representative to further examine cases in a number of situations, however, unforeseen delays due to political and security developments were encountered. In the case of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, delays were caused by multiple electoral processes ongoing throughout late 2019 and early 2020 and the subsequent closures caused by the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the region. My Special Representative is continuing to dialogue with parties until such an examination can be completed; meanwhile, I urge all parties, in particular the Israeli forces, to refrain from the use of violence against children and to put in place measures that will prevent these violations from occurring in the first place.

240. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw will continue to be listed under section A of annex I for the violations of sexual violence and killing and maiming. The Tatmadaw will be delisted for the violation of recruitment and use, following a continued significant decrease in recruitment, ongoing prosecutions and an agreement to continue to trace and release cases that were identified in previous years. The delisting with respect to recruitment and use is conditioned on the immediate ending and preventing of the ad hoc use of children in non-combat roles. A continued United Nations monitoring and engagement period of 12 months will ensure the sustainability of all existing measures, including the prevention of use of children, as verified by the United Nations, and continued engagement with my Special Representative. Any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in my next report. In Yemen, the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen will be delisted for the violation of killing and maiming, following a sustained significant decrease in killing and maiming due to air strikes and the signature and implementation of the programme of time-bound activities to support the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2019. A continued United Nations monitoring and engagement period of 12 months will ensure the sustained implementation of the programme of time-bound activities and the further decrease in the number of affected children as verified by the United Nations. Any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in my next report.

241. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In this regard, in the Central African Republic, Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, both part of the former Séléka coalition, will be listed in section B of annex I in recognition of the measures put in place within their respective action plans. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kamuina Nsapu and Mai-Mai Mazembe will be listed in section B of annex I for their existing violations, while Raia Mutomboki will be listed in section B of annex I but only with regard to their listing for recruitment and use and abduction, following their respective engagement with the United Nations through signed commitments. In Myanmar, the Karen National Liberation Army will be listed in section B of annex I, as a result of their enhanced engagement to end the recruitment and use of children within their ranks. In South Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition – pro-Machar will move to section B of annex I as a result of their engagement with and endorsement of the comprehensive action plan to end and prevent all six violations, signed in February 2020 between the United Nations and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces, and as a result of the measures taken to release children.

242. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulted from changes on the ground and are aimed at reflecting the name of parties more accurately. In Somalia, the Somali National Army is now listed as the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces, and includes the Somali Police Force, remaining on list B of annex I, conditioned on their timely implementation of the October 2019 road map to expedite the implementation of the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and on the immediate application of the road map to the Somali Police Force, which is now included in the action plans. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the groups self-affiliated with the Free Syrian Army are now listed as Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army). In Yemen, the Houthis will be listed as the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) and, owing to recent command orders to stop the recruitment and use of children and to release children, and to enhanced dialogue with the United Nations, will be listed in section B of annex I for recruitment and use, while remaining listed under section A of annex I for killing and maiming and for attacks on schools and hospitals.

243. In view of the gravity and number of violations reported and, where possible, verified in Cameroon (recruitment and use, killing and maiming, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access) and in Burkina Faso (attacks on schools, and killing and maiming) during 2019, both countries will be added as situations of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b,d</sup>
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
2. Bana Mura militias<sup>c,e</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
5. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
6. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>
7. Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine)<sup>a</sup>

\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

8. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
9. Nduma défense du Congo<sup>a,b</sup>
10. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b</sup>
11. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
12. Raia Mutomboki<sup>c</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *Non-State actors*

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest<sup>a,c</sup>
3. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated Border Guard forces<sup>b,c</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Sudan**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army)<sup>a</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>
5. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by Nusrah Front (Levant Liberation Organization)<sup>a,b</sup>

**Parties in Yemen**

*Non-State actors*

1. Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis)<sup>b,d</sup>
2. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>
4. Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Afghanistan**

*State actors*

Afghan National Police, including the Afghan Local Police<sup>a,f</sup>

**Parties in the Central African Republic**

*Non-State actors*

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

**Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

*State actors*

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

*Non-State actors*

1. Kamuina Nsapu<sup>a,d,e,f</sup>
2. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
3. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,e,f</sup>

**Parties in Iraq**

*State actors*

Popular Mobilization Forces<sup>a</sup>



### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *State actors*

Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces<sup>a,b,f</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in-Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the Yemeni armed forces<sup>a,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Houthi/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis)<sup>a</sup>

## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

**A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

**Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Civilian Joint Task Force<sup>a,f</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children**

Security Council  
Seventy-sixth year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2020, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2020, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information presented does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors, including access. The report presents trends

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2020/1030](#)), Mali ([S/2020/1105](#)), Myanmar ([S/2020/1243](#)), Nigeria ([S/2020/652](#)), the Philippines ([S/2020/777](#)), Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)), South Sudan ([S/2020/1205](#)) and the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/46/39](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2147 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



and patterns of violations, and engagement with parties responsible for violations that might lead to behavioural change, including promotion of accountability and inclusion of child protection provisions in peace processes. In the report, it is noted that attacks or threats of attacks on community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures. Where measures undertaken by listed parties had a positive impact on children or where ongoing conduct is of concern, this is highlighted. On the basis of enhanced engagement with parties, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and those that have not.

## **II. Situation of children and armed conflict**

### **A. Overview of trends and patterns**

4. In 2020, the situation of children in armed conflict was marked by a sustained high number of grave violations. The United Nations verified 26,425 grave violations, of which 23,946 were committed in 2020 and 2,479 were committed earlier but verified only in 2020. Violations affected 19,379 children (14,097 boys, 4,993 girls, 289 sex unknown) in 21 situations. The highest numbers of violations were the recruitment and use of 8,521 children, followed by the killing (2,674) and maiming (5,748) of 8,422 children and 4,156 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.<sup>3</sup> Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (3,243), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons. Escalation of conflict, armed clashes and disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law had a severe impact on the protection of children. Cross-border spillover of conflicts and intercommunal violence affected children, in particular in the Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions.

5. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Verified cases of abduction and sexual violence against children increased alarmingly by 90 and 70 per cent, respectively. Abduction is often combined with the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence. Continued high levels of denial of humanitarian access to children remained a concern. While attacks on hospitals decreased and attacks on schools increased, both continued to endanger children.

6. Grave violations affect boys and girls differently. Whereas 85 per cent of children recruited and used were boys, 98 per cent of sexual violence was perpetrated against girls. Sexual violence remained vastly underreported, owing to stigmatization,

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<sup>3</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not necessarily give an exhaustive view of the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

cultural norms, absence of services and safety concerns (see also [S/2021/312](#)). Abduction and killing and maiming also affected boys more severely (76 and 70 per cent, respectively).

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

7. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic aggravated existing vulnerabilities of children, including by hampering their access to education, health and social services, limiting child protection activities and shrinking safe spaces. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic exposed these children to grave violations, notably recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence. Attacks on schools and hospitals, and the military use thereof, exacerbated the plight of children.<sup>4</sup> While engagement to end and prevent grave violations was challenging, my Special Representative and country task forces made progress in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. Engagement with parties to conflict resulted in the release of 12,643 children from armed groups and armed forces.

8. As emphasized in Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#) and by the Secretary-General, the protection of children affected by armed conflict is crucial to prevent conflict and sustain peace. National and regional stakeholders should develop and expand initiatives to prevent grave violations. Prioritization of data analysis is crucial for early identification and response to prevent the impact of armed conflict on children, through enhanced information collection and analysis, support for national capacities and inclusion of child protection concerns in mediation.<sup>5</sup> Strategies and mechanisms for information exchange, while respecting individual data protection, in particular on cross-border issues, need to be researched.

9. Access challenges and escalation of conflict challenged child protection capacity and the monitoring and reporting of violations. While child protection actors adapted their working methods, strengthened the use of technology and maximized partnerships, child protection remained overstretched. The response to survivors was hampered, which led to delays in the separation of children from parties to the conflict and in family reunification and reintegration. Child protection advisers mainstream child protection and lead monitoring and prevention efforts. It is therefore important that their number and roles be assessed, protected and increased to adequately protect children.

## **III. Information on grave violations**

### **A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **Afghanistan**

10. The United Nations verified 3,061 grave violations against 2,863 children (2,020 boys, 840 girls, 3 sex unknown).

11. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 196 boys, attributed to the Taliban (172), Afghan National Police (5), Afghan National Army Territorial

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violations against children in situations of armed conflict", April, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict* (New York, 2020).

Force (4), pro-government militia (7) and jointly by the Afghan Local Police and pro-government militias (8), mainly in the northern (124) and north-eastern (51) regions. Children were used in combat, including in attacks with improvised explosive devices, intelligence gathering, staffing checkpoints and subjected to sexual violence. Nine boys were killed and injured in combat.

12. As at 31 December 2020, 165 children (164 boys, 1 girl) were detained on national security-related charges in juvenile rehabilitation centres for periods up to 3.5 years. In addition, 318 children, predominantly of non-Afghan nationality, were in prison with their mothers who were detained for alleged or actual association with the Taliban and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP).

13. The United Nations verified the killing (760) and maiming (1,859) of 2,619 children (1,789 boys, 827 girls, 3 sex unknown) attributed to armed groups (1,098) (including the Taliban (940), unidentified armed groups (115) (including from crossfire between the Taliban and ISIL-KP (3)) and ISIL-KP (43)); and government and pro-government forces (962) (including the Afghan National Army (708), unidentified government and pro-government forces (111), international forces (46), pro-government militia (23), the Afghan National Police (22), unidentified components of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (16), the National Directorate of Security (14), the Afghan National Civil Order Force (10), the Afghan National Border Force (9) and the Afghan Local Police (3)). Remaining casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (512) (including from crossfire between pro-government forces and armed groups (404)) and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (47). Child casualties resulted from ground engagement (1,195), non-suicide improvised explosive devices (517), explosive remnants of war (315) and air strikes (299). Other causes of casualties included targeted killings, suicide and complex attacks,<sup>6</sup> threats, search operations and abduction.

14. Sexual violence affecting 13 children (9 boys, 4 girls) was attributed to the Afghan National Police (6), including 5 boys used as *bacha bazi*,<sup>7</sup> Taliban (3), Afghan National Army (1), Afghan Local Police (1), pro-government militia (1) and Afghan National Army Territorial Force (1).

15. A total of 152 attacks on schools (62), hospitals (90) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified. Armed groups were responsible for 110 attacks, attributed to the Taliban (101), ISIL-KP (3) and unidentified armed groups (6). A total of 30 attacks were attributed to government and pro-government forces, including the Afghan National Army (16), Afghan National Border Force (1), pro-government militia (2), international forces (1) and unidentified government and pro-government forces (10). In addition, 12 attacks were attributed to unidentified perpetrators in crossfire between armed groups and government and pro-government forces.

16. The military use of schools (5) and hospitals (2) by elements of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (2), pro-government militias (2), the Taliban (1), the Afghan National Army (1) and the Afghan National Police (1) was verified.

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<sup>6</sup> A deliberate and coordinated attack that includes all of the three following elements: a suicide device, more than one attacker and more than one type of device, as defined in the annual report of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

<sup>7</sup> *Bacha bazi* is a harmful practice whereby boys are used by men for entertainment. The boys are made to dance at parties and are often dressed in female clothes and subjected to sexual violence, as reported by UNAMA and OHCHR in their annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

17. The abduction of 55 children (46 boys, 9 girls) by the Taliban (54) and a pro-government militia (1) was verified. Of those, 42 children were released, 4 were killed, 1 remained with the pro-government militia and the whereabouts of 8 children remain unknown.

18. A total of 26 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (24), Afghan National Police (1) and government forces (1) were verified.

*Developments and concerns*

19. I commend the Government for the continued progress in implementing the 2011 action plan and the 2014 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, including through the launch of the child protection policy by the Ministry of the Interior in November 2020, which includes provisions on the recruitment and use of children, *bacha bazi*, and the screening of children in Afghan National Police recruitment centres, with 187 child applicants prevented from enrolling in 2020. I call upon the Government to sustain the gains made in the implementation of the action plan since 2011 and to continue to prioritize the implementation of the road map, notably in terms of legal and policy reforms related to children detained on national security-related charges for actual or alleged association with armed groups and whose age assessment must be accelerated and subject to standard operating procedures, and in addressing reintegration policy gaps by adopting a referral system for the reintegration of children who have been separated from parties to conflict, released from detention and/or rejected from recruitment centres, as they remain at risk of recruitment and use. I also urge the Government to prioritize accountability for perpetrators and assistance for survivors and their families, and I urge the parliament to adopt the Child Rights Protection Law.

20. I continue to be concerned by the high number of children killed and maimed by all parties, as well as by landmines and explosive remnants of war, and at the high number of attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge the Government and the international community to invest in mine clearance and education. I am seriously concerned over the continuing increase in casualties caused by air strikes carried out by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and urge the Government to strengthen and implement protocols to prevent child casualties. I note the reduction in aerial operations by the international forces that has resulted, inter alia, in a sharp decrease in the number of child casualties attributed to these forces. I request my Special Representative to engage proactively on the implementation of measures taken by the Government to mitigate grave violations and to support the development of an action plan between the Afghan National Army and the United Nations on the killing and maiming of children.

21. I condemn all grave violations committed by parties to the conflict and am particularly concerned about the increase in the recruitment and use and the abduction of children by the Taliban. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I urge the Taliban to cease violations and engage with the United Nations to sign an action plan to end and prevent violations against children.

22. I welcome efforts to achieve a lasting political settlement to the conflict in Afghanistan and urge the Government and the Taliban to include child protection concerns in these negotiations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations, Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, *Practical Guidance for Mediators*.

### Central African Republic

23. The United Nations verified 899 grave violations against 731 children (440 boys, 291 girls) which occurred during the reporting period. In additionally, 201 grave violations against 201 children (130 boys, 71 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

24. A total of 584 children (400 boys, 184 girls) were verified as recruited and used by ex-Séléka factions (412), including Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (374), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (19), Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (15), joint UPC/MPC (2) and Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC) (2); Mouvement des libérateurs centrafricains pour la justice (MLCJ) (46); Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (45); anti-balaka (42); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (31); internal security forces (4); joint Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (3); and unidentified perpetrators (1). Children were used as combatants (111) and in support roles (464) and subjected to sexual violence (9). In addition, the recruitment and use of 190 children (124 boys, 66 girls) by anti-balaka in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

25. Four boys were arrested by the internal security forces for alleged association with armed groups; two were released. The United Nations advocated the release of the remaining 2 boys, as well as 10 children arrested in previous years. Four boys arrested in previous years were released in 2020.

26. The United Nations verified the killing (21) and maiming of (21) of 42 children (23 boys, 19 girls), mostly from gunshots. Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (20) (including from crossfire between anti-balaka and UPC (2) and between the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and UPC (1) and explosive remnants of war (5)), ex-Séléka factions (9) (FPRC (8), UPC (1)), anti-balaka (7), 3R (5) and Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC) (1). In addition, the killing (5) and maiming (3) of 8 children (6 boys, 2 girls) in previous years by UPC (4) and unidentified perpetrators during crossfire (4) (between anti-balaka and FPRC (2) and between traders and the PK-5 group "YOU" (2)) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

27. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 82 girls were verified and attributed to ex-Séléka factions (27) (FPRC (12), unidentified ex-Séléka, MPC and UPC (4 each), Séléka Rénovée (2) and joint FPRC/MPC (1)), 3R (14), unidentified perpetrators (15), anti-balaka (13), LRA (7), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (4) and internal security forces (2). Perpetrators were arrested in two cases (1 each from the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and internal security forces). In addition, sexual violence against three girls in 2019 by anti-balaka, unidentified ex-Séléka and 3R (1 each) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

28. A total of 30 attacks on schools (23) and hospitals (7) were verified and attributed to Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (14), unidentified perpetrators (6), ex-Séléka factions (5) (MPC (2) and FPRC, UPC and unidentified ex-Séléka (1 each)), anti-balaka (3) and 3R (2).

29. A total of 11 schools (10) and hospitals (1) were used for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (4), UPC (2), joint FPRC/MPC (1 school/1 hospital) and unidentified ex-Séléka, Révolution et justice-Sayo Branch (RJ-Sayo) and unidentified perpetrators (1 each). As at December 2020, three schools were still in use for military purposes.



30. Some 58 children (33 boys, 25 girls) were abducted by LRA (35), 3R (12), anti-balaka (6), FPRC (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2), including for recruitment purposes (29), sexual violence (10) and ransom (5).

31. The United Nations verified 103 incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (46), anti-balaka (21), ex-Séléka factions (20) (joint FPRC/MPC (8), FPRC (6), UPC (3), unidentified ex-Séléka (2) and MPC (1)), CPC (11) and 3R (5).

#### *Developments and concerns*

32. I welcome the appointment of a Minister Counsellor to the President on child protection and the promulgation of the Child Protection Code criminalizing child recruitment and use, and I encourage the Government to prevent the recruitment and use of children into armed and security forces. I welcome the conviction of 110 perpetrators of violations against children and urge the authorities to continue to pursue accountability for violations against children. I call upon the Government to submit its initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and I continue to urge the adoption of the protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian protection actors.

33. I welcome the release of 497 children following United Nations engagement with armed groups, including 255 children from FPRC. In addition, 190 self-demobilized children from anti-balaka were identified. The United Nations initiated dialogue with an LRA splinter group.

34. I am alarmed at the elevated numbers of grave violations, including the sharp increase in recruitment and use, sexual violence, abduction and attacks on schools, including by parties that have signed action plans with the United Nations. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all grave violations and to release children from their ranks.

35. I am concerned over the impact of electoral violence, leading to an increase in incidents of sexual violence and recruitment and use, and I call upon the signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to continue to implement it, including its child protection provisions.

#### **Colombia**

36. The United Nations verified 210 grave violations against 184 children (123 boys, 61 girls).

37. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 116 children (77 boys, 39 girls). Perpetrators were dissident groups of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) (66), the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (22), unidentified perpetrators (12), the Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (9) and Los Caparrapos (7). According to the Government, 144 children (105 boys, 39 girls) were separated from armed groups and entered the protection programme of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute.

38. A total of 69 children (48 boys, 21 girls) were killed (48) and maimed (21) by unidentified perpetrators (36), dissident FARC-EP groups (18), AGC (7), the Colombian armed forces (4), Los Caparrapos (3) and ELN (1). Children were killed and maimed by gunshots (49), landmines (12) and improvised explosive devices (8).

39. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affected nine children (2 boys, 7 girls). Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4), the Colombian armed

forces (3) and dissident FARC-EP groups (2). The perpetrators were arrested in the three cases attributed to the Colombian armed forces, and investigations are ongoing.

40. Six attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (2) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4) and AGC and ELN (1 each).

41. One school was used for military purposes by a dissident FARC-EP group in March.

42. Two children (1 boy, 1 girl) were abducted by dissident FARC-EP groups, including one for recruitment. Their whereabouts are unknown.

43. Eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to dissident FARC-EP groups (3), AGC and unidentified armed groups (2 each) and ELN (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

44. In July, the Government approved a national action plan to implement the 2019 policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children and launched the programme “Súmate por mí” to prevent child recruitment and use by armed groups. I encourage the Government to allocate adequate financial and human resources for their implementation, in particular in vulnerable areas, including in indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities.

45. I welcome advances in accountability, including through Case No. 07 of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, concerning the recruitment and use of children, and I also welcome that the Truth Commission is addressing the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children.

46. I am concerned about the continuing recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular by FARC-EP dissident groups and ELN, and by the increase in killing and maiming of children. I urge all armed groups to immediately release all children and to adopt and implement commitments to end and prevent all grave violations. I encourage the Government to continue its demining and mine risk education activities. As of February 2021, the crime of sexual violence against children is imprescriptible in Colombia. I urge the authorities to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual violence by the armed and security forces and to strengthen prevention and response for survivors.

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

47. The United Nations verified 3,470 grave violations against 2,912 children (2,113 boys, 799 girls). In addition, 1,786 grave violations against 1,294 children (787 boys, 507 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

48. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 788 children (687 boys, 101 girls), all of whom were recruited, used and separated in 2020. Perpetrators were Mai-Mai Mazembe (209), Nyatura (109), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaises (101), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (66), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (62), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (34), Raia Mutomboki (34), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (29) and other armed groups (143). One boy was recruited by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to spy on Mai-Mai elements. The incidents occurred in North Kivu (544), South Kivu (117), Ituri (65) and Tanganyika (62). Fifty girls were subjected to sexual violence, and 240 children were used as combatants and 456 in support roles. In addition, the recruitment and use of 1,164 children (747 boys, 417 girls) by armed groups (1,162) (including Kamuina Nsapu (1,047) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (30)) and the armed forces (2) were verified at a later date.

49. In addition, 1,313 children (1,135 boys, 178 girls) were recruited in previous years and used, until their separation in 2020, by 36 armed groups: Mai-Mai Mazembe (296), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (187), Nyatura (185), Kamuina Nsapu (126), NDC-Rénové (93), Raia Mutomboki (67) and other armed groups (357). Two boys were used by the armed forces as servants for one year. The incidents occurred in North Kivu (764), Tanganyika (188), the greater Kasai region (177), South Kivu (119) and Ituri (65). A total of 592 children were used as combatants. Some children escaped and others were released following United Nations advocacy or through demobilization processes.

50. The United Nations verified the detention of 85 children (72 boys, 13 girls), by the armed forces (80) and the Congolese National Police (5) for alleged association with armed groups. Most (76) were released upon advocacy by the United Nations following detention periods of up to three years.

51. The United Nations verified the killing (220) and maiming (143) of 363 children (217 boys, 146 girls), mostly attributed to armed groups (294): CODECO (140), NDC-Rénové (27), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (26), Nyatura (23), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (16), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (14) and other armed groups (48). Government forces were responsible for 59 child casualties (armed forces (43) and the national police (16)), while another 10 casualties resulted from landmines and explosive remnants of war. The main causes were ethnically motivated raids on villages (146); crossfire between armed groups and the armed forces (25); and armed group clashes (23). A spike in casualties occurred during ethnic violence in Ituri and of armed groups fighting in North Kivu, with 83 per cent of all casualties verified in these two provinces. In addition, the killing (18) and maiming (32) of 50 children (34 boys, 16 girls) mainly by armed groups (46), including CODECO (15), Nyaturya (8) and Bana Mura (6), and by the armed forces (4) were verified at a later date.

52. The United Nations verified that 396 girls and 2 boys were subjected to sexual violence by armed groups (261) (Nyatura (50), NDC-Rénové (40), CODECO (31), Mai-Mai Mazembe (20), other groups (120)) and by government forces (137) (armed forces (92), national police (41), Agence nationale de renseignements (4)). Violations occurred in North Kivu (192), the greater Kasai region (58), Ituri (50) and other provinces (98) and involved rape (245), gang rape (77), forced marriage (46) and sexual slavery (23). Of the government elements, 45 suspects were arrested and 4 were convicted. Two armed group members were also arrested. In addition, sexual violence against 170 children (2 boys, 168 girls) by armed groups (148), including Kamuina Nsapu (67), Mai-Mai Mazembe (18) and Nyatura (7), and by State actors (22), namely the armed forces (12), the national police (9) and the Agence nationale de renseignements (1) was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

53. The United Nations verified 145 attacks on schools (101) and hospitals (44) and on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals in Ituri (83), North Kivu (33), South Kivu (15) and other provinces (14), mostly attributed to armed groups (128): CODECO (66), NDC-Rénové (14), Twigwaneho (14), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (10) and other groups (24). Seventeen attacks were attributed to the armed forces. CODECO deliberately destroyed 53 schools during attacks in Ituri. In addition, 28 attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (6) by Twigwaneho (26), Bana Mura (1) and the armed forces (1) were verified at a later date.

54. Five schools were used by the armed forces in North Kivu (4) and Tanganyika (1) for up to four months for military operations and subsequently vacated.

55. There were 460 children (307 boys, 153 girls) abducted by Mai-Mai Mazembe (106), Nyatura (53), ADF (48), CODECO (42), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (38), NDC-Rénové (31) and other groups (135). Seven girls were abducted by government forces (armed forces (4), national police (2), Agence nationale de renseignements

(1)). Children were abducted for purposes of recruitment (273), sexual violence (88) and ransom (4) and for unknown reasons (95). Most abductions occurred in North Kivu (270), Ituri (94) and South Kivu (42). Separately, 52 children abducted in 2017 by the Bana Mura in Kasai province were returned to their families following United Nations advocacy. In addition, the abduction of 374 children (296 boys, 78 girls) by armed groups (370), including Mai-Mai Mazembe (71), Nyatura (55), Bana Mura (52) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (48), and by State forces, namely the armed forces (3) and the national police (1), were verified at a later date.

56. Three incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to the armed forces, Mai-Mai Yakotumba and Mai-Mai Mazembe (1 each).

#### *Developments and concerns*

57. The armed forces continued to screen new recruits, separating 53 children before enrolment. I commend the Government for its continuing efforts to sustainably prevent child recruitment and use by its forces. I call upon the Government to durably address sexual violence against children, by implementing the 2012 action plan and prioritizing access to services for survivors.

58. I welcome the conviction of the former leader of Nduma défense du Congo, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, for war crimes, including child recruitment and use. The conviction of 17 soldiers of the armed forces and 11 police officers for the rape of children and the trials of suspected child recruiters are positive developments. I commend the Government for its efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable and urge them to continue to do so.

59. The signature of seven new commitments by commanders to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations, following United Nations engagement, is encouraging. As a result of similar commitments, 838 children were released in 2020. I encourage remaining armed groups to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

60. The separation of 2,101 children is a positive development. I urge the Government to facilitate access of child protection actors to demobilization sites to separate children. I call upon the Government to approve, fund and implement a national community-based disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. I appeal to the donor community to support the reintegration of children formerly associated with parties to conflict.

61. Despite a noted decrease, I am gravely concerned by the persistent prevalence of violations, particularly the recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence against children, and the increased attacks on schools. I call upon all parties to conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children.

62. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2020/1030](#)).

#### **Iraq**

63. The United Nations verified 85 grave violations against 82 children (62 boys, 19 girls, 1 sex unknown) that occurred during the reporting period. In addition, 32 grave violations against 22 children (8 boys, 14 girls) that occurred in the previous reporting period were verified at a later date.

64. The recruitment and use of one boy by the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) was verified. The boy was recruited in 2018, used, and killed in a military operation in May 2020. In addition, the recruitment and use of a boy by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2015 was verified at a later date.

65. As at 31 December, 1,114 children (1,071 boys, 43 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily ISIL.

66. A total of 79 children (61 boys, 17 girls, 1 sex unknown) were killed (24) and maimed (55) by ISIL (36), Operation Claw<sup>9</sup> (2), Companions of the Cave<sup>10</sup> (1) and unidentified perpetrators (40). Some 65 incidents took place in areas previously under ISIL control, and 25 casualties were caused by indirect attacks or crossfire, 17 by improvised explosive devices and 17 by explosive remnants of war. In addition, the killing (4) and maiming (2) of six children (3 boys, 3 girls) that took place in 2016 and 2017 in Mosul (Ninawa) was verified at a later date and attributed to ISIL (3) and the international counter-ISIL coalition (3).

67. Incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence against nine girls by ISIL that took place in 2014 were verified at a later date.

68. The United Nations verified an Operation Claw air strike in Sulaymaniyah Governorate that hit a health centre. A total of 27 instances of military use of schools by the Iraqi police (22), the Peshmerga (1) and the Iraqi Army (4) were verified.

69. The United Nations verified the abduction of three children (1 boy, 2 girls) by ISIL. In addition, the abduction of 16 children (5 boys, 11 girls) attributed to ISIL that occurred between 2014 and 2016 was verified at a later date.

70. One incident of denial of humanitarian access was verified in 2020, claimed by the Guardians of Blood.

#### *Developments and concerns*

71. I welcome the decrease in cases of recruitment and use of children attributed to PMF and the ongoing engagement between the Government and the United Nations to develop an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children by PMF. I urge the Government to speedily agree to and sign the action plan. I encourage the Interministerial Committee on Monitoring and Reporting on Grave Child Rights Violations to resume consultations with the United Nations.

72. I remain deeply concerned at the ongoing killing and maiming of children by landmines and explosive remnants of war. I urge the Government to implement international legal instruments on landmines and explosive remnants of war and to promote mine clearance and mine risk education, including prior to any movement by internally displaced persons back to contaminated areas.

73. I remain concerned about the situation of children detained on national security-related charges, including for their alleged association with armed groups, and recall that children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. The detention of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, with respect for due process. The United Nations is committed to supporting the Government in the reintegration of children actually or allegedly associated with parties to conflict. I welcome the reintegration of 355 children (259 boys, 96 girls) through United Nations-supported programmes, in coordination with the Government, and urge the Government to develop and implement a national reintegration programme for children affected by armed conflict.

74. I commend the Government for its efforts to release 194 children (95 girls) allegedly affiliated with ISIL and to facilitate their return to their countries of origin.

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<sup>9</sup> Launched by Turkey in northern Iraq in May 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ashab al-Kahf, an armed group.

I call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of their children, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, with respect for family unity and the best interests of the children, and in accordance with international law.

### **Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>11</sup>**

75. The United Nations verified 1,031 grave violations against 340 Palestinian and 3 Israeli children (327 boys, 13 girls) in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel. In addition, 96 grave violations against 96 children (92 boys, 4 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at later date.

76. The United Nations verified the recruitment of two Palestinian boys by Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades in Gaza.

77. The United Nations verified the detention of 361 Palestinian children for alleged security offences by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (361, including 283 in East Jerusalem). Eighty-seven children reported ill-treatment and breaches of due process by Israeli forces while in detention, with 83 per cent reporting physical violence.

78. Twelve children (11 Palestinian boys, 1 Israeli boy) were killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (9), in Gaza (2) and in Israel (1) by Israeli forces (8), Palestinian security forces (1), Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades (1), unidentified perpetrator (1) and explosive remnants of war (1). Of the eight Palestinian children killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, seven were killed by Israeli forces by live ammunition (6) and physical assault during arrest (1), during law enforcement operations (3), demonstrations and confrontations involving stone throwing (2) and Molotov cocktails (1), and a shooting attack against Israeli forces (1). The child killed by Palestinian security forces was shot with live ammunition in a law enforcement operation. One Israeli boy was killed in the occupied West Bank while being pursued by Israeli police after allegedly throwing stones at Palestinians.

79. A total of 326 children (324 Palestinian children, 2 Israeli children; 313 boys, 13 girls) were maimed<sup>12</sup> in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (304), and in Gaza (22) by Israeli forces (294), Israeli settlers (20), Palestinian armed groups (2) and unidentified Palestinian perpetrators (2) and explosive remnants of war (8). The main causes of maiming of children by Israeli forces were tear gas inhalation (170), rubber-coated metal bullets and sponge-tipped bullets (70) and live ammunition (34). Eight children were maimed by Israeli forces during demonstrations at the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence. In Gaza, six Palestinian children were maimed during air strikes by Israeli forces on Gaza, and two Palestinian boys were maimed by a rocket fired by a Palestinian armed group landing near their home. Separately, the maiming of another 96 children (92 boys, 4 girls) by Israeli forces that occurred during demonstrations in Gaza in 2018 and 2019 was verified at a later date. Two Israeli children were maimed in stone-throwing incidents attributed to Palestinian perpetrators.

80. The United Nations verified 30 attacks on schools (11) and hospitals (19), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to Israeli forces (26) and Israeli settlers (4) in Gaza (4) and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (26). Incidents involved air strikes (4), settler attacks (1), attacks on medical personnel (18) and threats against teachers or students (7). The United Nations verified one incident of a school being used for military purposes in

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<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

<sup>12</sup> Any action that causes a serious, permanent, disabling injury, scarring or mutilation to a child.

Gaza by unidentified perpetrators. Separately, 94 other interferences with health (5) or education (89) by Israeli forces (90), affecting the education of more than 6,900 Palestinian children, and Fatah's Tanzim (4) were verified in the occupied West Bank. Most verified interferences involved Israeli force closures or denial of teachers' and students' access through checkpoints (39), Israeli forces firing tear gas or other weapons in and around schools (22), or threats of demolition (9). Self-identified members of Fatah's Tanzim dismissed students and teachers from four schools owing to demonstrations.

81. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces (661) was verified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. Two incidents occurred in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through the delay and/or prevention by the Israeli forces of medical care being provided to fatally injured children. The suspension of coordination between the authorities of the State of Palestine and Israel in response to the plans by Israel to annex parts of the occupied West Bank continued to pose additional obstacles to children in need of medical treatment in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel. Some 28 per cent of permit applications to Israeli authorities for children to exit through the Erez crossing to access specialized medical treatment outside Gaza were delayed and 3 per cent were denied, affecting 659 children (397 boys, 262 girls). Three Palestinian children died while waiting for permission to access medical care outside Gaza.

#### *Developments and concerns*

82. I welcome the collaboration extended by the Israeli and Palestinian parties to my Special Representative following my request in 2019 to further examine the cases of maiming and injuries caused by Israeli forces and of the recruitment and use of children by armed groups (see [A/73/907-S/2019/509](#)), reiterated in June 2020 (see [A/74/845-S/2020/525](#)). I take note of the findings resulting from these consultations, which I have shared with the authorities of Israel and the State of Palestine. I welcome that both authorities reported that corrective measures had been taken and existing protection frameworks had been strengthened and that both expressed commitment to continuing to engage to better protect children. I note that investigations by Israeli authorities are ongoing and call for these investigations to follow international standards. My Special Representative will continue to engage with all parties to protect children, and I encourage the Israeli and Palestinian authorities to reinforce their dialogue with the United Nations at the country level, in particular in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

83. While I note a decrease in grave violations in 2020, I remain deeply concerned by the number of children killed and maimed, including through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and I urge Israel to continue to investigate each case where live ammunition was used, as required by procedure, and urge the authorities to pursue accountability for violations against children.

84. I urge the Israeli authorities to review and strengthen measures to prevent any excessive use of force, to ensure that force be used only when necessary and to minimize the effects of its forces' operations on children and ensure accountability in all cases involving the killing and maiming of children. I further call upon Israel to better protect schools as places of learning. Taking note of the decrease in detentions, I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and end the administrative detention of children, prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention, and halt any attempted recruitment of detained children as informants. Of concern are continued allegations of attempts to recruit detained Palestinian children as informants.

85. I am also concerned by the two incidents of children recruited by al-Qassam Brigades. I call upon al-Qassam Brigades to cease the recruitment and use of children and to abide by its domestic and international legal obligations. I urge all Palestinian armed groups to protect children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence or by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes.

86. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

### **Lebanon**

87. The United Nations verified 16 grave violations against 16 children (14 boys, 2 girls).

88. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of nine children (8 boys, 1 girl) by Jund Ansar Allah<sup>13</sup> (3), unidentified perpetrators (2), Fath al-Islam (2) and ISIL (2). Three children were used as combatants.

89. Children continued to be arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges, including allegations of terrorism, with the verified detention of two boys. As at December 2020, an additional three boys were detained.

90. Seven children (6 boys, 1 girl) were killed (6) and maimed (1) by unidentified perpetrators.

#### *Developments and concerns*

91. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

92. I reiterate my call upon armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment and use of children.

93. I am concerned about the continued detention of children for alleged association with armed groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, and urge the Government to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims, detain them only as a measure of last resort for the shortest appropriate period of time and refer them to reintegration programmes.

### **Libya**

94. The United Nations verified 166 grave violations against 117 children (94 boys, 23 girls).

95. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of nine boys by the Libyan National Army (LNA) and affiliated forces (3), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (3) and Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as the Free Syrian Army (Mu'tasim and Samarqand brigades) (3), which trafficked them from the Syrian Arab Republic to Libya.

96. The United Nations verified the detention of one boy by LNA and affiliated forces, and of 67 children and their mothers, from several nationalities, by the Judicial

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<sup>13</sup> A Palestinian armed group based mainly in the Ein El Hilweh and Mich Mich Palestine refugee camps of Lebanon.



Police for the mothers alleged association with ISIL, in Judaydah prison in Tripoli. As at December, 12 children had been repatriated to their countries of origin.

97. The verified killing (31) and maiming (65) of 96 children (79 boys, 17 girls) was attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (71), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (8) and unidentified perpetrators (17), and caused by shelling (50), air strikes (20) or explosive remnants of war (26).

98. Five verified cases of sexual violence (3 boys, 2 girls) were attributed to forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (4) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

99. A total of 48 verified attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (26) were attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (16), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (1) and unidentified perpetrators (31), including crossfire between LNA-affiliated groups and forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (8).

100. The verified abduction of seven children (3 boys, 4 girls) was attributed to LNA and affiliated forces (Ninth Brigade, also known as Al-Kaniyat) (3), forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (3) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

101. One verified denial of humanitarian access was attributed to forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord.

#### *Developments and concerns*

102. I welcome the efforts of the Government to mitigate the effect of landmines and explosive remnants of war, and I call upon Libya to become a party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (Protocol V). I call upon the Government to enforce laws on weapons and ammunition and to reinforce the implementation of the ceasefire agreement with emphasis on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children.

103. I am concerned about the prevalence of killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law. I call upon parties to cease the recruitment and use of children and their trafficking across borders from the Syrian Arab Republic to Libya. I am concerned over the risk of sexual violence against children.

104. I welcome the initial efforts by the Government to facilitate the return of women and children allegedly associated with ISIL in Libya and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of these children, in line with international law principles, including the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child.

105. I urge the Government to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent violations against children, and to ensure that child protection provisions are included in ceasefire and peace processes. I reiterate my concern about the abuse of refugee and migrant children, including through trafficking in persons, the deprivation of liberty, torture and sexual violence. I call upon the Government to take immediate action to end child detention and to pursue alternatives to detention and facilitate United Nations and other humanitarian agencies access to detention centres. The denial of humanitarian access to children, including those in detention, is deeply concerning.

## Mali

106. The United Nations verified 809 grave violations against 535 children (394 boys, 135 girls, 6 sex unknown) which occurred during the reporting period. In addition, 204 grave violations against 183 children (145 boys, 38 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

107. Some 284 children (221 boys, 63 girls) were recruited and used by the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (141), including Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (70), Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (45) and Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (26); Platform (70), including Ganda Lassal Izo (31), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (15), Ganda Koy (15) and Mouvement pour le Salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (9); Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (19), Front de libération du Macina (FLM) (17), unidentified perpetrators (13), Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) (1) and the Malian armed forces (23). Most children were recruited in the Kidal (112) and Gao (74) regions. Children were used in combat roles (120) and support roles and were subjected to sexual violence. In addition, the recruitment and use of 170 children (137 boys, 33 girls) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date. Perpetrators were Platform (84) (GATIA (38), Ganda Koy (18) and other Platform members (28)), CMA (44) (MNLA (31) and other CMA members (13)) and other armed groups (42).

108. Eleven boys were arrested by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (10) and Operation Barkhane (1)<sup>14</sup> for alleged association with armed groups. They were released after periods ranging from 1 to 21 days, except for one boy held by the national authorities for five months. Of the 17 children held in government detention since 2019, 15 remained detained as at December 2020.

109. A total of 173 children (115 boys, 52 girls, 6 sex unknown) were killed (87) and maimed (86), mostly in the Mopti region (134), as a result of attacks on villages, crossfire, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. The perpetrators were unidentified (116), Fulani armed elements (19), Dogon armed elements (8), Dozo traditional hunters (7), Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (6), Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (5), joint JNIM/Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (2), joint Dozo traditional hunters/FLM (1) and ISGS (1). Seven child casualties were attributed to FDSM and the maiming of a boy to Operation Barkhane. In addition, the killing (5) and maiming (2) of seven children by unidentified perpetrators (6) and DNA (1) in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

110. Sexual violence affected 12 girls, attributed to unidentified perpetrators (10) and the Malian armed forces (2). In addition, sexual violence against 24 girls by GATIA (10), MNLA (9) the Malian armed forces (3) and MSA (2) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

111. A total of 61 attacks on schools (36) and hospitals (25) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (57) and to JNIM, ISGS, DNA and the Malian armed forces (1 each). In addition, one attack on medical personnel by unidentified perpetrators in 2019 was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

112. Four schools were used for military purposes by unidentified perpetrators (3) and Dozo traditional hunters (1) in the Mopti region.

113. A total of 80 children (48 boys, 32 girls) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (63), DNA (6), Dogon armed elements (5), Dozo traditional hunters (4)

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<sup>14</sup> The status of the victim was misrepresented at the moment of arrest.

and Fulani armed elements and Malian Defence and Security Forces (1 each) for sexual violence (8), retaliation (3) and unknown purposes (65). Four children were killed. The abduction of two boys by Dozo traditional hunters (1) and FLM (1) which occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

114. The United Nations verified 199 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by unidentified perpetrators, mostly in the Mopti (60), Gao (39) and Ménaka (35) regions.

#### *Developments and concerns*

115. I welcome the Government's issuance of orders to military commanders prohibiting the use of children under 15 and curbing the presence of children around military barracks. I note the release in 2020 of 23 children recruited and used by the Malian armed forces. I call upon the Government to take measures to end and prevent sexual violence against children, to continue reinforcing systems to prevent child recruitment and use by armed forces, and to swiftly finalize the revision of the Child Protection Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those aged 15 to 17, as well as to release children detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups.

116. I welcome advances in the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, including on a draft law on the protection of education from attacks, the swift adoption and implementation of which I encourage.

117. I am alarmed by the elevated numbers of grave violations against children, particularly recruitment and use, killing and maiming, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denials of humanitarian access. I urge all parties to immediately prevent and put an end to violations and call upon armed groups to respect the protocol on the release and transfer of children associated with parties signed in 2013. I am gravely concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children by CMA and Platform. I call upon CMA to continue implementing its 2017 action plan, and I call upon Platform to adopt and swiftly implement an action plan addressing child recruitment and use.

118. I reiterate my recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Mali (S/2020/1105).

#### **Myanmar**

119. The United Nations verified 1,039 grave violations against 1,012 children (920 boys, 88 girls, 4 sex unknown). In addition, two grave violations against two girls which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

120. The recruitment and use of 790 children (778 boys, 12 girls), mainly in Rakhine (698) and Kachin (49) States, was attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi (726), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (62) and the Arakan Army (AA) (2). Of those attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi, 7 children were recruited and released in 2020, 22 children were recruited between 2010 and 2019 and were still being used in 2020, 697 children were used in Rakhine (689) and Shan (1) States, including as guides or porters, for camp maintenance or agricultural work, or in unsafe mine clearance. With regard to cases attributed to armed groups, 36 children (27 boys, 9 girls) were released by KIA, including 26 children following engagement between KIA and the United Nations.

121. The detention of 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) for up to 10 months by the Tatmadaw Kyi, for alleged association with AA was verified in Rakhine State. Subsequently, the children were released.

122. The killing (56) and maiming (160) of 216 children (138 boys, 74 girls, 4 sex unknown) was verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (152), including from crossfire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and armed groups (20), Tatmadaw Kyi (62), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (1) and KIA (1). Child casualties occurred in Rakhine (155), Chin (29), Shan (24), Kayin (5) and Kachin (3) States. Most resulted from landmines and explosive remnants of war (74), shelling (62), air strikes (33) and crossfire (23).

123. The rape of one girl by SSA in Shan State was verified. In addition, the rape of two girls by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) (1) and the Tatmadaw Kyi (1) that occurred in previous years was verified by the United Nations.

124. The United Nations verified 11 attacks on schools (10) and hospitals (1) attributed to the Tatmadaw Kyi (6) and unidentified perpetrators (5), including resulting from crossfire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and AA (2) in Rakhine (9) and Chin (2) States.

125. The United Nations verified the military use of 30 schools and 1 hospital by the Tatmadaw Kyi in Rakhine (30) and Shan (1) States. Facilities were vacated after one day to a month.

126. The abduction of 17 children (16 boys, 1 girl) by the Tatmadaw Kyi (10), Shan State Army (SSA) (3), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) (2), AA (1) and KIA (1) in Rakhine (13), Shan (3) and Kachin (1) States was verified. Children abducted by the Tatmadaw Kyi were used, including as human shields (7) and guides (2). All children were released, except one child whose whereabouts remain unknown.

127. Humanitarian access in Rakhine and Shan States deteriorated, despite an informal ceasefire between the Tatmadaw Kyi and AA in Rakhine State in November and December. Movement restrictions in areas affected by the Tatmadaw Kyi-AA conflict in seven townships prevented over 100,000 people from accessing assistance. Continued onerous and unpredictable travel authorization requirements continued, particularly in Kachin, northern Shan and Rakhine States.

#### *Developments and concerns*

128. I note the ratification by the Government of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138) in June 2020 and the establishment of a national complaint mechanism to eliminate forced labour, prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in February 2020. I call upon all parties to respect international standards on impartiality, victim protection and the best interests of the child in the implementation of these standards.

129. I commend the November 2020 signature of a joint action plan between the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army and the United Nations to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the first action plan with an armed group in Myanmar. I am encouraged by the engagement between KIA and the United Nations on recruitment and use resulting in the release of 26 children. I encourage other armed groups to continue to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

130. I condemn all grave violations committed against children by all parties to conflict, and reiterate my call for the accountability of perpetrators.

131. I call upon the Tatmadaw Kyi to continue implementing the joint action plan on non-recruitment of children signed in 2012. I am gravely concerned and alarmed by the continued use of children by the Tatmadaw Kyi, predominantly in Rakhine State. I am disappointed at the failure of the Tatmadaw Kyi to immediately cease the use of children and again urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to cease this practice and to comply with the Joint Action Plan by swiftly implementing its road map, in line with the Child

Rights Law. While I note the issuance of four military directives on the use of children and the development of a road map by the Tatmadaw Kyi and the United Nations to end and prevent the use of children, I am concerned that these directives have not led to a significant decrease in the use of children during 2020. I urge the release of all children within the framework of the Joint Action Plan, and I welcome the release of 32 children and young men by the Tatmadaw Kyi in 2020. I urge the immediate clearance of 156 pending cases of suspected minors.

132. I am gravely concerned by the increase in the killing and maiming of children, including by landmines, explosive remnants of war and shelling, and the continuous attacks on schools and their use for military purposes. I reiterate my call to the Tatmadaw Kyi to sign a joint action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. I call upon Myanmar to become a party to the Ottawa Convention and to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

133. I am worried by persistent restrictions to humanitarian access and call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to United Nations and child protection actors.

134. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Myanmar (S/2020/1243), pending a review of the situation in 2021 owing to the brutal violence taking place in Myanmar since February 2021.

### **Somalia**

135. The United Nations verified 4,714 grave violations against 3,810 children (3,038 boys, 772 girls).

136. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,716 children (1,655 boys, 61 girls) by Al-Shabaab (1,407); government security forces, including the Somali Police Force (101), the Somali National Army (62) and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (5); regional forces, including Jubaland forces (36), Galmudug forces (31), Puntland forces (21), Jubaland police (3), Puntland police (2) and Galmudug police (1); and clan militia (47). Children were used in support roles (255) or in combat (165).

137. A total of 212 children (211 boys, 1 girl) were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (127), the Somali National Army (40), Jubaland forces (27), Puntland forces (8), Galmudug forces (1), Jubaland police (4), Galmudug police (3) and Puntland police (2). Some 128 children were released, whereas 83 remained in detention and 1 child is not accounted for.

138. The killing (206) and maiming (881) of 1,087 children (825 boys, 262 girls) was attributed to Al-Shabaab (329), government security forces (including the Somali National Army (70), the Somali Police Force (56) and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (1)) and regional forces (including Puntland forces (28), Jubaland forces (14), Galmudug forces (1), Puntland police (24), Jubaland police (1), Galmudug police (1), and Southwest forces (8)). Violations were also attributed to clan militia (90), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) (8), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (455) (including from air strikes (4)). The four main causes of child casualties were crossfire between armed forces and groups (318), gunshots (183), improvised explosive devices (173) and physical assault (119). The majority of casualties occurred in Banaadir/Mogadishu (236), Shabelle Hoose (171) and Juba Hoose (155).

139. Some 406 children (6 boys, 400 girls) were raped and were victims of other forms of sexual violence by government security forces, including the Somali National Army (21) and the Somali Police Force (19), and regional forces, including Jubaland forces (8), Puntland forces (4), Jubaland police (2) and Puntland police (2).

Al-Shabaab (60), clan militia (55) and unidentified armed elements (235) were responsible for the remaining incidents. The violations included rape (272), attempted rape (59), forced marriage (44), sexual harassment (20) and sexual assault (11).

140. The United Nations verified 58 attacks on schools (53) and hospitals (5), attributed to Al-Shabaab (55), the Somali Police Force (1), and clan militia (2).

141. A total of 1,430 children (1,348 boys, 82 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (1,413), clan militia (9), unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Westland armed group (1). Children were abducted for recruitment and use (868), alleged association with armed forces (174) and non-compliance with Al-Shabaab-imposed codes (93). Some 136 children were released 52 escaped and 42 were rescued, whereas 1,168 remained held, 6 were killed and 26 are unaccounted for.

142. The United Nations verified 17 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by Al-Shabaab (12), government security forces, including the Somali National Army (2) and the Somali Police Force (1), clan militia (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

143. I reiterate my call upon the Government to expedite the implementation of the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and of the 2019 road map, including at the federal member states level. While I recognize the steps taken by the Government in implementing the action plans, I am concerned at the increase in violations attributed to the Somali Police Force and the federal member states forces and especially urge that implementation be expedited, including at the federal member states level.

144. I call upon the Government to provide more information on the integration of Ahl al Sunna wal-Jama'a into the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces to enable the United Nations to conduct a screening.

145. I am seriously concerned at the staggering numbers of grave violations by all parties to conflict, in particular the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children. I am concerned at the rising levels of sexual violence against children, in particular the cases attributed to the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces. I urge the Government to immediately cease this violation and request my Special Representative and the United Nations country task force to engage to secure a rapid development, signature and implementation of an action plan to that effect. I call upon all parties to immediately cease all violations and abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

146. I reiterate my call to the Government to treat children formerly associated with armed groups according to the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), endorsed by Somalia, and to apply the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups to child protection actors, endorsed in 2014.

147. I urge the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to fast-track the endorsement of the child rights bill and to ensure that any sexual violence legislation is in line with human rights commitments and meets regional and international standards. In this regard, I call for the immediate adoption of the 2018 sexual offences bill and urge the endorsement by the Cabinet of the juvenile justice bill and the age verification guidelines.

148. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2020/174](#)).

## South Sudan

149. The United Nations verified 165 grave violations against 154 children (125 boys, 28 girls, 1 sex unknown). In addition, 11 grave violations against children that occurred in 2019 were verified at a later date.

150. A total of 62 children (61 boys, 1 girl) were recruited and used by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) (55), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces (6), and the South Sudan National Police Service (1). Violations occurred in Central Equatoria (31), Unity (17), Western Equatoria (9), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (2), Jonglei, Lakes and Warrap (1 each) states. Children were used as combatants, bodyguards and servants.

151. The killing (22) and maiming (41) of 63 children (53 boys, 9 girls, 1 sex unknown) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (54), including from explosive remnants of war (47); crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and armed Misseriya cattle keepers (5) and between SPLA-IO and forces loyal to General Ochan Puot (2); the National Salvation Front (NAS) (6); and SPLA-IO (3). In addition, the maiming of 11 boys by explosive remnants of war in December 2019 was verified at a later date.

152. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 17 girls were attributed to SPLA-IO (10), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (4), NAS (2) and forces loyal to General Ochan (1). Four girls were also abducted, and one girl was also recruited and used.

153. Four attacks on hospitals were verified and attributed to NAS (2) and SPLA-IO (2). Incidents included the looting of facilities. In addition, the military use of 10 schools and 1 hospital by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (10) and SPLA-IO (1) was verified.

154. A total of 17 children (11 boys, 6 girls) were abducted by NAS (10), SPLA-IO (5) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2), including 4 girls who were abducted and subjected to sexual violence. Thirteen children were released or escaped, and four children are missing.

155. Two incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

### *Developments and concerns*

156. I welcome the signature on 7 February 2020 of the Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations against Children by parties to the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and the establishment of national and state-level committees. I reiterate my call for the implementation of the Action Plan and call upon the Government to budget for its implementation.

157. I note the decrease in grave violations and the cooperation of parties to conflict with the United Nations, including joint efforts with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission resulting in the release of 44 children in 2020. I call upon the Commission to engage with NAS to ensure the demobilization and reintegration of associated children, and I underline the need for child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and demining processes and encourage international support in this regard.

158. I remain concerned that parties, including government security forces, continue to perpetrate grave violations against children. I call upon the Government and other parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and

international human rights law. I reiterate my concern over escalating intercommunal violence and am concerned over the increase in violations by NAS. I urge all parties to immediately release children recruited or abducted. I encourage the international community to support gender-sensitive and survivor-centred reintegration and assistance programmes, including for survivors of sexual violence.

159. I urge the Government to remedy the prevalent impunity for grave violations and to hold perpetrators accountable. I encourage the Government to endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers and to submit its initial report on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

160. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan ([S/2020/1205](#)).

## **Sudan**

### *Darfur*

161. The United Nations verified 292 grave violations against 274 children (143 boys, 131 girls). In addition, 24 violations against 19 children (14 boys, 5 girls) in December 2019 were verified at a later date.

162. Thirteen boys were verified as recruited and used by the Sudan Liberation Movement-Transitional Council (SLM-TC) (12) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) (1).

163. Seven children (6 boys, 1 girl) were detained for alleged association with armed groups by the Sudanese Armed Forces and later released.

164. The killing (53) and maiming (120) of 173 children (116 boys, 57 girls) was attributed to government security forces (35) (including the Rapid Support Forces (20), the Sudanese Armed Forces (13) and the Sudan Police Force (2)); the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) (33) (including SLA-AW splinter groups (32); and unidentified perpetrators (105). Five children were killed (1) and maimed (4) during crossfire in fighting between SLA-AW splinter groups in Jebel Marra and intercommunal violence in West Darfur. In addition, the killing (7) and maiming (9) of 16 children (14 boys, 2 girls) by the Rapid Support Forces was verified at a later date.

165. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against 57 girls were attributed to government security forces (15) (including the Sudanese Armed Forces (12), the Rapid Support Forces (2) and the Sudan Police Force (1)); SLA-AW (15); and unidentified perpetrators (27). In addition, the rape of and sexual violence against three girls in December 2019, attributed to unidentified perpetrators, were verified at a later date.

166. The United Nations verified 13 attacks on schools (6) and hospitals (7), attributed to the Central Reserve Police (1); SLA-AW (1); and unidentified perpetrators (11). In addition, five attacks on schools by the Rapid Support Forces in December 2019 were verified at a later date.

167. The military use of four schools and two hospitals by the Sudanese Armed Forces (4), the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Central Reserve Police (1) was verified. Except for one school, all facilities continued to be used as at December 2020. The military use of three schools by government security forces (including the Sudanese Armed Forces (2) and SPF (1)), previously verified, continued in 2020.

168. A total of 31 children (14 boys, 17 girls) were abducted by government security forces (12) (including the Rapid Support Forces (9) and the Sudanese Armed Forces



(3)); SLA-AW (11); and unidentified perpetrators (8). Children were abducted for sexual purposes, recruitment or ransom.

169. Five incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (4) and Military Intelligence (1).

*South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei*

170. The United Nations verified 25 grave violations against 19 children (15 boys, 4 girls).

171. The killing (13) and maiming (4) of 17 children (14 boys, 3 girls) was attributed to the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2), unidentified perpetrators (15), explosive remnants of war (8), stray bullets (1) and intercommunal violence between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya tribes (6).

172. Six attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (2) attributed to unidentified perpetrators were verified, as was the military use of one school by the Rapid Support Forces.

173. The verified abduction of two children (1 boy, 1 girl) was attributed to Misseriya tribe gunmen.

*Developments and concerns*

174. I welcome the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement on 3 October 2020 and the improvement of humanitarian access in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, while noting that access restrictions hindered monitoring and reporting by the United Nations. I take note of the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians, adopted in 2020.

175. I am concerned about the continuing grave violations, in particular the prevalence of the killing and maiming of children by government security forces and armed groups, and the recruitment drives by signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent all grave violations against children and to release all children from their ranks and hand them over to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development in coordination with the United Nations. I further call upon the Government to refrain from any excessive use of force against children, cease the military use of schools and strengthen accountability for perpetrators of grave violations.

176. I call upon the Government to end all grave violations and to engage with the United Nations on a national prevention plan to prevent all grave violations and sustain the gains of the action plan on ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children. I encourage the Government to continue to make use of the National Council for Child Welfare and the Technical Committee for the Protection of Children from Violations. I further call upon SLA-AW, including its factions, to engage with the United Nations to sign an action plan, and upon JEM, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Malik Agar factions to recommit to their existing action plans with the United Nations through road maps for implementation. I further urge the transitional Government and armed groups to agree upon handover protocols for children associated with them.

177. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Sudan ([S/2020/614](#)).

**Syrian Arab Republic**

178. The United Nations verified 2,388 grave violations against 2,250 children (1,618 boys, 419 girls, 213 sex unknown). In addition, 51 grave violations against 51 children (39 boys, 10 girls, 2 sex unknown) that occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

179. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 813 children (777 boys, 36 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (390); Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) (170); the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (119) under the umbrella of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); pro-government militia (42); Ahrar al-Sham (31), Nur al-Din al-Zanki (3) and Army of Islam (Jaysh al-Islam) (3), all nominally operating under the umbrella of the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) since October 2019; the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) (30); the Internal Security Forces (13); Hurras al-Din (6); ISIL (4); and Syrian government forces (2). Cases were verified mainly in Idlib (477) and Aleppo (119). Of those, 99 per cent (805) were used in combat. In addition, the recruitment and use of 24 children (20 boys, 4 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (7), Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (6), YPG/YPJ (8), ISIL, pro-government militia and the Kurdish Revolutionary Youth (1 each) were verified at a later date.

180. The deprivation of liberty of 870 children (642 boys, 2 girls, 226 sex unknown) was verified and attributed to SDF (777), the Internal Security Forces (91) and the Syrian government forces (2) in Hasakah (868), Damascus (1) and Dayr al-Zawr (1). In addition, over 64,000 women and children with suspected family ties to ISIL and from an estimated 60 countries of origin continued to be held in the Hawl and Rawj camps in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic at the end of 2020.

181. The United Nations verified the killing (512) and maiming (699) of 1,211 children (765 boys, 233 girls, 213 sex unknown) attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (568) (including government and pro-government air forces (465)); SDF (37); Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (26); ISIL (22); joint operations of Syrian armed opposition groups and Turkish armed forces (10); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (7); and unidentified perpetrators (541). Casualties resulted mainly from air strikes (472); explosive remnants of war (288); improvised explosive device attacks (231); and shelling (139). Most occurred in Idlib (496) and Aleppo (359). The first quarter of 2020 witnessed a spike in child casualties in the north-west. As of March 2020, attacks using explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices became the primary cause of child casualties. In addition, the killing (6) and maiming (12) of 18 children (15 boys, 3 girls) by pro-government air forces (11) and unidentified perpetrators (7) were verified at a later date.

182. Seven children (2 boys; 5 girls) were subjected to sexual violence by ISIL (4) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (3). In addition, sexual violence committed by ISIL affecting one girl was verified at a later date.

183. The United Nations verified 90 attacks on schools (61) and hospitals (29), including on protected personnel, attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (77), including government and pro-government air forces (61), unidentified perpetrators (7), SDF (4), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1) and ISIL (1). Most attacks occurred in Idlib and were conducted by air strikes (62) and shelling (17).

184. The military use of 30 schools and 4 medical facilities was verified and attributed to SDF (15), Syrian armed opposition groups (10), Syrian government forces (6) and Turkish armed forces (3).<sup>15</sup> In addition, the military use of five schools by YPG/YPJ was verified at a later date.

185. The United Nations verified the abduction of 219 children (74 boys, 145 girls) by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (211), ISIL (4), YPG and YPJ (2), Syrian government forces (1) and Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (1). Only 10 children

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<sup>15</sup> My Special Representative was informed by the Government of Turkey that it had repaired and made 426 schools operational in the Ra's al-Ayn and Tall Abyad area, which provided education for approximately 45,000 students.

were released or escaped. In addition, the abduction of eight children (6 boys, 2 girls) by YPG/YPJ (6), ISIL (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified at a later date.

186. There were 48 denials of humanitarian access verified and attributed to Syrian government and pro-government forces (9), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (9), joint operations of Syrian armed opposition groups and Turkish armed forces (8), the self-administration in the northern and eastern parts of the country (4), Syrian armed opposition groups formerly known as FSA (4); SDF (2); and unidentified perpetrators (12). Incidents included attacks (24), interference (14) and attacks on or disruption of water facilities (10).

#### *Developments and concerns*

187. I note the dialogue between the Government and the United Nations on humanitarian and child protection issues, including on access to education and education curricula in areas outside of government control, and the situation of foreign and Iraqi women and children in the Hawl and Rawj camps. I note the vacating of 11 schools by the Government. I call upon the Government to engage with the United Nations and with my Special Representative to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict, including through the signature of a joint action plan to prevent violations for which the Government is listed.

188. I note the progress in the implementation of the June 2019 action plan signed by SDF that resulted in the disengagement of 150 children from SDF ranks and the screening out of 908 children. SDF established an age assessment committee. A child protection committee and a "child protection office" were created to resolve complaints regarding incidents of recruitment. In December 2020, SDF and the United Nations agreed to a road map to accelerate implementation of the action plan. The former issued a military order to prohibit military use of schools and vacated 18 schools.

189. I note that SNA issued a statement prohibiting recruitment under the age of 18 by its forces, including accountability measures. I encourage armed groups, including those operating under the SNA umbrella, to engage with the United Nations to adopt action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

190. I am appalled by the persistent high levels of all violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic by all parties to the conflict, particularly the continued high numbers of recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, and related gaps in accountability. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

191. I remain alarmed by the deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with parties to conflict. I welcome the access to them provided to child protection actors by SDF and call upon other parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to also facilitate United Nations access to children deprived of liberty. I reiterate my call to treat them primarily as victims, and that deprivation of liberty should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time possible and should be in line with international juvenile justice standards.

192. I remain seriously concerned by the humanitarian situation of women and children in the Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children currently in these camps, including those with suspected family ties to ISIL, consistent with the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for family unity and the best interest of the child, and in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, adopted in 2020.

193. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (S/2021/398).

### **Yemen**

194. The United Nations verified 4,418 grave violations against 1,287 children (944 boys, 343 girls). In addition, 63 grave violations against 54 children (43 boys, 11 girls) which occurred in previous years were verified at a later date.

195. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 163 children (134 boys, 29 girls) by Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (115), the Yemen Armed Forces (34), the Security Belt Forces (10) and unidentified perpetrators (4). Most children (92) were used in combat roles, and a third of these children were victims of other violations during their association with parties to conflict, including killing and maiming. In addition, the recruitment and use of 9 boys by the Houthis (8) and the Yemen Armed Forces (1) in previous years was verified at a later date.

196. The deprivation of liberty of 14 boys for their alleged association with parties, some for up to two years, was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (11), the Houthis (2) and the Security Belt Forces (1).

197. The United Nations verified the killing (269) and maiming (855) of 1,124 children (816 boys, 308 girls) attributed to the Houthis (255), the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (194), the Yemen Armed Forces (121), the Security Belt Forces (49), Islamic State in Yemen (11), Popular Resistance (8), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (2) and unidentified perpetrators (484), including in crossfire, mainly between the Houthis and the Yemen Armed Forces (228) and between other parties (43). The main causes for child casualties were mortar and artillery shelling (339), gunshots and crossfire (305), explosive remnants of war (212) and air strikes (150). Most casualties occurred in Hudaydah (242), Ta'izz (239), Ma'rib (132) and Jawf (129) Governorates. In addition, the killing (14) and maiming (27) of 41 children (32 boys, 9 girls) in previous years was verified at a later date and attributed to the Coalition (20), the Houthis (10) and other perpetrators (11).

198. Sexual violence against seven children (3 boys, 4 girls) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (4), the Yemen Armed Forces (1), the Security Belt Forces (1) and the Salafists (1). In addition, incidents of sexual violence affecting three children (1 boy, 2 girls) that occurred in previous years and attributed to the Houthis were verified at a later date.

199. There were 36 verified attacks on schools (16) and hospitals (20) attributed to the Houthis (24), the Yemen Armed Forces (7), Popular Resistance (2), the Coalition (1), the Security Belt Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, one attack on a school by the Houthis that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date.

200. The military use of 34 schools and 1 hospital was verified and attributed to the Houthis (30) and the Yemen Armed Forces (5).

201. A total of 55 children (53 boys, 2 girls) were abducted by the Yemen Armed Forces (27), the Houthis (22), the Hadhrami Elite Forces (3), the Security Belt Forces (2) and the Yemeni Islah party (1), including 12 boys also recruited. The abduction of nine boys that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date and attributed to the Houthis (5) and the Yemen Armed Forces (4).

202. A total of 3,033 incidents of denial of humanitarian access to children were verified and attributed to the Houthis (2,502), the Yemen Armed Forces (479) and unidentified perpetrators (52). Incidents included attacks, restrictions of movements in and out of Yemen, and interference in implementation. Incidents were prevalent in Amanat al-Asimah (1,048), Sa'dah (597), Aden (378) and Hudaydah (371) Governorates.

*Developments and concerns*

203. I welcome the continued commitment of the Government to protecting children, including through the implementation of the 2014 action plan and the 2018 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use, and welcome efforts to apply the presidential directive of 12 February 2020 and the military directive of 3 March 2020, including plans to establish child protection units. I note the significant decrease in the recruitment and use of children in 2020. I encourage the Government's engagement with the United Nations on priority actions, including to restore the interministerial committee, to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children and to implement measures to prevent violations against children, such as reinforced training of its Armed Forces in the prevention of violations, including the recruitment and use of children. I am concerned at the noticeable increase in the killing and maiming of children attributed to government forces and urge the Government to put in place immediate measures to mitigate and reduce this trend.

204. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition with my Special Representative to sustainably end and prevent grave violations against children in Yemen, and I call upon the Coalition to pursue the implementation of the memorandum of understanding signed in March 2019 and the related programme of time-bound activities endorsed in January 2020. I urge the Coalition to continue to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Although their numbers have decreased, I remain concerned by incidents of air strikes resulting in child casualties, including those being investigated by the Coalition. I commend the Coalition for the swift investigation of two of these incidents that took place in 2020 and I urge it to swiftly conclude these investigations and to ensure that investigations are undertaken for all incidents with child casualties. I also urge the Coalition to expedite justice, accountability and redress to child victims and their families. I welcome the training and high-level workshop on child protection conducted in March and May 2021 by the Office of my Special Representative with the Coalition. Continuous monitoring and engagement to ensure the sustained implementation of the programme of time-bound activities and the further decrease in the number of affected children, as verified by the United Nations, is expected and will be closely observed. Any failure in sustained progress in this regard will lead to relisting.

205. I note the continued dialogue between the Houthis and the United Nations to develop an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I urge the Houthis to promptly finalize and sign it. I welcome the handover protocol signed in April 2020, as well as the release of 68 children, and urge the protocol's continued implementation and the release of additional children.

206. I am gravely concerned by the continuing rise in the number of grave violations, including the recruitment of children, particularly by the Houthis; by the persistent high numbers of children killed and maimed; and by the increase in denials of humanitarian access. I am also concerned about the persistent level of grave violations by the Government.

207. I urge all parties to abide by their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I also urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

208. I call upon parties to the conflict to declare a nationwide ceasefire and to continue their engagement with my Special Envoy for Yemen towards the resumption of an inclusive political process to reach a comprehensive negotiated settlement, with a view to ending the conflict and bringing lasting peace to Yemen. I also call upon them to include child protection concerns in the peace process.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Burkina Faso**

209. The United Nations verified 171 grave violations against 83 children (45 boys, 37 girls, 1 sex unknown). Most violations occurred in the East (62), Central North (52) and Sahel (36) regions.

210. Four children, all boys, were recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators in the Sahel region.

211. Ten boys, including nationals of Mali, the Niger and Nigeria (1 each), have been detained in Ouagadougou since 2018 for alleged association with armed groups. One boy associated with an armed group was released and placed in a transit centre.

212. The United Nations verified the killing (24) and maiming (30) of 54 children (27 boys, 26 girls, 1 sex unknown) attributed to JNIM (29), unidentified perpetrators (17), ISGS (5), the Defence and Security Forces (2) and Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (1). Child casualties resulted from gunshots (33), including 22 during crossfire between the Defence and Security Forces and armed groups, and improvised explosive devices (15).

213. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting three girls were verified and attributed to JNIM (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

214. A total of 80 attacks on schools (70) and hospitals (10) were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (30), ISGS (44) and JNIM (6).

215. A total of 22 children (14 boys, 8 girls) were abducted for unknown purposes by unidentified perpetrators (16), JNIM and ISGS (3 each). Twenty of the children were released.

216. The United Nations verified eight incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (4), JNIM (3) and ISGS (1).

### *Developments and concerns*

217. I welcome the development of a handover protocol between the Government and the United Nations for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, and I call upon the Government to endorse and implement it, in cooperation with the United Nations, and to release all children from detention. I also call upon the national authorities to treat these children primarily as victims and to uphold international juvenile justice standards.

218. I am alarmed at the elevated number of attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals by armed groups. I call upon the parties to conflict to end such attacks.

219. I am concerned by the killing and maiming of children. I urge all parties not to target children and to minimize the effect of their operations on children. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations. I urge the Government to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are held accountable.

### **Cameroon**

220. The United Nations verified 285 grave violations against 232 children (118 boys, 92 girls, 22 sex unknown), in the Far North (161), North-West (83) and South-West (41) Regions.

221. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 15 children (10 boys, 5 girls) in the Far North by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (15), including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (3) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (12). Eight boys were used in hostilities and seven children as carriers of improvised explosive devices.

222. A total of 16 boys were detained by security forces on national security-related charges in the South-West (11), North-West (3), West (1) and Far North (1) Regions. The United Nations could not establish their status as at December 2020.

223. A total of 165 children (87 boys, 66 girls, 12 sex unknown) were killed (77) and maimed (88) by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (97), including JAS (37) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (60); unidentified armed groups in the North-West (3); unidentified perpetrators (50) (including 5 during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces); and the Cameroon Armed Forces (15). Casualties occurred in the Far North (97), South-West (35) and North-West (33) Regions and resulted from gunshots, suicide attacks and explosive remnants of war.

224. The attempted rape of one girl by unidentified perpetrators was verified in the North-West Region.

225. A total of 26 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (6) were verified in the North-West (18), South-West (4) and Far North (4) Regions and were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (22) (including 1 that occurred during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces) and to Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (4), including JAS (2) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (2).

226. The United Nations verified 19 incidents of military use of schools attributed to the Cameroon Armed Forces in the Far North. Schools continued to be used as at December 2020.

227. The United Nations verified the abduction of 68 children (32 boys, 26 girls, 10 sex unknown) attributed to Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups (45), including JAS (37) and unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (8), and to unidentified perpetrators (23), occurring in the Far North (45) and North-West (23) Regions. Of those, 32 children were released or escaped, while the status of 36 children is unknown.

228. Ten incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators (8) (including 1 during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces) and to the Cameroon Armed Forces (2).

#### *Developments and concerns*

229. I welcome the creation of a commission of inquiry following the attack in Ngarbuh, North-West Region, on 14 February 2020, which resulted in 14 children killed. In June 2020, the Government announced the arrest of two Cameroon Armed Forces soldiers and a gendarme, whose trial began in December. I also welcome the conviction of members of a vigilante committee for the killing in April 2015 of two children allegedly associated with Boko Haram in the Far-North Region. I call upon the Government to pursue its efforts towards accountability for all grave violations against children.

230. According to the Government, 72 children (34 boys, 38 girls) formerly associated with Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups, were released in 2020 and transited through a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centre in Méri, Far North Region. I welcome this development and call upon the Government to transfer the children to civilian child protection actors and to ensure that children have access to child- and gender-specific disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and that their rights are protected.

231. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups and on national security-related charges. I call upon the Government to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups as victims, in line with international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and to release all detained children. I urge authorities to adopt a protocol for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

232. The brutality of grave violations perpetrated by JAS and other Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups remains a grave concern, notably the use of children, particularly girls, as carriers of improvised explosive devices. I am deeply concerned by the grave violations in the North-West and South-West Regions, including denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools, resulting in the killing and maiming of children. I urge all parties in Cameroon to immediately cease all violations against children.

### **India**

233. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of two boys by unidentified perpetrators. The United Nations is reviewing reports of the use of three boys by Indian security forces for less than 24 hours.

234. Four children were detained by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir for alleged association with armed groups.

235. A total of 39 children (33 boys, 6 girls) were killed (9) and maimed (30) by pellet guns (11) and torture (2) by unidentified perpetrators (13) (including resulting from explosive remnants of war (7), crossfire between unidentified armed groups and Indian security forces (3), crossfire between unidentified armed groups, and grenade attacks (3)), Indian security forces (13), and crossfire and shelling across the line of control (13).

236. The United Nations verified the use of seven schools by Indian security forces for four months. Schools were vacated by the end of 2020.

237. The United Nations did not verify grave violations in the context of the Naxalite insurgency.

### *Developments and concerns*

238. I welcome the positive engagement of the Government with my Special Representative to put in place national preventive and accountability measures for all grave violations.

239. I remain concerned by grave violations against children in Jammu and Kashmir and call upon the Government to take preventive measures to protect children, including by ending the use of pellets against children, ensuring that children are not associated in any way to security forces, and endorsing the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles. I am alarmed at the detention and torture of children and concerned by the military use of schools. I urge the Government to ensure that children are detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and to prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention. I also urge the Government to ensure the implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, to address the use of children for illegal activities and the situation of detained children.



### Lake Chad basin

240. The United Nations verified 762 grave violations against 685 children (382 boys, 260 girls, 43 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in the Far North Region of Cameroon (161), Lac Province in Chad (145), Diffa Region in the Niger (206) and north-east Nigeria (250). Violations were perpetrated primarily by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.<sup>16</sup> Information on violations in the Far North Region of Cameroon and north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections.

241. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 73 children in Chad (40: 35 boys, 5 girls) and the Niger (33: 26 boys, 7 girls) by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.

242. A total of 21 children were detained by the respective Governments in Chad (11) and the Niger (10) for alleged association with armed groups. In Chad, the whereabouts of the detained children remain unknown. In the Niger, three boys were detained for 11 months.

243. The United Nations verified the killing (46) and maiming (13) of 59 children in Chad (28: 2 boys, 26 sex unknown) and the Niger (31: 21 boys, 10 girls) attributed to Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (55). A case of maiming was attributed to the Niger Armed Forces (1). Three casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators during crossfire between unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups and armed forces in the Niger (2) and Chad (1).

244. The United Nations verified rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups, against 23 girls in Chad (6) and the Niger (17). In the Niger, the 17 girls were also abducted.

245. The United Nations verified seven attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (6) in the Niger, all attributed to Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups.

246. A total of 188 children (95 boys, 85 girls, 8 sex unknown) were abducted in Chad (70) and the Niger (118) by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter groups (149), and by unidentified perpetrators in Chad only (39). The whereabouts of most of the children are unknown, although 13 children were rescued by the Chadian National Army (9) or escaped (4).

247. The United Nations verified one incident of denial of humanitarian access in Chad by Boko Haram, including unidentified affiliated or splinter group.

### *Developments and concerns*

248. I welcome the interest and action of the Government of the Niger in relation to the protection of schools, and I note the efforts undertaken by the Government of Chad to train armed forces during 2020 and ask that these efforts be sustained. I call upon the Government of Chad to release all children in detention, in line with the protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors adopted in September 2014, and to provide access for the United Nations to children detained or in centres. I note the adoption in 2017 of the handover protocol in the Niger and call upon the Government to continue implementing it, including through the release of all children in detention. Children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces and groups must be treated primarily as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, in line with international juvenile justice standards.

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<sup>16</sup> Including JAS and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

249. I am gravely concerned at the scale of grave violations perpetrated by Boko Haram, including affiliated or splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin region, notably the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, sexual violence and abduction. I call upon the groups to immediately cease all grave violations and release all children.

### **Nigeria**

250. The United Nations verified 250 grave violations against 208 children (114 boys, 92 girls, 2 sex unknown) in North-East Nigeria. Most violations occurred in Borno State.

251. Seven children (4 boys, 3 girls) were recruited and used by Boko Haram-affiliated or splinter groups, including JAS (4) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (1); and by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (2). Two girls were used in combat. Two boys were used by CJTF at a checkpoint.

252. The Nigerian authorities released 230 children (215 boys, 15 girls) held for periods ranging from one week to several years for alleged association with armed groups. Nine other children (4 boys, 5 girls) remain detained as at December 2020. The United Nations was unable to verify the number of children in detention, as access to detention facilities was denied.

253. The United Nations verified the killing (77) and maiming (47) of 124 children (83 boys, 39 girls, 2 sex unknown) by JAS (46); ISWAP (30); unidentified perpetrators (27), including 9 in crossfire between the Nigerian Security Forces/CJTF joint operations and ISWAP; and the Nigerian Security Forces (21).

254. Ten girls were raped by JAS (9), following their abduction, and by CJTF (1).

255. The United Nations verified 15 attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (10) attributed to JAS (9) and ISWAP (6).

256. A total of 76 children (27 boys, 49 girls) were abducted by JAS (63) and ISWAP (13) for sexual violence (9) and unknown purposes (67). The whereabouts of 73 children are unknown, while 3 children escaped.

257. The United Nations verified 18 incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to ISWAP (11), JAS (5) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

### *Developments and concerns*

258. I commend CJTF efforts to implement the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, including the separation of 2,203 children in previous years, and I note the significant decrease in recruitment. I welcome the Government's constructive role in the implementation of the action plan. I encourage CJTF to ensure the sustainability of the action plan, by creating child protection units in all its formations, instituting accountability mechanisms and enforcing zero tolerance of child recruitment and use. I note the Government's investigation into the sexual violence case attributed to CJTF.

259. While the release of 230 children is encouraging, I am concerned about the children remaining in detention for alleged association with armed groups. I reiterate my call upon Nigerian authorities to treat all children formerly associated with armed groups as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody. I reiterate my call upon the Nigerian authorities to adopt a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, and to immediately provide access for the United Nations to all detained children.

260. I remain seriously concerned about grave violations perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP, in particular the abduction of children, attacks on schools and the killing and

maiming of children. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

### **Pakistan**

261. A total of 39 children (6 boys, 6 girls, 27 sex unknown) were reportedly killed (8) and maimed (31) by unidentified perpetrators in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (16), Pakistan-administered Kashmir (13) and Balochistan (10). Incidents included clashes across the line of control (13) and improvised explosive devices (6).

262. One attack on a school was reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province when unidentified perpetrators placed an improvised explosive device. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative reported 127 incidents by unidentified armed elements.

#### *Developments and concerns*

263. I welcome the engagement of the Government with my Special Representative to develop preventive measures to protect children. I reiterate my call for the Government to better protect children through the endorsement of international commitments such as the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

### **Philippines**

264. The United Nations verified 60 grave violations against 57 children (34 boys, 23 girls). In addition, nine grave violations against nine children (5 boys, 4 girls) that occurred before the reporting period were verified at a later date.

265. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 12 children (5 boys, 7 girls) attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) in Misamis Oriental (4), Davao Oriental (2), Negros Oriental (2), Leyte (2), Bukidnon (1) and Negros Occidental (1) provinces. At least three of the children were used in combat. All children were separated from the group. In addition, the recruitment and use and the subsequent release of one boy by NPA in Samar province was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

266. The United Nations verified the detention of five children (2 boys, 3 girls) by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in Misamis Oriental (3) and Zambales (2) provinces. Three children remained detained as at December 2020.

267. The killing (14) and maiming (31) of 45 children (28 boys, 17 girls) were verified and attributed to the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (14), NPA (6), AFP (9) and unidentified perpetrators (16) as a result of crossfire and shelling between AFP and the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (12), explosive remnants of war (3) and improvised explosive devices (1). Child casualties occurred in Maguindanao (15), Sulu (14), Surigao del Sur (5) and other provinces (11). In addition, the killing (2) and maiming (4) of six children (4 boys, 2 girls) by NPA (5) and AFP (1) that occurred in previous years was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

268. No incidents of sexual violence were verified. Sexual violence affecting two girls attributed to AFP (2) that occurred in 2018 and 2019 was verified at a later date by the United Nations.

269. Two attacks on schools were verified and attributed to NPA (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in Bukidnon (1) and Agusan del Sur (1) provinces.

270. The United Nations verified the abduction of one boy by NPA in Agusan del Sur province.

#### *Developments and concerns*

271. I welcome the adoption by the Government of a protocol on handling children in situations of armed conflict in September 2020. I encourage the Government to

implement the Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act and its Implementing Rules and Regulations. I urge AFP to sign a strategic plan to halt, prevent and respond to grave violations against children in armed conflict, as agreed in November 2019.

272. I am concerned over child casualties in the context of military operations against BIFF, ASG and Islamic State-inspired groups, and over the impact of improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war on children.

273. I call upon the Government to continue its collaboration with the United Nations to address violations against children, to support the implementation of national child protection procedures and guidelines and to facilitate access to conflict-affected areas for child protection actors. I also call upon the Government to implement the Ottawa Convention and become a party to Protocol V to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and to endorse the Paris Principles and the Vancouver Principles.

274. I remain concerned about the attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools, particularly in indigenous communities. I reiterate my call upon the Government to implement the 2019 National policy framework on learners and schools as zones of peace and to better protect children through the Safe Schools Declaration.

275. I urge NPA and other armed groups to immediately end the recruitment and use of children and to release children. I call upon listed armed groups to engage in dialogue with the United Nations with a view to developing action plans to end and prevent child recruitment and use.

276. I call upon the Government and armed groups to integrate the protection of children into peace negotiations.

277. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Philippines ([S/2020/777](#)).

#### **IV. Recommendations**

278. I welcome the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and commitments to protect children in armed conflict. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement protocols for the handover of children to civilian child protection actors. I request my Special Representative, in support of the country task forces, to engage with parties to prevent grave violations, including through engagement with regional organizations, and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in coordination with United Nations system entities.

279. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in line with the 2017 policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in early warning, conflict analysis, peace processes, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. My Special Representative will continue to disseminate and encourage the use of the Practical Guidance for Mediators to Protect Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

280. I call upon Member States to respect the rights of the child, including by becoming parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I welcome the widespread ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention,

1999 (No. 182), and call upon States parties to implement their obligations under the Convention. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

281. I remain concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations committed against children. I call upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and to immediately end and prevent grave violations.

282. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation criminalizing violations of the rules of international law pertaining to the protection of children in armed conflict and encourage Member States to adopt national accountability measures and to cooperate with relevant international accountability mechanisms. I call for the inclusion of accountability provisions in action plans signed between the United Nations and parties listed in the annexes, and for their implementation.

283. I am deeply concerned at the numbers of children held in detention, and I reiterate that this should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized whenever possible and that children should never be detained solely for their or their parents' association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims, to give child protection actors access to them and to continue to search for solutions towards voluntary repatriation and reintegration of these children, including those with alleged links to ISIL being held in camps in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. I am concerned about the impact of counter-terrorism operations on the protection of children.

284. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, as well as access to services by children, in order to provide assistance to children, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that hospitals, schools and their personnel should be protected. Furthermore, I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

285. I am deeply concerned about the adverse impact of the pandemic on conflict-affected children and urge all parties to adhere to my appeal for a global ceasefire. I call upon Member States to take into account child protection concerns in the design of pandemic response measures and in recovery plans.

286. I call upon the donor community to provide urgently needed financial support and technical assistance for sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive, survivor-centred and inclusive reintegration, services and assistance programmes for children, including for survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence. I encourage the international community to provide funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children.

287. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to strengthen child protection capacities and to engage with the United Nations in order to improve analysis, develop strategies to prevent grave violations, and foster partnerships on child protection.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

288. Following an increase in child casualties in Afghanistan, the Afghan National Army has been listed under section B of annex I for the killing and maiming of

children; the listing reflects the measures that it put in place during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, two armed groups have been listed: CODECO has been listed under section A of annex I for the killing and maiming of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals, following a substantial increase of these violations since my previous report, in which they were referred to as the Lendu militia. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale has been listed for the recruitment and use and the abduction of children, following a substantial increase of these violations since my previous report, in which they were referred to as the Twa militia. I urge both parties to eradicate these practices, including by swiftly engaging with the United Nations through action plans.

289. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi, including the integrated border guard forces, has been relisted under section B of annex I for the recruitment and use of children, following its failure to end and prevent the ad hoc use of children in non-combat roles. I urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to take immediate action to address the implementation gaps of the joint action plan to sustainably end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to immediately refrain from the continued use of children. The Tatmadaw Kyi will continue to be listed under section A of annex I for the violations of killing and maiming children and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. I urge the Tatmadaw Kyi to engage in ending these violations, including through the development of a joint action plan to this effect. In Somalia, the violation of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children has been added to the listing of the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces under section B of annex I, following an increase of this violation. I urge the Government of Somalia to implement the provisions relating to rape and other forms of sexual violence contained in the road map signed in 2019 and in the joint communiqué on the prevention of sexual violence signed in 2013. I further urge the federal member states of Somalia to immediately address the patterns of grave violations against children, specifically the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children committed by the Jubaland, Galmudug and Puntland forces and to engage with the United Nations in developing and implementing a prevention plan. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as a result of the continuous increase in cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové armed group, the party has been listed under section A of annex I for this violation.

290. In Afghanistan, the Afghan National Police has been delisted for the violation of recruitment and use of children owing to the sustained progress in the implementation of its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to the significant continued decrease in cases under this violation. This delisting is conditioned on the finalization of all pending action plan activities and the continued decrease in the recruitment and use of children by the Afghan National Police, failure of which will lead to its relisting in my next report. In Nigeria, the CJTF armed group has been delisted following a significant decrease in the recruitment and use of children through the continued implementation of its action plan, which was signed with the United Nations in 2017. I urge the party to complete its obligations under the action plan, as well as to develop and implement prevention measures in coordination with the United Nations and my Special Representative. Such measures should include swiftly implementing the remaining activities of the action plan, namely establishing child protection units in all CJTF formations in Borno State and training the units on children's rights, establishing accountability mechanisms and subjecting CJTF members to disciplinary measures when standing orders that are in line with the action plan are violated and raising awareness among CJTF and community members through outreach activities. A lack of progress in this regard may lead to the relisting of the party for that violation in my next report.

291. There have been technical delistings of some of the listed parties following their dissolution or cessation of activities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Kamuina Nsapu and the Bana Mura militias have been removed, as these armed groups are no longer active. I urge the Government and relevant partners to ensure the swift demobilization of all children formerly associated with these groups, or with their residual elements, and to ensure accountability for those who committed violations against children. Nduma défense du Congo has been removed, as the armed group is no longer active and its former leader, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, was convicted by a Congolese military court in November 2020. The Union des patriotes congolais pour la paix (also known as Mai-Mai Lafontaine) has been removed, as the group ceased to exist. In Mali, the Mouvement pour l'unification et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest has been removed, as the armed group ceased to exist.

292. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or from changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain armed group will be listed in section B of annex I, following the signing of a road map in 2020 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations. Both the Mai-Mai Mazembe and Raia Mutomboki armed groups have been relisted under section A of annex I, the former for the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children and the latter for the recruitment and use and the abduction of children; both groups have been relisted owing to the lack of action in implementing signed commitments and because the parties were the main perpetrators of grave violations against children in 2020.

293. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the name of parties more accurately. In Myanmar, the Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council armed group is now listed as Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council to accurately represent the party's name. In the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North armed group is now listed as two separate entities, namely the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction, to accurately represent the separate chains of command of the two groups. I urge both parties to grant access to the United Nations to the areas under their respective control and to implement the action plan signed in 2016, which is now applicable to both. In the Syrian Arab Republic, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham led by the Nusra Front (Levant Liberation Organization) is now listed as Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham to accurately reflect the name of the armed group in the current context. In Nigeria, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram, is now listed as Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, as it more accurately reflects the structure and organization of the armed group. In Yemen, the Houthis/Ansar Allah (previously the Houthis) is now listed as the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah).

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Haqqani Network<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b,d</sup>
4. Taliban forces and affiliated groups<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Local defence militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
2. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)<sup>b,d</sup>
3. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
4. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
5. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
6. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale<sup>a,e</sup>
7. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
8. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
9. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b,c</sup>
10. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
11. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e,f</sup>



## **Parties in Iraq**

### *Non-State actors*

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

## **Parties in Mali**

### *Non-State actors*

1. Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>
2. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in Myanmar**

### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>b,c</sup>

### *Non-State actors*

United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in Somalia**

### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>

## **Parties in the Sudan**

### *Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction<sup>a,f</sup>
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction<sup>a,f</sup>

## **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

### *State actors*

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

### *Non-State actors*

1. Ahrar al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>
3. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
4. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
5. Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army)<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
2. Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>b,d</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>
4. Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

## **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

### **Parties in Afghanistan**

#### *State actors*

Afghan National Army<sup>b</sup>

### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### *State actors*

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *State actors*

Popular Mobilization Forces<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>

5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *State actors*

Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces<sup>a,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>a</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions [1539 \(2004\)](#) and [1612 \(2005\)](#).

## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

**A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

**Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

**Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

*None*

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Seventy-seventh year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2021, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2021, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors, including access. The report presents trends and patterns of

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in Colombia ([S/2021/1022](#)), the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)), Yemen ([S/2021/761](#)), Afghanistan ([S/2021/662](#)), the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2021/398](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/49/58](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



violations, and engagement with parties responsible for violations that might lead to behavioural change, including promotion of accountability and inclusion of child protection provisions in peace processes. In the report, it is noted that attacks or threats of attacks on community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures. Where measures undertaken by listed parties had a positive impact on children or where ongoing conduct is of concern, this is highlighted. On the basis of enhanced engagement with parties, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and those that have not.

## **II. Situation of children and armed conflict**

### **A. Overview of trends and patterns**

4. In 2021, children in armed conflict suffered a high number of grave violations. The United Nations verified 23,982 grave violations, of which 22,645 were committed in 2021 and 1,337 were committed earlier but verified only in 2021. Violations affected 19,165 children (13,633 boys, 5,242 girls, 290 sex unknown) in 21 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement. The highest numbers of violations were the killing (2,515) and maiming (5,555) of 8,070 children, followed by the recruitment and use of 6,310 children and 3,945 incidents of denial of humanitarian access.<sup>3</sup> Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (2,864), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons.

5. My Special Representative and country task forces made progress in engaging with parties in a number of countries, including Mali, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen to protect children. Engagement with parties to conflict resulted in the release of 12,214 children from armed groups and armed forces.

6. Conflict escalation, the multiplication of armed actors, the use of mines, improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and explosive weapons in populated areas, intensified humanitarian crises, and violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law had a severe impact on the protection of children. Cross-border conflicts and intercommunal violence affected children, in particular in the central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions, while coups

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<sup>3</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not necessarily give an exhaustive view of the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

and takeovers aggravated the situation of children in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Mali, Myanmar and the Sudan.

7. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. The number of cases of abduction increased by over 20 per cent and cases of sexual violence against children continued to increase, by over 20 per cent. The number of attacks on schools and hospitals increased by 5 per cent in a context of school closures, the military use of schools and disregard for children's right to education and health, and the situation was compounded by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Non-State armed groups were responsible for 55 per cent of violations, State forces for 25 per cent, and the remainder of the violations resulted from crossfire, the use of improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and landmines, or were committed by unidentified perpetrators. Over 25 per cent of child casualties resulted from improvised explosive devices, explosive remnants of war and landmines, for a total of 2,257 child casualties.

8. Whereas 70 per cent of children affected by grave violations are boys, the number of violations affecting boys has decreased, while the number of girls who were casualties of killing and maiming, or subjected to abduction and sexual violence, increased, particularly in the Lake Chad basin. Cases of sexual violence continued to be vastly underreported, owing to stigmatization, the fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence of services, impunity, the lack of humanitarian access and safety concerns (S/2022/272). Children with disabilities and displaced children were particularly vulnerable.

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

9. Compared with the proportion of casualties among adults, children were disproportionately affected by explosive remnants of war, the use of improvised explosive devices and mines, with a steady increase in the number of children killed or maimed by such weapons (9 per cent increase compared with the previous report, A/75/873-S/2021/437). Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Myanmar, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the Lake Chad basin (areas affected by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups) are particularly affected by the use and impact of such weapons. Efforts must be prioritized to clear explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and mines, provide child-sensitive risk education, and promote assistance to victims. Similarly, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks using explosive weapons in populated areas have had a severe impact on children, and parties to conflict must avoid the use of explosive weapons in populated areas.

10. The number of attacks on schools continues to rise, including attacks on students and on educational personnel, as well as the military use of schools, depriving children of their right to education and reducing the availability of safe and child-friendly spaces, thus jeopardizing children's future and their access to essential services, as well as making children more vulnerable to other violations. Children are abducted, killed or maimed, and suffer sexual violence, in or on the way to school. Some parties to conflict also use schools as recruitment grounds. In addition, the abduction of girls has increased by 41 per cent. Girls' education has been undermined by targeted attacks on girls' schools and the denial of schooling, particularly in Afghanistan and in the Lake Chad basin region. These attacks further affect girls' already limited access to education in the long term. In Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mali, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic, attacks on schools

were devastating for children. The Security Council, in its resolution 2601 (2021), called for measures to protect schools and mitigate the military use of schools.

11. The pandemic aggravated the existing vulnerabilities of children, including by hampering the fulfilment of their rights, reducing child protection activities and safe spaces. The socioeconomic impact of the pandemic exposed children to grave violations and threatens to undo recent gains in the areas of child protection, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, by exposing children, their families and communities to renewed risks, including: economic insecurity; exploitative and hazardous relationships; negative coping mechanisms; social isolation; and reduced access to services and humanitarian assistance. In some contexts, girls may never be able to go back to school, because they have to earn an income or were forcibly married to support their families. We should continue monitoring and adapting programmatic and advocacy responses towards child protection, with a particular focus on girls.

### **III. Information on grave violations**

#### **A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

##### **Afghanistan**

12. The United Nations verified 2,577 grave violations against 2,430 children (1,579 boys, 798 girls, 53 sex unknown). In addition, 35 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021. Serious safety and security challenges were faced by the country task force for monitoring and reporting on violations against children, following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban on 15 August 2021. Parties to conflict affiliated with the government and pro-government parties ceased to exist. Most of the figures presented herein were verified for the period 1 January to 15 August 2021. Reporting by the monitoring and reporting mechanism was temporarily suspended from that moment until 31 December 2021 owing to the lack of access to monitor and verify violations. Reporting resumed in January 2022.

13. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 58 boys, some as young as 12, by the Taliban (34), pro-government militia (16), the Afghan National Police (7), Afghan National Police jointly with the Afghan National Army (1), in the north-eastern (20), south-eastern (14), northern (13), southern (6) central (2), eastern (2) and western (1) regions. Among these boys, 47 were recruited and used prior to 15 August. Children were used in combat, including in suicide attack squads, and support roles, including to make and transport improvised explosive devices for the Taliban.

14. As at mid-August 2021, 166 boys were detained on national security-related charges in juvenile rehabilitation centres. In addition, 168 children (90 boys, 78 girls) were kept in the Kabul female detention centre with their mothers who were detained for alleged or actual affiliation with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP). After August 2021, the Taliban announced the release of all prisoners from Pul-e-Charkhi prison, juvenile rehabilitation centres and National Directorate of Security detention facilities, but the United Nations confirmed the continued presence of unknown numbers of children detained with adults in prisons and juvenile rehabilitation centres.

15. The United Nations verified the killing (626) and maiming (1,713) of 2,339 children (1,491 boys, 795 girls, 53 sex unknown), attributed to armed groups (1,047) (Taliban (690), unidentified armed groups (260), ISIL-KP (94), crossfire between Taliban and ISIL-KP (1), self-proclaimed Da'esh (1), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (1)); and to government and pro-government forces (698) (Afghan National Defence and



Security Forces (582), joint operations of government and pro-government forces (72), pro-government militia (20), unidentified pro-government forces (15), international forces (9)). The remaining casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (238), crossfire between pro-government forces and armed groups (346) and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (10). Child casualties mainly resulted from ground engagement (912), non-suicide improvised explosive devices (699), explosive remnants of war (261), air strikes (224), targeted killings (79) and suicide attacks (65). Of the total number of casualties, 2,074 casualties occurred before 15 August. In addition, the killing (7) and maiming (10) of 17 children (15 boys, 2 girls) in 2020 by unidentified armed groups (8), pro-government forces (5) and unidentified perpetrators (4) were verified in 2021.

16. Cases of sexual violence perpetrated against 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) by the Afghan National Police (6), Taliban (1) and the Afghan National Army (1) were verified. Six boys were used as *bacha bazi* by the Afghan National Police.<sup>4</sup>

17. The United Nations verified 116 attacks on schools (53) and hospitals (63), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, which were attributed to armed groups (65) (Taliban (46), unidentified armed groups (11), ISIL-KP (8)); to government and pro-government forces (32) (Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (26), pro-government militia (3), unidentified pro-government forces (3)); and to unidentified perpetrators (19), including as a result of crossfire between armed groups and government and pro-government forces (17), a grenade (1) and an improvised explosive device (1). Of the total number of attacks, 111 occurred before 15 August. In addition, one attack on a school in 2020 was verified in 2021.

18. As at mid-August, the military use of 35 schools (26) and hospitals (9) by the Taliban (24), and government and pro-government forces (11) (Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (7), pro-government militias (3), pro-government forces operating jointly (1)) was verified.

19. The abduction of 25 children (23 boys, 2 girls) by the Taliban was verified. Twenty children were subsequently released. In addition, the abduction of 17 boys by the Taliban in 2020 was verified in 2021.

20. The United Nations verified 31 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (16), ISIL-KP (8), unidentified armed groups (6) and a pro-government militia (1). All the incidents occurred before 15 August.

#### *Developments and concerns*

21. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children. I am concerned by the persistent high number of children killed and maimed, including by landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war, and by the high number of attacks on schools and hospitals. I call for the international community to invest in mine clearance and education. I urge the immediate reopening of schools for children in the sixth grade and above, including for all girls.

22. I am further concerned by the impact of the ongoing economic and humanitarian crisis in terms of exacerbating grave violations against children, such as the recruitment and use of children.

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<sup>4</sup> *Bacha bazi* is a harmful practice whereby boys are used by men for entertainment. The boys are made to dance at parties and are often dressed in female clothes and subjected to sexual violence, as reported by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in their annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

23. I urge the Taliban, and other parties, to engage with the United Nations to adopt concrete measures and sign an action plan to end and prevent violations against children, including the recruitment and use of children.

24. I call upon the Taliban to release children from detention and to respect international juvenile justice standards.

25. I urge the Taliban to define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, and to respect the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

### **Central African Republic**

26. The United Nations verified 925 violations against 646 children (344 boys, 302 girls), including 105 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 154 grave violations affecting 151 children (42 boys, 109 girls) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

27. A total of 329 children (262 boys, 67 girls), some as young as 7, were verified as having been recruited and used, by armed groups (293): Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (197) (Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (143), joint operations by anti-balaka and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (37), unidentified CPC (8), anti-balaka (6), 3R (3)); Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (71); and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (25). Some 84 children were used as combatants. A total of 36 children were used by other security personnel (28), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (5), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (2) and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1) for intelligence gathering, at checkpoints and to run errands. Most violations (189) occurred in Haute-Kotto Prefecture. In addition, in 2021 the United Nations verified cases of the recruitment and use of 80 children (39 boys, 41 girls), by FPRC (70), jointly by Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) and FPRC (7), anti-balaka (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1), which occurred in earlier years.

28. Eight boys were detained by national authorities for alleged association with armed groups. Two remain in detention and the United Nations continues to advocate their release.

29. The United Nations verified the killing (57) and maiming (47) of 104 children (68 boys, 36 girls) caused by gunshots and crossfire (78), shrapnel from an exploded drone (11), mutilations (10), explosive ordnance (3), death resulting from rape (1) and glass shrapnel (1). Violations were attributed to government and pro-government forces (47): other security personnel (18), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (12), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (9) and by anti-balaka elements recruited by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (8); to armed groups (32): CPC (31) (3R (22); anti-balaka/3R (4), jointly by anti-balaka and UPC (2), anti-balaka, FPRC and FPRC/MPC (1 each)) and UPC (1); and to unidentified perpetrators (25), including 20 in crossfire between parties. Most violations occurred in Ouaka (36), Nana-Mambéré (12) and Lobaye (11). In addition, the United Nations verified the maiming of three children by unidentified perpetrators (2) and unidentified CPC (1), which occurred prior to 2021.

30. Rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against 211 girls were verified and mostly attributed to armed groups (171): CPC (145) (unidentified CPC (52); FPRC (43), 3R (28), anti-balaka (10), UPC (6), jointly by anti-balaka and 3R (4), MPC (2)); LRA (13); UPC/Guenderou faction (7); and unidentified ex-Séléka (6). Twenty violations were attributed to government and pro-government forces: the

Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (13), other security personnel (6) and special mixed security units (1), unidentified perpetrators (18) and Chadian National Army elements (2). Cases included rape (205) and forced marriage (6). The United Nations verified cases of sexual violence perpetrated against 65 girls by CPC factions (47) (unidentified CPC (22), anti-balaka (13), 3R (5), UPC (3), FPRC and MPC (2 each)); special mixed security units (8); MPC/FPRC (5); UPC/Guenderou faction (2); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2); and unidentified ex-Séléka (1), all of which occurred prior to 2021.

31. A total of 52 attacks on schools (26) and hospitals (26), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to government and pro-government forces (26): other security personnel (15), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (6), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel/internal security forces (3) and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2); to armed groups (21): CPC (21) (unidentified CPC and UPC (7 each), 3R (3), FPRC and anti-balaka (2 each)); and to unidentified perpetrators (5). Incidents involved looting, destruction and threats and attacks against related protected persons. The United Nations verified three attacks on schools (2) and hospitals (1) attributed to anti-balaka/3R, unidentified CPC and unidentified perpetrators, which occurred prior to 2021.

32. A total of 55 schools and 4 hospitals were used for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (23), other security personnel (15), UPC (10), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (5), unidentified CPC (3), 3R (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1). Four schools continued to be used as at December 2021 by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (2), other security personnel (1) and unidentified CPC (1).

33. The United Nations verified the abduction of 111 children (47 boys, 64 girls) by CPC (76) (FPRC (51), 3R (10), anti-balaka (6), unidentified CPC (6), UPC (3)); LRA (24); unidentified perpetrators (5); by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and by other security personnel (2 each); and by UPC/Guenderou faction and by unidentified ex-Séléka (1 each). Most children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence (94). One child was killed, 15 children were released, 89 children escaped and the status of 6 children is unknown. The United Nations verified the abduction of children by anti-balaka (2) and FPRC (1), which occurred in previous years.

34. The United Nations verified 118 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, most of which were attributed to armed groups (70): CPC (66) (unidentified CPC (19), anti-balaka and FPRC (12 each), FPRC/UPC (8), 3R (5), UPC (4), FPRC/MPC and MPC (2 each), anti-balaka/MPC and 3R/MPC (1 each)); UPC/Guenderou faction (3); and unidentified ex-Séléka (1). Responsibility for 19 violations was attributed to government and pro-government forces: other security personnel (7), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (6), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (3), internal security forces (2), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (1), and unidentified perpetrators (29). Most incidents involved robberies, extortion, the destruction of property and assaults on humanitarian personnel.

#### *Developments and concerns*

35. I welcome the development by the Government of interministerial plans to implement the Child Protection Code. I remain concerned by the surge in the number of violations against children and by the recurrent attacks on and the military use of schools and hospitals and by the increased number child casualties caused by the

Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and other security personnel. I call upon the Government to swiftly appoint child protection focal points in the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, issue command directives applicable to all forces in the country, and, in cooperation with the United Nations, end and prevent grave violations by the Armed Forces and other security personnel. I urge the Government to investigate ongoing violations and hold perpetrators accountable. I continue to urge the Government to adopt a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian protection actors.

36. I urge the Government and other signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic to cooperate with the United Nations to develop a national strategy to prevent and eliminate grave violations against children, and I request my Special Representative and the country task force to engage with the Government and signatories of the Agreement in support of this effort.

37. I note that United Nations dialogue with armed groups led to the release of 134 children from FPRC (92) and UPC (42). I am alarmed by the scale of violations attributed to armed groups, particularly CPC, such as the ongoing recruitment and use of children, and a sharp increase in sexual violence, abductions and in the number of attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge FPRC, MPC and UPC, all of which have signed action plans with the United Nations, to comply with their commitments and call upon all parties to adopt concrete measures to cease all grave violations, unconditionally release associated children and respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals.

38. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Central African Republic ([S/2021/882](#)).

### **Colombia**

39. The United Nations verified 231 grave violations against 192 children (136 boys, 56 girls), including 26 children who were victims of multiple violations.

40. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 123 children (98 boys, 25 girls), between the ages of 12 and 17. Perpetrators were the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups (75), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (17), Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia (AGC) (17), unidentified perpetrators (8) and Los Caparrapos (6). Children were used as combatants and in support roles. During their association, 13 children were killed or maimed and three were victims of sexual violence. Most violations occurred in Nariño (16), Chocó and Antioquia (13 each), Norte de Santander and Caquetá (12 each), and Arauca (10).

41. A total of 70 children (45 boys, 25 girls) were killed (31) and maimed (39) by unidentified perpetrators (44), ELN (8), the Colombian armed forces (7), AGC (6) and FARC-EP dissident groups (5) mostly in Cauca (16), Chocó (13), and Antioquia (9). Child casualties resulted from gunshots (31), landmines, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war (30), air strikes (6) and torture and inhuman treatment (3).

42. Rape and other forms of sexual violence affected 11 girls and the cases were attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups (6), unidentified perpetrators (3), ELN (1) and the Colombian armed forces (1). Most violations (7) occurred in Nariño Department.

43. Nine attacks on schools (6), hospitals (3) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified and attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups (5), unidentified perpetrators (2), and ELN and Los Caparrapos (1 each). Incidents

involved the killing and abduction of, and threats against, protected personnel, and damage to facilities.

44. Three schools were used by the Colombian armed forces (2) and AGC (1) in Arauca (2) and Chocó (1) Departments. The Colombian armed forces vacated the schools after a few hours.

45. A total of 16 children (11 boys, 5 girls) were abducted by ELN (7), Los Caparrapos (6) and FARC-EP dissident groups (3), mostly for recruitment purposes. Twelve of the children were released.

46. Two incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups and unidentified perpetrators in Arauca and Norte de Santander.

#### *Developments and concerns*

47. In January, the Government launched a strategy for the local implementation of the policy to prevent the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence against children. The programme, entitled “Súmate por mí” (Join Up for Me), continued in 209 municipalities, aimed at preventing child recruitment and use by armed groups. I commend these initiatives and encourage the Government to allocate adequate resources for their implementation, particularly at the local level and in vulnerable areas. I encourage the Government to continue demining and mine risk education activities. I urge the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and to end the military use of schools. I request my Special Representative and the country task force to further engage with the Government so as to support its protection and prevention efforts.

48. I welcome the fact that 180 children (126 boys, 54 girls) who were separated from armed groups entered the protection programme of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute. I also welcome the fact that the Institute is providing training to the Colombian armed forces on child rights.

49. I am concerned by the continued increase in the number of grave violations against children, notably in the cases of recruitment and use and abduction of children by armed groups, particularly by FARC-EP dissident groups and ELN. I urge armed groups to immediately end violations, unconditionally release children and adopt measures to end grave violations. I reiterate my call upon all parties to take all necessary measures to protect children during operations.

50. I urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence. I commend the Government for investigating and prosecuting perpetrators, including members of the Colombian armed forces, and urge it to continue to do so. I further call upon the Government to ensure that adequate programmes are accessible to all survivors, including child-friendly and safe reporting and response mechanisms.

51. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Colombia ([S/2021/1022](#)).

#### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

52. The United Nations verified 3,546 violations against 2,979 children (2,090 boys, 889 girls). In addition, 790 grave violations against 238 children (162 boys, 76 girls) which occurred prior to 2021 were verified during the reporting period. At least 650 children were victims of multiple violations.

53. The United Nations verified the new recruitment and use of 565 children (487 boys, 78 girls), all of whom were separated in 2021, by Nyatura (120), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (101), Mai-Mai Mazembe (80),

the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (60) and other armed groups (198). Six children were used as spies by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (5) and in hostilities (1). Cases were verified in North Kivu (385), Ituri (105), South Kivu (56), Maniema (13) and Tanganyika (4). Two children were recruited in Burundi and Uganda and trafficked into the Democratic Republic of the Congo for use by the Forces nationales de libération and ADF, respectively. Of the total, 241 children were used in combat and 324 children were used in support roles. In addition, 42 girls were also used for and subjected to sexual violence. Furthermore, the recruitment and use of 128 children (121 boys, 7 girls) by Raia Mutomboki (46), Mai-Mai Mazembe (31), Nyatura (13) and other armed groups (38), which occurred in previous years, were verified in 2021.

54. In addition, 1,298 children (1,168 boys, 130 girls), recruited in previous years, were used until their separation in 2021 by Nyatura (237), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (168), Mai-Mai Mazembe (159), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (118), APCLS (106), Mai-Mai Bilonze Bishambuke (57), Raia Mutomboki (50) and 34 other armed groups (403) in North Kivu (773), South Kivu (231), Tanganyika (229), other provinces (63) and in Rwanda (2). Some 714 children were used in combat and 584 children were used in support roles. Two boys and 54 girls were also used for and subjected to sexual violence.

55. The United Nations verified the detention of 160 children (142 boys, 18 girls) by the armed forces (152) and the Congolese National Police (8); 151 children were released.

56. The United Nations verified the killing (285) and maiming (157) of 442 children (272 boys, 170 girls) mostly by armed groups (353): ADF (101), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (95), Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (25), Nyatura (22), Twigwaneho (19), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (16), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (15), APCLS (13), and other groups (47). Government forces were responsible for 62 child casualties ((armed forces (52); police (10)). The remaining 27 casualties were attributed to unidentified perpetrators, including 25 resulting from explosive remnants of war. Attacks against civilians (289), crossfire (64) and explosive remnants of war (32) were the main causes of child casualties. In addition, the killing (20) and maiming (12) of 32 children (21 boys, 11 girls) by armed groups (31) and the armed forces (1), which occurred in previous years, were verified in 2021.

57. The United Nations verified that 436 children (7 boys, 429 girls) were subjected to sexual violence, mostly by armed groups (336): Nyatura (85), CODECO (72), Mai-Mai Malaika (42), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (33), APCLS (18), ADF (13), Raia Mutomboki (12), Mai-Mai Mazembe (11) and other armed groups (50). Government forces were responsible for 100 violations (Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (82), police (17); National Intelligence Agency (1)). Most of the incidents involved rape (268), gang rape (96) and sexual slavery (47). In addition, cases of sexual violence against 121 children (3 boys, 118 girls) by armed groups (96) and government forces (25) (armed forces (18); police (7)), which occurred in previous years, were verified in 2021.

58. The United Nations verified 112 attacks on schools (69), and hospitals (43) and on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to government forces (40) (armed forces (39); police (1)), CODECO (31), Mai-Mai groups (21), ADF (18) and other armed groups (2). The incidents included destruction (68), looting (37) and attacks against related protected persons (7). In addition, one attack on a hospital by Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale, from a previous year, was verified in 2021.

59. Four schools were used for military purposes by the armed forces.

60. A total of 684 children (416 boys, 268 girls) were abducted by ADF (181), Nyatura (104), APCLS (64), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (55), CODECO (48), other armed groups (217) and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (15). The purposes of the abductions included recruitment and use (460) and sexual violence (94). Abductions occurred in North Kivu (308), Ituri (210), South Kivu (83) and other provinces (77), and in neighbouring countries (6). In addition, the abduction of 508 children (434 boys, 74 girls) by Nyatura (118), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (67) and other groups (323), which occurred in previous years, was verified in 2021.

61. Nine incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to CODECO (3), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (2), and to the armed forces, Mai-Mai Malaika, NDC-Rénové and Twigwaneho (1 each). Incidents included threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, abductions, checkpoints and extortion.

#### *Developments and concerns*

62. I welcome the commitment of the Government to sustain the gains made in preventing child recruitment and use, including through screening mechanisms. I call upon the Government to pursue those efforts and act to prevent cases of use of children by its armed forces.

63. I further call upon the Government to redouble efforts to end and prevent sexual violence against children, including by its forces, which are responsible for a persistently high number of violations. I reiterate my call upon the Government to implement the 2012 action plan and other commitments to address conflict-related sexual violence and prioritize access to services for survivors.

64. I commend the Government for its efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable and urge them to continue to do so, including for cases of child recruitment and use, and for cases of sexual violence.

65. I am troubled by the staggeringly high number of violations against children, particularly those committed by armed groups, and amid rising intercommunal violence, hate speech and attacks on civilians. I am concerned by the increase in the number of violations by government forces, particularly the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, mostly in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces. I urge all parties to cease and prevent violations against children, to protect children during operations and immediately and unconditionally to release children. I call upon the Government to implement the Safe Schools Declaration, which it endorsed in 2016.

66. I call upon the Government to release children detained for alleged association with armed groups and to treat them in line with the 2013 governmental directives and international juvenile justice standards.

67. The signature by six commanders of unilateral commitments to protect children, following United Nations advocacy, and the release of 430 children, are welcomed. I urge groups that have not done so, including ADF, CODECO, and Mai-Mai groups operating in the Hauts Plateaux (South Kivu) to cease violations, immediately and unconditionally release children, and to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations.

68. I welcome the new disarmament, demobilization and reintegration community and stabilization programme and urge the Government to give children special consideration in the implementation thereof. I call upon international partners to support and fund reintegration programmes for children separated from armed groups.

## **Iraq**

69. The United Nations verified 288 grave violations against 167 children (131 boys, 32 girls, 4 sex unknown). In addition, 16 grave violations against 16 children (4 boys, 12 girls), which occurred in previous years, were verified in 2021.

70. No cases of the recruitment and use of children were verified during the reporting period. The recruitment and use of one boy by Da'esh (in 2017) was verified in 2021.

71. As at December 2021, 1,267 children (1,251 boys, 16 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, for up to five years, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily Da'esh.

72. A total of 159 children (127 boys, 28 girls, 4 unknown sex) were killed (72) and maimed (87) by unidentified perpetrators (101), Da'esh (37), Iraqi security forces (12), Operation Claw<sup>5</sup> (6) and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) (3). The majority of incidents occurred in areas previously under the control of Da'esh. Child casualties resulted from explosive remnants of war (127), ground engagement (24), crossfire (1) and air strikes (7). In addition, the killing of two boys in 2017 by unidentified perpetrators was verified in 2021.

73. Rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against 6 girls by Da'esh in 2014 were verified in 2021.

74. Three attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (2) were verified and attributed to Da'esh (2) and Operation Claw (1). A total of 33 instances of the military use of schools by the Iraqi police (25), PMF (4), the Iraqi army (3) and the Peshmerga (1) were verified in Kirkuk (29), Ninawa (3) and in Salah al-Din (1) Governorates.

75. The United Nations verified the abduction of 8 children (4 boys, 4 girls) by Da'esh. In addition, the abduction of 7 children (1 boy, 6 girls) by Da'esh in 2014 was verified in 2021.

76. A total of 118 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to Iraqi security forces (89), PMF (16), the Iraqi police (10), Operation Claw (1), national security services (1) and to unidentified perpetrators (1).

### *Developments and concerns*

77. I welcome the absence of cases of the recruitment and use of children attributed to PMF and the engagement between the Government and the United Nations to prevent grave violations, and the progress made towards the development of an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by PMF. I urge the Government to prioritize the adoption and implementation of the action plan. The prompt signature and implementation of the action plan may make PMF eligible for delisting from the annexes to my report on children and armed conflict upon United Nations verification that the terms of the action plan have been fulfilled, including that the violations mentioned therein have ceased, and that measures are in place to prevent their reoccurrence.

78. I am concerned that explosive remnants of war are the leading cause for rising child casualties. I urge the Government to fully implement international legal instruments on mines and explosive remnants of war. I call upon the Government to continue demining, mine risk education and victim assistance, including prior to any movement by internally displaced persons to contaminated areas.

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<sup>5</sup> Launched by Türkiye in northern Iraq in May 2019.



79. I am troubled by the increase in the number of children detained on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with Da'esh. These children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. Children should only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. I call upon the Government to release these children to child protection actors.

80. I welcome the adoption of the Law on Support to Female Yazidi Survivors. I encourage the Government to address the needs of other minorities, of boys and men who are survivors of Da'esh atrocities and of children born of rape.

81. I commend the Government for the repatriation of 336 Iraqi families, including 858 children, from Hawl camp in the Syrian Arab Republic. I welcome the repatriation of 223 children from Iraq to their countries of origin. I reiterate my call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of children, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, with respect for family unity and the best interests of the child, and in accordance with international law.

82. I encourage the Government to facilitate the reintegration of all children affected by armed conflict, with the support of the United Nations.

83. I reiterate my recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Iraq ([S/2022/46](#)).

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>6</sup>**

84. The United Nations verified 2,934 grave violations against 1,208 Palestinian children and 9 Israeli children (915 boys, 302 girls) in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

85. The United Nations verified the recruitment of one Palestinian boy by the Mujahidin Brigades in Gaza. In addition, the recruitment and use of one boy by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in 2019 was verified in 2021. In Gaza, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Abu Ali Mustafa Brigades and Palestinian Mujahidin Movement Mujahidin Brigades, organized "summer camps" for adults and children as young as 14, exposing them to military content and activities.

86. The United Nations verified the detention of 637 Palestinian children for alleged security offences by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including 557 in East Jerusalem. Among those children, 85 reported ill-treatment and breaches of due process by Israeli forces while in detention, with 75 per cent reporting having experienced physical violence.

87. A total of 88 children (86 Palestinians, 2 Israelis; 64 boys, 24 girls) were killed in Gaza (69), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (17) and in Israel (2), by Israeli forces (78), Palestinian armed groups (8), unidentified perpetrators and explosive remnants of war (2). All 17 children in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were killed by Israeli forces using live ammunition mainly during demonstrations (9), and in relation to alleged or attempted attacks on Israeli civilians or forces (7). In Gaza, 59 children were killed by air strikes and 1 by live ammunition by Israeli forces during the escalation of hostilities in May, 6 by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups, one by Israeli forces during a demonstration at the Israel-Gaza perimeter fence, one by explosive remnants of war and one by unidentified

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<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

perpetrators. The two Israeli children were killed by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups.

88. A total of 1,128 children (1,121 Palestinians, 7 Israelis; 850 boys, 278 girls) were maimed in Gaza (661), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (464) and in Israel (3), by Israeli forces (982), Israeli settlers (28), Palestinian armed groups (46), including Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (18), Palestinian perpetrators (4), and unidentified perpetrators (68), including by explosive remnants of war (10). The main causes of maiming by Israeli forces were shelling and air strikes (539), tear gas inhalation (153), rubber-coated metal bullets (133) and live ammunition (116). Of the children maimed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, 196 were maimed during demonstrations against settlement activities. A total of 43 Palestinian children were maimed by Palestinian armed groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (18), in Gaza, by rockets fired during the escalation in May (18), as a result of the explosion of stored weapons (23) and as a result of accidents involving children who were near to military training exercises (2). The 7 Israeli children were maimed by rockets fired by Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades, striking Israel (3), and by Palestinian perpetrators during stone-throwing incidents in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4).

89. The United Nations verified 134 attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (112), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (61), attributed to Israeli forces (128), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (5) and Palestinian armed groups (1), in Gaza (72), the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (61) and in Israel (1). Incidents involved air strikes (67), attacks on medical personnel (59), the explosion of munitions stored in the vicinity of schools and/or hospitals (5), threats against school personnel (2) and a rocket attack (1). Separately, 156 other interferences with health (54) and education (102) by Israeli forces (152) and Israeli settlers (4) were verified. Most involved Israeli forces firing weapons at health facilities (4), at ambulances and paramedics (45), at or in the vicinity of schools (27) and closures of checkpoints or the denial of teachers' and students' access through checkpoints (45). Of concern, in the context of a subsequent investigation into how to secure a school of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East that had been struck by two Israeli missiles, the existence of a possible tunnel under the school was discovered, for potential use by Palestinian armed groups, with no indication of the existence of any entry or exit points for the tunnel within the premises.

90. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces (1,582) and Palestinian armed groups (1) was verified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in Gaza. Some 38 per cent of permit applications to Israeli authorities for children to exit through the Erez crossing to access specialized medical treatment outside Gaza were delayed or denied, affecting 1,581 applications (933 boys, 648 girls).

#### *Developments and concerns*

91. I welcome the collaboration extended by Israeli and Palestinian parties to my Special Representative.

92. I am alarmed by the increase in grave violations against children, particularly the dramatic rise in killing and maiming, including in the context of the escalation of hostilities in May 2021, despite commitments by Israeli and Palestinian parties to implement corrective measures and strengthen protection frameworks following consultations with my Special Representative ([A/75/873-S/2021/437](#)). I urge the Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian and international human rights law, including by ensuring

that operations are conducted in line with the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and to immediately correct and reinforce existing measures to ensure the protection of children affected by armed conflict. I reiterate my call upon all parties to continue to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations, including at the country level, to end and prevent grave violations against children and to better protect children and respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

93. I am shocked by the number of children killed and maimed by Israeli forces during hostilities, in air strikes on densely populated areas and through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and by the persistent lack of accountability for these violations. I express serious concern regarding the excessive use of force and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to end and prevent any excessive use of force against children. I note the existing procedures, which have been shared with my Special Representative, and I urge Israeli authorities to review and strengthen their procedures to prevent any excessive use of force. I further urge Israel to continue to investigate each case where live ammunition was used, as required by procedure, and to pursue accountability for violations against children. I exhort Israel to better protect schools.

94. I am concerned by the increase in the number of children detained by Israel and by the reports by children of physical violence directed against them during detention. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, to end the administrative detention of children, and to prevent any violence and ill-treatment in detention.

95. I am concerned by the increase in the killing and maiming of children by Palestinian armed groups and by recurrent incidents of recruitment and use of children. I call upon Palestinian armed groups to cease the recruitment and use of children and to abide by their domestic and international legal obligations. I call upon Palestinian armed groups to cease all indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated areas in Gaza towards Israeli civilian population centres. I urge all Palestinian armed groups to protect children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence or by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes.

## **Lebanon**

96. The United Nations verified 55 grave violations against 51 children (45 boys, 6 girls).

97. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 32 boys, between the ages of 11 and 17, by unidentified armed groups (24), Fath al-Islam (3), Hizbullah (2), Jund Ansar Allah (1), Saraya al-Muqawama<sup>7</sup> (1) and Da'esh (1).

98. Children continued to be arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges, with the verified detention of three boys.

99. A total of 19 children (13 boys, 6 girls) were killed (9) and maimed (10) by unidentified perpetrators as a result of armed clashes (12), cluster munitions or explosive remnants of war (7).

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<sup>7</sup> The Lebanese Resistance Brigades, known in Arabic as Saraya al-Muqawama, is a non-denominational paramilitary group affiliated with Hizbullah.

100. The United Nations verified four attacks on schools by unidentified perpetrators in Palestine refugee camps.

*Developments and concerns*

101. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

102. I am concerned about the continued detention of children. I urge the Government to release these children to reintegration actors and treat them primarily as victims. The detention of children should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

103. I am concerned about the increasing recruitment and use of children and call upon armed groups to cease this practice.

104. I am disturbed by continuing armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps and their negative impact on children. I urge the Palestinian National Security Forces to fully apply their Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics in these camps.

**Libya**

105. The United Nations verified 63 grave violations against 52 children (32 boys, 20 girls).

106. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of one boy by forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord, which occurred before March 2021.

107. The United Nations verified the detention of 125 children and their mothers, of several nationalities, for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh, by the Judicial Police, in Judaydah prison (93), by the Deterrent Agency for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism, in Mitiga prison (22), and by the Libyan National Army (LNA) and affiliated forces (10) in Kuwayfayah prison. Eighteen of the children were repatriated to their countries of origin.

108. The verified killing (17) and maiming (21) of 38 children (28 boys, 10 girls) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (28), including in crossfire between the Deterrent Agency for Combating Organized Crime and Terrorism and the Stability Support Apparatus (1), and LNA and affiliated forces (10), and were mostly caused by explosive remnants of war (20) mortar shelling (6) and landmines (6).

109. Sexual violence was verified as having been perpetrated against seven girls by the Abu Issa Brigade and Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade in control of detention facilities of the Department for Combating Illegal Migration.

110. One attack on a school by unidentified perpetrators was verified in Tripoli.

111. The abduction of six children (3 boys, 3 girls) was attributed to forces affiliated with the former Government of National Accord (1) before March 2021, the Internal Security Agency (4) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

112. Ten denials of humanitarian access were attributed to forces affiliated to the Government of National Unity (1) and unidentified perpetrators (9).

*Developments and concerns*

113. I welcome the efforts of the Libyan authorities to strengthen the protection of children, in particular the declaration by the Government of National Unity of

25 November 2021.<sup>8</sup> I welcome the establishment of specialized courts for the prosecution of violence against women and children.

114. I am concerned about the prevalence of killing and maiming of children, in particular by explosive remnants of war. I call upon Libya to become party to international legal instruments on mines and explosive remnants of war. I call upon the Libyan authorities to advance the implementation of the ceasefire agreement with an emphasis on the reintegration of children.

115. I encourage the Libyan authorities to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children actually or allegedly associated with Da'esh and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate their voluntary repatriation and reintegration, in line with the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child and in accordance with international law.

116. I urge the Libyan authorities to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent violations against children, particularly the denial of humanitarian access to children.

117. I am appalled by reports of abuse of refugee and migrant children, including torture and sexual violence. I urge the Libyan authorities to immediately end child detention, pursue alternatives to detention and facilitate access by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to detention centres and disembarkation points.

## **Mali**

118. The United Nations verified 994 grave violations against 648 children (478 boys, 149 girls, 21 sex unknown), including 22 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 42 grave violations affecting 39 boys and 3 girls that occurred in earlier years were verified in 2021.

119. A total of 352 children (288 boys, 64 girls), some as young as 6, were recruited and used by Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (151) (Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (60), Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNL) (57), Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA)-CMA (19) and unidentified CMA (15)); unidentified perpetrators (66); Dozo traditional hunters (48); Platform (47) (Ganda Izo (24), Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) of the Dawsahak (13), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (7), Ganda Koy (2), and MAA-Platform (1)); Front de libération du Macina (FLM) (16); Jama 'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (10); the Malian armed forces (8); Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) of the Chamanamas (3); and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (3). Children were mostly recruited in Kidal (115), Gao (94), Mopti (61), Ménaka (30) and Timbuktu (27) Regions. Children were used in hostilities (39), in support roles and for sexual violence. In addition, in 2021 the United Nations verified earlier cases of the recruitment and use of 42 children (39 boys, 3 girls) by CMA/MNL (22); Platform (15) (Ganda Izo (7), Ganda Koy (5), MSA of the Dawsahak (3)); and Coalition du peuple de l'Azawad (CPA) (5).

120. Seven boys were arrested by national authorities for their alleged association with armed groups. Five boys remain in detention. In accordance with the handover protocol signed in 2013 by the Government of Mali and the United Nations, 10 children captured during military operations were transferred to civilian child protection services.

121. A total of 201 children (132 boys, 56 girls, 13 sex unknown) were killed (73) and maimed (128) by unidentified perpetrators (142), ISGS (40), the Malian armed

<sup>8</sup> Available at [www.genevacall.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Signed-Libya-event-statement\\_EN1.pdf](http://www.genevacall.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Signed-Libya-event-statement_EN1.pdf).

forces (12), Operation Barkhane (2), Ganda Izo (2), FLM (2) and JNIM (1). Most child casualties resulted from gunshot wounds during attacks on villages and improvised explosive devices or explosive remnants of war (40), and most of them occurred in Gao (79) and Mopti (70) Regions.

122. Sexual violence affected 35 girls, in cases attributed to unidentified perpetrators (30), the Malian armed forces (4) and JNIM (1). Violations occurred mostly in Gao (15) and Mopti (10) Regions and involved rape (17), forced marriage (15), sexual assault (2) and attempted rape (1). No perpetrators were arrested.

123. The United Nations verified 153 attacks on schools (120), hospitals (33) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals attributed to unidentified perpetrators (135), JNIM (9), FLM (6), ISGS (2) and Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (1). Incidents involved the abduction of and threats against related protected persons, the destruction and burning of facilities and looting. They occurred mostly in Mopti (60), Ségou (45) and Timbuktu (32) Regions.

124. One school has been used for over two years by Dozo traditional hunters in Mopti Region.

125. Some 94 children (67 boys, 19 girls, 8 sex unknown) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (76), DNA (8), FLM (6), ISGS (3) and MAA (1), including for forced marriage (12), intelligence gathering (9), recruitment and use (6), as a result of accusations of treason (3) and for sexual violence (1). Most incidents occurred in Gao (41) and Mopti (36) Regions. One child was killed, 5 escaped and 44 were released.

126. The United Nations verified 159 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by unidentified perpetrators (155) and JNIM (4), mostly in Mopti (71), Gao (30), Timbuktu (21) and Ségou (14) Regions. Incidents involved violence and threats against humanitarian personnel, including killing, abduction, carjacking and robbery.

#### *Developments and concerns*

127. I welcome the engagement of the transitional Government with the United Nations to establish a framework between the Malian armed forces and the United Nations to address grave violations against children by armed forces and I call for its endorsement and implementation, including by notifying the United Nations of children associated with the Malian armed forces and releasing them. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize the revision of the Child Protection Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those between the ages of 15 and 17, and to work with the United Nations to develop a national prevention strategy on grave violations against children. I request my Special Representative and the country task force to further engage with the transitional Government.

128. I welcome advances in the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and in revising the bill on the protection of education from attacks. I call for its adoption and implementation.

129. I welcome the signature by two Platform factions on 26 August of action plans to end and prevent child recruitment and use. Furthermore, CMA and the United Nations organized two workshops to accelerate the implementation of the 2017 action plan. I remain concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children by CMA and Platform and I call upon these parties to prevent further recruitment and use and implement their action plans with United Nations support.

130. I remain alarmed at the elevated number of grave violations against children, notably the sharp increase in attacks on schools. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations, unconditionally release associated children, protect schools and

hospitals and allow the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors to affected populations.

## Myanmar

131. The United Nations verified 503 grave violations against 462 children (390 boys, 69 girls, 3 sex unknown). In addition, an earlier violation against one child was verified in 2021. The monitoring and reporting mechanism faced serious safety, security and access challenges following the military takeover on 1 February 2021.

132. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 280 children (260 boys, 20 girls), some as young as 12, attributed to the Tatmadaw (222), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (50), Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army — South (RCSS/SSA-South) (6), Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) (1) and the Arakan Army (AA) (1), in Rakhine (203), Kachin (40), Shan (16), Mon (13) Chin (2), Kayah (1), Magway (1), Mandalay (1), Sagaing (1), Taninthayi (1) states and regions and in Yangon (1). A total of 13 children (10 boys, 3 girls) were released by KIA, following advocacy by the United Nations, civil society or their parents.

133. The United Nations verified the detention of 87 children (75 boys, 12 girls) by the police and the Tatmadaw for their alleged association with armed groups. In addition, a boy who had been detained by the Tatmadaw since September 2020 was released in 2021.

134. The United Nations verified the killing (65) and maiming (104) of 169 children (119 boys, 47 girls, 3 sex unknown), which were attributed to the Tatmadaw (75), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) (2), Pyu Saw Htee (1) and KIA (1), as well as unidentified perpetrators (90), including as a result of explosive remnants of war (29), improvised explosive devices (21), landmines (17) and crossfire (16), in Shan (41), Rakhine (23), Chin (22), Sagaing (18), Kachin (16), Magway (14), Kayah (12), Kayin (10), Mon (9) and Taninthayi (4) states and regions. In addition, the maiming of one girl by the Tatmadaw in 2020 was verified in 2021.

135. The United Nations verified the rape of one girl by the Tatmadaw.

136. The United Nations verified 27 attacks on schools (14) and hospitals (13), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to the Tatmadaw (17) and unidentified perpetrators (10), including crossfire between RCSS/SSA-South, Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and SSPP/SSA (1) in Kayin (7), Shan (7), Kayah (6), Kachin (4), Mon (2) and Chin (1) States.

137. The United Nations verified the military use of 53 schools (51) and hospitals (2) by the Tatmadaw (52) and AA (1) in Rakhine (31), Kayah (7), Kayin (6), Chin (6) and Kachin (3) States.

138. The abduction of 24 children (22 boys, 2 girls) by the Tatmadaw (10), AA (5), KIA (4), SSPP/SSA (3) and RCSS/SSA-South (2), in Shan (7), Rakhine (5), Kachin (4), Kayah (4), Chin (2), Mon (1) States and in Taninthayi (1) was verified by the United Nations.

139. Two incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Tatmadaw in Shan State (2) were verified by the United Nations. Administrative impediments, security threats, control and restrictions of passage severely affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance to children. The expansion of armed conflict in new areas and the intensification of clashes in both the north-west and south-east regions increased humanitarian needs.

*Developments and concerns*

140. I note the intention of the Tatmadaw to continue implementing the 2012 joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children, but I am extremely concerned by the continued high number of children used, predominantly in Rakhine. I call upon the Tatmadaw to implement all activities of the joint action plan, in close cooperation with the United Nations, in order to immediately cease the use of children and prevent their recruitment and use.

141. I am gravely concerned by the surge in the number of attacks targeting children, and I strongly urge the Tatmadaw to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I reiterate my call upon the Tatmadaw to sign a joint action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the killing and maiming of children and the perpetration of sexual violence against children.

142. I welcome the implementation of the joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children by the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). I welcome the engagement between KIA and the United Nations, leading to the release of 13 children.

143. I note that the National Unity Government<sup>9</sup> reported the development of guidelines and awareness-raising regarding the prevention of grave violations against children.

144. I strongly condemn the violations against children resulting from the military takeover by the Tatmadaw, including the killing and maiming of children, as well as the attacks on and the use of schools and hospitals. I am alarmed by the spread of clashes in new areas, and by the multiplication of the number of armed groups.

145. I condemn the ongoing grave violations and the increase in abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals by all parties to the conflict, and the increase in the military use of schools and hospitals. I remain concerned by casualties caused by explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines. I call upon all parties and those with influence over parties to end and prevent these violations. I reiterate my call for the accountability of perpetrators.

146. I am concerned by the increase in the number of cases of detention of children, and their being denied due process, as well as cases of torture and mistreatment of children. I call for the implementation of the 2019 Child Rights Law, and I urge the Tatmadaw to immediately release detained children and recall that children should be treated primarily as victims. Children should only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

147. I am concerned by the severe and increased restrictions to humanitarian access and call upon the Tatmadaw, as well as all other parties, to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

**Somalia**

148. The United Nations verified 3,340 grave violations against 2,687 children (2,041 boys, 646 girls), including 604 children who were victims of multiple violations.

149. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,161 children (1,116 boys, 45 girls) by Al-Shabaab (854); government security forces (138) (Somali Police

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<sup>9</sup> National League for Democracy parliamentarians who had won seats in the 2020 elections established the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw, which then formed the National Unity Government opposing the military (A/HRC/49/72, para. 4).



Force (75), Somali National Army (60) and National Intelligence and Security Agency (3)); regional forces (73) (Puntland forces (26), Jubbaland forces (21), Galmudug forces (14), Galmudug police (5), Jubbaland police (2), “Somaliland” forces (2), Hirshabelle police (2) and Puntland police (1)); clan militia (63) and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama‘a (33). Children were used in support roles (176), in combat (69) or for unknown purposes (916).

150. A total of 195 children (192 boys, 3 girls) were detained for their alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (101), the Somali National Army (35), Jubbaland forces (20), Jubbaland police (9), Galmudug police (9), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (7), Puntland forces (6), Puntland police (6) and Galmudug forces (2).

151. The killing (200) and maiming (593) of 793 children (573 boys, 220 girls) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (335); Al-Shabaab (256); government security forces (92) (Somali National Army (54) and Somali Police Force (38)); clan militia (58); regional forces (48) (Puntland police (14), Jubbaland forces (11), Jubbaland police (8), Puntland forces (8), Galmudug forces (4), Galmudug police (1), Hirshabelle police (1) and “Somaliland” police (1)); Da’esh (3); and Westland militia (1). The two main causes of casualties were crossfire between armed forces and groups (263) and explosive devices, including improvised explosive devices, mines and explosive remnants of war (187).

152. Responsibility for the perpetration of sexual violence against 307 children (1 boy, 306 girls) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (205); Al-Shabaab (50), government security forces (26) (Somali National Army (18) and Somali Police Force (8)); clan militia (18); and regional forces (8) (Puntland police (3), Puntland forces (2), Jubbaland police (2) and Galmudug police (1)). Violations included rape (187), attempted rape (66) and forced marriage (42). Eleven cases were resolved traditionally, 13 perpetrators were arrested, while 283 perpetrators remained at large.

153. The United Nations verified 33 attacks on schools (30) and hospitals (3), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, by Al-Shabaab (30), the Somali Police Force (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1). Most incidents (25) involved the abduction of teachers and students.

154. A total of 1,030 children (933 boys, 97 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (1,012), clan militia (5) and unidentified perpetrators (13). Most children were abducted for recruitment and use (532), owing to alleged association with armed forces (104) and as a result of non-compliance with codes imposed by Al-Shabaab (131). Some were released (123) or escaped (35).

155. The United Nations verified 16 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by clan militia (8), Al-Shabaab (5), the Somali National Army (1) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

#### *Developments and concerns*

156. I welcome the Government’s efforts to implement the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and the 2019 road map, including at the federal member state level. The establishment of working groups on children and armed conflict at the federal member state level is a positive development and I recommend expanding these to all states. I urge the Government to strengthen and expedite the implementation of its commitments to combat conflict-related sexual violence

157. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, fast-track the

endorsement of the child rights bill, endorse the juvenile justice bill and age verification guidelines, and adopt the sexual offences bill of 2018. I underline that all legislation pertaining to children and sexual violence should be in line with Somalia's human rights commitments and meet international and regional standards.

158. I am concerned by the continuing high number of children in detention. I urge the Government to immediately release these children and to treat them primarily as victims. Children should only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. I urge the Government to apply the standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of children separated from armed groups to child protection actors, endorsed in 2014.

159. I am concerned about clashes between Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a and security forces in Galmudug and call upon the group to cease child recruitment and use. I reiterate my call upon the Government to provide information on the integration of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a into the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces and enable the United Nations to conduct screening exercises.

160. I am alarmed by the staggering numbers of grave violations committed by all parties to conflict, the majority of which were committed by Al-Shabaab. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

161. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Somalia ([S/2022/397](#)).

### **South Sudan**

162. The United Nations verified 196 grave violations against 183 children (148 boys, 35 girls), including two girls who were victims of multiple violations. Violations occurred in Jonglei (51), Central Equatoria (40), Western Equatoria (35), Lakes (20), Western Bahr el-Ghazal (17), Northern Bahr el-Ghazal (13), Unity (10), Upper Nile (9), and Eastern Equatoria (1) States.

163. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 129 children (124 boys, 5 girls), with 30 per cent of the children recruited under the age of 15, by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces (69), forces loyal to General James Nando (20), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar (SPLA-IO) (14), the South Sudan National Police Service (12), forces loyal to General Moses Lokujo (9), the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) (4) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) (1). Children were used as combatants, bodyguards and cooks.

164. The killing (12) and maiming (25) of 37 children (21 boys, 16 girls) was perpetrated by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (35), including resulting from explosive remnants of war (27) and crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and NAS (2), SPLA-IO and armed youths (3) and forces loyal to General James Nando and armed youths (1).

165. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 9 girls by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2), SPLA-IO (6) and NAS (1). In addition, in 2021, the United Nations verified three girls as survivors of sexual violence perpetrated by SPLA-IO prior to 2021.

166. Four attacks on hospitals were attributed to NAS (1) and unidentified perpetrators (3). In addition, the military use of 9 schools and 2 hospitals by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (10) and SPLA-IO (1) was verified.

167. A total of 11 children (3 boys, 8 girls) were abducted by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (1), SPLA-IO (5) and NAS (5).

168. Six incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

*Developments and concerns*

169. I welcome steps towards the implementation of the 2020 comprehensive action plan to end and prevent all grave violations against children and reiterate my call for the expedited implementation of the action plan and for the Government to budget for this accordingly. I underline the importance of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including its provisions relating to children.

170. I urge the Government to combat the prevalent impunity for grave violations and to hold perpetrators accountable, including through the designation of a focal point on children and armed conflict in the Ministry of Justice.

171. I encourage the continued cooperation of parties to conflict with the United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. I reiterate the need for child-sensitive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, for coordinated mine action and for gender-sensitive and survivor-centred reintegration and assistance programmes, including for survivors of sexual violence. I call upon the international community to step up its support in this regard.

172. I welcome the increased access to barracks provided by the Government to the United Nations for age screening exercises, but I remain concerned by the number of children recruited and used, particularly by Government security forces. I call upon the Government and other parties to immediately cease and prevent all violations, to facilitate humanitarian assistance and protect humanitarian personnel, and to release associated children.

173. I am concerned about escalating subnational violence and the impact of climate change across South Sudan, and I request my Special Representative to analyse the impact of these conflict dynamics on children.

**Sudan**

174. The United Nations verified 202 grave violations against 195 children (137 boys, 57 girls, 1 sex unknown) in the Sudan,<sup>10</sup> including one girl who was the victim of multiple violations. In addition, 8 violations against 4 children (2 boys, 2 girls) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

175. A total of 11 children (8 boys, 3 girls), some as young as 11, were verified as having been recruited and used by the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Transitional Council (SLM/A-TC) (8), the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid splinter group led by Ali Hamid “Shakush” (2) and the Sudanese Alliance (1) in Central Darfur (10) and West Darfur (1). The earlier recruitment of one girl by the Justice and Equality Movement was verified in 2021.

176. The killing (54) and maiming (112) of 166 children (128 boys, 37 girls, 1 sex unknown) was attributed to government security forces (27) (Sudanese Armed Forces (26) and Rapid Support Forces (1)); and unidentified perpetrators (139), including due to crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and armed groups, intercommunal violence (83) and explosive remnants of war (41). The maiming of 2 boys by unidentified perpetrators, which occurred prior to 2021, was verified in 2021.

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<sup>10</sup> Following the deployment of the United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in the Sudan (UNITAMS), pursuant to Security Council resolution 2524 (2020), and a reconfiguration of the country taskforce on monitoring and reporting, reporting on children and armed conflict in the Sudan now follows a whole-of-country approach.

177. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 17 children (1 boy, 16 girls), with responsibility attributed to government security forces (3) (Sudan Police Force (2) and Sudanese Armed Forces (1)); and unidentified perpetrators (14) in North Darfur (11), South Darfur (4), West Darfur (1) and Central Darfur (1). The incidents included gang rape (2), rape (13) and attempted rape (2). Sexual violence perpetrated against one girl by the Sudan Police Force prior to 2021 was verified in 2021.

178. Two attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (1) in South Kordofan and East Darfur were attributed to unidentified perpetrators. In addition, four attacks on schools by the Sudanese Armed Forces, which occurred in previous years, were verified in 2021.

179. The military use of three schools by the Sudanese Armed Forces in West Darfur (2) and South Darfur (1) was verified.

180. The United Nations verified the abduction for sexual violence of one girl by the Sudanese Armed Forces (1) in North Darfur.

181. Five incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to the Sudanese Armed Forces (1), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (1), and unidentified perpetrators (3) in East Darfur (2), Central Darfur (1), North Darfur (1) and Blue Nile (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

182. I welcome the collaboration between the transitional authorities and the United Nations to strengthen the protection of children, resulting in the joint commitment by the transitional authorities and signatories to the Juba Agreement for Peace in the Sudan to a road map based on the 2016 action plan on ending and preventing child recruitment and use, and I call for the endorsement of the road map.

183. I reiterate my call upon the transitional authorities to engage with the United Nations on a longer-term national prevention plan to prevent all grave violations and sustain the gains of the 2016 action plan. I welcome the use of child rights and human rights units within the government security forces to address grave violations. I encourage the Juba Peace Agreement signatories to ensure their child protection focal points are embedded in these units. I encourage the transitional Government to continue to engage with the United Nations on ending and preventing grave violations within the framework of the Darfur Permanent Ceasefire Committee.

184. I am concerned about the stalled implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, uncertainties surrounding the Sudanese transition following the military coup of 25 October 2021, rising intercommunal tensions in the Sudan, particularly in Darfur, and ongoing access restrictions to conflict-affected areas. I urge all parties to conflict to enable unhindered and safe access for the United Nations and humanitarian partners to conflict-affected populations.

185. I call upon the transitional authorities and security forces to refrain from the excessive use of force against children and to cease the military use of schools and hospitals. I urge the transitional Government to investigate all allegations of violations, including in the context of civil unrest, and to hold perpetrators accountable.

186. I am concerned about ongoing violations, particularly the killing and maiming of children and the perpetration of sexual violence against them. I call upon all parties to cease and prevent all grave violations against children. I urge the transitional authorities to ensure the safety of and access for mine action operations. I urge all parties to release associated children and hand them over to reintegration actors in accordance with the national framework on children affected by armed conflict.

187. I urge the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid, including all its factions, to engage with the United Nations in order to sign an action plan, and call upon the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu and Malik Agar factions to fully implement their respective action plans and other child protection commitments, including under the 2021 road map.

### **Syrian Arab Republic**

188. The United Nations verified 2,271 grave violations against 2,202 children (1,824 boys, 235 girls, 143 sex unknown). In addition, 74 grave violations against 73 children (58 boys, 14 girls, 1 sex unknown) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

189. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,296 children (1,258 boys, 38 girls) by the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) (569) (Faylaq al-Sham (103), Hamzah Division (48), Ahrar al-Sham (41), Suqur al-Sham (38), Jabhah al-Sharqiyah (23), Sultan Murad Brigade (19), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (16), Jabhah al-Islamiyah (16), Jaysh al-Nusrah (8), Jaysh al-Sharqiyah (7), Samarqand Brigade (5), Dir' al-Furat (4), Hizb al-Turkmani (2), Mu'tasim Brigade (2), Ahrar al-Sharqiyah (1), Jaysh al-Sunnah (1), unidentified factions (235)); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (380); the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (221) (the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (220) and other components of SDF (1)), Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (46); pro-government militias, including the National Defence Forces (NDF) (35); the Internal Security Forces under the authority of the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria (24) (the Internal Security Forces); the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (10); Nur al-Din al-Zanki (5); Afrin Liberation Forces (2); and unidentified perpetrators (4). Cases were verified mainly in Idlib (591) and Aleppo (401). Most of the children (1,285) were used in combat. In addition, the recruitment and use of 5 children (4 boys, 1 girl) by YPG/YPJ that occurred prior to 2021 were verified in 2021.

190. The deprivation of liberty of 62 children (11 boys, 1 girl, 50 sex unknown) was verified and attributed to the Internal Security Forces (43), SDF (9), Syrian government forces (5), NDF (3), Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1) and opposition SNA (1). At the end of 2021, over 800 children, including foreigners, reportedly remained in detention for alleged association with Da'esh in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, over 53,000 women and children with suspected family ties to Da'esh and from an estimated 50 countries of origin continued to be held in the Hawl and Rawj camps in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic at the end of 2021.

191. The United Nations verified the killing (424) and maiming (474) of 898 children (564 boys, 191 girls, 143 sex unknown) attributed to Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (301) (including pro-government air forces (86)); SDF (55) (YPG/YPJ (26) and other components of SDF (29)), Da'esh (25); opposition SNA (20); Afrin Liberation Forces (17); border area fire from Türkiye (4) and Turkish armed forces operations in support of opposition SNA (2); Internal Security Forces (2); the international counter-Da'esh coalition (1); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1); Youth of Aleppo al-Shahba' Squadron for Special Tasks (1); and unidentified perpetrators (469). Casualties resulted mainly from explosive remnants of war (297), shelling (290), attacks with the use of improvised explosive devices (173), and air strikes (98). Most incidents occurred in Aleppo (291) and Idlib (290). In addition, the killing (24) and maiming (39) of 63 children (54 boys, 8 girls, 1 sex unknown) that occurred in previous years and were attributed to pro-government air forces (4), Internal Security Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (58) were verified in 2021.

192. Sexual violence against 4 girls trafficked in 2014 from Iraq by Da'esh was verified in 2021.

193. The United Nations verified 45 attacks on schools (28) and hospitals (17), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (23), including pro-government air forces (3); SDF (8); the Internal Security Forces (3); opposition SNA (3); Afrin Liberation Forces (1); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1); and unidentified perpetrators (6). Most attacks occurred in Idlib (18), Dar'a (9) and Aleppo (8) and resulted from shelling (20), assault on or the arrest of protected persons (12), air strikes (3) and raids (3). In addition, an earlier attack on a hospital by pro-government air forces was verified in 2021.

194. The military use of 20 schools (17) and hospitals (3) was attributed to YPG/YPJ (12), the Internal Security Forces (3), NDF (2), Syrian government forces (1), and opposition SNA (2).

195. The United Nations verified the abduction of 8 children (2 boys, 6 girls) by the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (3) and unidentified perpetrators (5). In addition, the earlier abduction of one girl by Da'esh was verified in 2021.

196. A total of 24 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (5), including pro-government air forces (2); Internal Security Forces (4); Da'esh (3); SDF (2); opposition SNA (2); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (2); Afrin Liberation Forces (1); and unidentified perpetrators (5). Incidents included attacks (15), the denial of humanitarian services or disruption to water facilities (7) and the encirclement of areas (2).

#### *Developments and concerns*

197. I welcome the dialogue between the Government and the United Nations on measures to end and prevent grave violations against children, the reactivation of the interministerial committee, and the organization of a joint workshop on child protection on 14 March 2022. I note the issuance of law No. 21/2021 on the rights and protections afforded to children and the commitment reaffirmed by the Government to support the humanitarian response by the United Nations and its partners. I urge the Government to increase its engagement with the United Nations, and with my Special Representative, to strengthen the protection of children, including through the signature of concrete time-bound commitments, and I welcome the ongoing development of a draft comprehensive action plan.

198. I note the continuing progress in the implementation of the 2019 action plan by SDF, resulting in the disengagement of a further 182 children from their ranks and the screening out of 568 boys through age assessment procedures. I also note the adoption by SDF of new guidelines for the release and exclusion of children from their ranks, and procedures for protecting children detained for alleged association with Da'esh. The disciplinary measures against SDF personnel who violate the commitments under the action plan are a positive development. However, I remain concerned by the increased number of verified cases of recruitment and use by SDF and I urge SDF to immediately end all violations.

199. I note the engagement between factions of the opposition SNA and the United Nations, including an exchange of letters aiming at the development of an action plan, and the fact that the opposition SNA issued a statement in September 2021 on measures to comply with international humanitarian law to protect children, including the prohibition of child recruitment and use. I urge the opposition SNA to scale up its

engagement with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations and to adopt an action plan.

200. I remain alarmed by the deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with parties to conflict. I welcome the access provided by SDF for United Nations partners to visit two detention facilities in Aleppo Governorate and I call upon other parties in the Syrian Arab Republic to also facilitate United Nations access to children deprived of liberty. I reiterate my call to treat children primarily as victims, and that deprivation of liberty should be a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and in line with international juvenile justice standards and the best interest of the child.

201. I remain seriously concerned by the humanitarian situation of women and children in the Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children who are currently in these camps, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh, in line with international law and in full respect for the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for family unity and the best interest of the child, and in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, adopted in 2020.

202. I am appalled by the persistently high number of violations against children committed by all parties to the conflict, particularly the significant increase in child recruitment and use, and by the continued high number of cases of killing and maiming and of attacks on schools and hospitals, and by widespread impunity. I urge all parties to end and prevent grave violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

203. I call upon the Syrian Arab Republic to become a party to international legal instruments on mines and explosive remnants of war.

204. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2021/398](#)).

## **Yemen**

205. The United Nations verified 2,748 grave violations against 800 children (652 boys, 148 girls), with 99 of those children being victims of multiple violations. In addition, 209 grave violations against 164 children (120 boys, 44 girls) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

206. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 174 children (172 boys, 2 girls), between the ages of 9 and 17, by the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (hereafter “the Houthis”) (131), the Yemen Armed Forces (28), the Security Belt Forces (6), pro-government militias (4), unidentified perpetrators (4) and Islamic State in Yemen (1). Most children (128) served in combat roles. In addition, the recruitment and use of 51 boys by the Houthis (37), the Yemen Armed Forces (12), the Security Belt Forces (1) and Islamic State in Yemen (1) in previous years was verified in 2021.

207. The deprivation of liberty of 10 boys for their alleged association with parties to conflict was verified and attributed to Yemen Armed Forces (5) and the Houthis (5).

208. The United Nations verified the killing (201) and maiming (480) of 681 children (546 boys, 135 girls) attributed to unidentified perpetrators (280), including in crossfire (83), mainly between the Houthis and the Yemen Armed Forces (63) and between other parties (20); the Houthis (180), the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in

Yemen (the Coalition) (100), the Yemen Armed Forces (74), the Security Belt Forces (42), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (3), Islamic State in Yemen (1) and the Hadrami Elite Forces (1). The main causes of child casualties were explosive remnants of war (181), gunshots and crossfire (176), mortar and artillery shelling (172), air strikes (83) and children being run over by military vehicles (68). Most casualties occurred in Ta'izz (137), Ma'rib (132) and Hudaydah (107) Governorates. In addition, the killing (50) and maiming (96) of 146 children (106 boys, 40 girls) that occurred in previous years was verified in 2021 and attributed to the Houthis (46), the Coalition (22), Yemen Armed Forces (21), the Security Belt Forces (5), Da'esh (3), Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (1) and unidentified perpetrators (48).

209. Sexual violence perpetrated against 11 children (6 boys, 5 girls) was attributed to the Houthis (5), unidentified perpetrators (3), the Yemen Armed Forces (2), and jointly to the Security Belt Forces and the Yemen Armed Forces (1). In addition, sexual violence affecting 7 children (3 boys, 4 girls), in cases which occurred in previous years and were attributed to the Houthis (6) and Yemen Armed Forces (1), was verified in 2021.

210. There were 34 verified attacks on schools (18) and hospitals (16), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to the Houthis (15), the Security Belt Forces (7), the Yemen Armed Forces (6), the Coalition (5) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, two attacks on hospitals by the Houthis (1) and the Security Belt Forces (1) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

211. The military use of 53 schools (49) and hospitals (4) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (46), the Yemen Armed Forces (4) and the Security Belt Forces (3).

212. A total of 35 children (27 boys, 8 girls) were abducted by the Houthis (11), the Security Belt Forces (10), Salafists (3), the Yemen Armed Forces (3), Hadrami Elite Forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (6). The purposes of the abductions were for recruitment and use (2), sexual violence (2) and unknown purposes (31). The abduction of three boys in earlier years was verified in 2021 and attributed to the Houthis (2) and the Yemen Armed Forces (1).

213. A total of 1,813 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to the Houthis (1,448), the Yemen Armed Forces (331) and unidentified perpetrators (34). Incidents included attacks, in-country movement restrictions and interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities. Incidents were prevalent in the Governorates of Amanat Al-Asimah (595), Sa'dah (331) and Aden (306).

#### *Developments and concerns*

214. I welcome the continued commitment of the Government, through the identification of priority activities, to implementing the 2014 action plan and the 2018 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use. I further welcome the resumption of the interministerial committee activities and the organization of training sessions on child protection. I note the significant decrease in the number of verified cases of child recruitment and use by, and the decrease in the number of child casualties caused by, the Yemen Armed Forces, as well as efforts by the Government to facilitate humanitarian access. I encourage the Government to continue to strengthen the measures in place to prevent child casualties during military operations and implement measures to prevent violations. I note Government efforts to reintegrate children formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups and the recent roll-out of the Act to Protect Children Affected by Conflict campaign in Aden. I call upon the Government to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children.



215. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition with my Special Representative to sustainably end and prevent grave violations against children and the progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of time-bound activities endorsed in January 2020. I note the continued decrease in the number of child casualties, and I call upon the Coalition to pursue and deepen the implementation of the 2019 memorandum of understanding and the related programme of time-bound activities. I urge the Coalition to swiftly investigate all incidents involving child casualties and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. I also urge the Coalition to expedite justice, accountability and redress to child victims and their families. Continuous monitoring and engagement to ensure the sustained implementation of agreed activities and further reductions in the number of affected children, as verified by the United Nations, is expected and will be closely observed.

216. I welcome the signature of an action plan by the Houthis with the United Nations on 18 April 2022 to end and prevent the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, as well as attacks on schools and hospitals and other grave violations. I urge the Houthis to implement all the activities of the action plan, including releasing all children from their ranks, and to immediately end and prevent violations. I call upon the Houthis to continue the implementation of the handover protocol of April 2020 and to allow unimpeded access for the United Nations to all places of detention.

217. I am alarmed by the high number of children killed and maimed, especially by explosive remnants of war, by the number of cases of denial of humanitarian access and by the number of cases of the recruitment and use of children and of the military use of schools and hospitals, particularly by the Houthis. I urge the Houthis and all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children across the country. I urge all parties to step up the clearance of mines and explosive remnants of war, as well as and mine risk education.

218. I call upon parties to put an end to the fighting and engage with my Special Envoy for Yemen towards the resumption of an inclusive political process to reach a comprehensive negotiated settlement. I also call upon them to include child protection concerns in the peace process.

219. I reiterate the recommendations from my report on children and armed conflict in Yemen ([S/2021/761](#)).

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Burkina Faso**

220. The United Nations verified 653 grave violations against 509 children (230 boys, 235 girls, 44 sex unknown).

221. Some 68 children (62 boys, 6 girls), some as young as 6, were recruited and used by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (59), unidentified perpetrators (7) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (2), mostly in the Sahel (22) and North (21) Regions. Most children (48) were used as combatants.

222. A total of 18 boys were detained in the high security prison of Ouagadougou for their alleged association with armed groups, including three who have been in detention since 2018. Three children were released in 2021.

223. The United Nations verified the killing (99) and maiming (128) of 227 children (91 boys, 92 girls, 44 sex unknown) by JNIM (113); unidentified perpetrators (58), including 11 in crossfire between the Defence and Security Forces and JNIM; ISGS (48); the Defence and Security Forces (4) and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (4). Casualties resulted mainly from gunshots and physical assault (95 each) and improvised explosive devices (15). Most violations occurred in the Sahel (121) and Centre-Nord (85) Regions.

224. The United Nations verified rape and other forms of sexual violence against nine girls by unidentified perpetrators (5), JNIM (3) and ISGS (1).

225. There were 85 verified attacks on schools (46) and hospitals (39), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to ISGS (37); JNIM (37); unidentified perpetrators (10), including four in crossfire between the Defence and Security Forces and JNIM; and the Defence and Security Forces (1), mostly in the East (58) Region. Incidents involved the abduction and killing of related protected persons, threats directed against protected persons, and the destruction, looting and forced closure of schools.

226. Two schools and one hospital were used for military purposes by the Defence and Security Forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

227. A total of 250 children (88 boys, 159 girls, 3 sex unknown) were abducted by JNIM (187), mostly as punishment for not adhering to JNIM norms, by unidentified perpetrators (55) and ISGS (8). Most violations occurred in the Centre-Nord (177) and Sahel (66) Regions. Among those abducted, 238 children were subsequently released.

228. Seventeen incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to JNIM (8), ISGS (7) and unidentified perpetrators (2) in the Sahel (10), East (4) and North (3) Regions. Incidents included threats and violence directed at humanitarians, the abduction of humanitarians, as well as looting.

#### *Developments and concerns*

229. I welcome the fact that the Government progressed with the validation of a handover protocol for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors. I call upon the authorities to endorse and implement the protocol, to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to release all children in its custody.

230. I am deeply troubled by the sharp increase in grave violations. I am alarmed by the scale of abductions, particularly of girls, and by the recruitment and use of children, with JNIM as the main perpetrator. I urge JNIM and other parties to cease all violations and release associated children.

231. I call upon parties to immediately cease the killing and maiming of children and take necessary measures to protect children during operations, and to cease and prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected persons and prevent their military use. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations and further urge the authorities, including *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*, to prevent grave violations committed during security operations and to pursue accountability.

#### **Cameroon**

232. The United Nations verified 174 grave violations against 129 children (62 boys, 57 girls, 10 sex unknown) in the Far North (94), North-West (45) and South-West (35) Regions, including 7 children who were victims of multiple violations.

233. Three boys, some as young as 10, were recruited and used by unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups as spies and to run errands in the Far North Region.

234. Five children (2 boys, 3 girls) were detained in Far North by the Cameroon Armed Forces for their alleged association with armed groups and remained in detention as at December 2021.

235. A total of 75 children (48 boys, 25 girls, 2 sex unknown) were killed (44) and maimed (31) by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups (50), including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (25) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (2); the Cameroon Armed Forces (14) and unidentified perpetrators (11), including in crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces (4). Casualties occurred in the Far North (49), South-West (14) and North-West (12) regions and resulted mainly from gunshots (55) and improvised explosive devices or explosive remnants of war (16).

236. Sexual violence perpetrated against one girl by unidentified perpetrators was verified in the South-West Region.

237. A total of 22 attacks on schools (18) and hospitals (4), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were attributed to unidentified armed groups in the North-West and South-West (16), ISWAP (2), the Cameroon Armed Forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (2), including one attack that occurred during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces. Incidents were verified in the North-West (11), South-West (8) and Far North (3) Regions and involved attacks and threats against related protected persons, including their killing and abduction, and destruction and damage to facilities.

238. The United Nations verified the military use of 21 schools by the Cameroon Armed Forces in the Far-North for one year. Four schools continued to be used as at December 2021.

239. The United Nations verified the abduction of 55 children (14 boys, 33 girls, 8 sex unknown) by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups (39), including JAS (24) and ISWAP (2), and unidentified armed groups in the North-West and South-West (16). Violations occurred in Far North (39), North-West (12) and South-West (4) Regions. Children were abducted for ransom (16), recruitment and use (3) and for unknown purposes (36). Of the 55 who were abducted, 12 children were rescued or released, 7 remain in captivity, 3 were arrested by the Cameroon Armed Forces, while the status of 33 is unknown.

240. A total of 18 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified armed groups in the North-West and South-West (14) Regions, the Cameroon Armed Forces (3) and unidentified perpetrators during crossfire between armed groups and the Cameroon Armed Forces (1). Incidents involved the abduction of, and threats and violence against, humanitarian personnel and assets, access restrictions and looting in North-West (10) and South-West (8) Regions.

#### *Developments and concerns*

241. I welcome the training of police officers on child protection, including in the North-West and South-West Regions, by the United Nations. I call upon the Government to extend the training to all defence and security forces. I also call upon the Government to ensure that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes consider the specific needs and rights of children formerly associated with armed groups and to allow child protection actors access to all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centres. I further call upon the Government to pursue

its efforts to strengthen the protection of children, including by ensuring accountability for grave violations against children.

242. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups. I call upon the Government to treat these children primarily as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody. I urge the Government to adopt a handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

243. I am deeply concerned about the continued grave violations in the North-West and South-West Regions, particularly the denial of humanitarian access, including the detention of humanitarian personnel and attacks on schools, including the killing and abduction of teachers and students. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations and protect schools and hospitals and prevent their military use.

244. I urge Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the Far North Region to put an end to violations and immediately release associated children.

### **India**

245. The United Nations verified 54 grave violations against 49 children (45 boys, 4 girls).

246. The recruitment and use of 18 boys by armed groups in Jammu and Kashmir was verified.

247. A total of 33 boys were detained by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir for their alleged association with armed groups or on national security grounds.

248. A total of 34 children (30 boys, 4 girls) were killed (5) and maimed (29) by Indian security forces, including by the use of pellets by the Central Reserve Police Force (19), unidentified perpetrators (4), crossfire between armed groups and unidentified perpetrators (7), and crossfire and shelling across the line of control (4).

249. The killing of two teachers by an armed group in Srinagar was verified.

### *Developments and concerns*

250. I welcome the ongoing engagement of the Government with my Special Representative, including the interministerial meeting held in November 2021 and the appointment of a national focal point to identify priority national interventions so as to enhance the protection of children. I further welcome the agreement to a joint technical mission to hold interministerial, technical-level meetings with the United Nations during 2022 to identify areas of enhanced cooperation for child protection. This enhanced engagement may lead to the removal of India as a situation of concern from my next report on children and armed conflict, should all practical measures agreed to in such meetings be fully implemented by that date.

251. I welcome the legal and administrative framework for the protection of children and improved access to child protection services in Chhattisgarh, Assam, Jharkhand, Odisha and Jammu and Kashmir, and progress in the creation of a Jammu and Kashmir commission for the protection of children's rights, but I remain concerned about the risk of child recruitment by armed groups in affected districts.

252. I am concerned by the increased number of violations against children verified in Jammu and Kashmir. I call upon the Government to strengthen child protection, including by ending the use of pellet guns against children and building the capacity of its forces. I am concerned by the detention of children, and I urge the Government to ensure that children are detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate

period of time, and to prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention in line, with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

### **Lake Chad basin**

253. The United Nations verified 928 grave violations against 826 children (393 boys, 425 girls, 8 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in the Far North Region of Cameroon (94), Lac Province in Chad (166), Diffa Region in the Niger (224) and north-east Nigeria (444). Among those children, 68 were victims of multiple violations. Violations were primarily perpetrated by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups (890), including Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (222) and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (243). Information pertaining to violations in Cameroon's Far North and in north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections.

254. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 11 boys, some as young as 10, in Chad (8) and the Niger (3) by unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups. Children in Chad were predominantly recruited through abduction and were used in support roles.

255. The United Nations verified the killing (11) and maiming (15) of 26 children (21 boys, 5 girls) in Chad (14) and the Niger (12), by unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups (23) and unidentified perpetrators (3) during crossfire between the Niger security forces and unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups. Most child casualties resulted from improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war (15) and gunshots (7).

256. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against two girls were verified and attributed to the Chadian National Army, in Lac Province.

257. Two attacks on hospitals by unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the Niger were verified. Incidents involved damage to and the looting of health facilities and equipment.

258. A total of 349 children (167 boys, 182 girls) were abducted in Chad (142) and the Niger (207) by unidentified Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups. Among those abducted, 1 child was killed, 35 were released and 6 escaped, while the status of 307 children is unknown.

### *Developments and concerns*

259. I welcome the commitment by the Government of Chad to the protection of children, including efforts to comply with its action plan on child recruitment and use, which was completed in 2014, and regular training for its armed forces. These efforts should be prioritized, including by incorporating such training into the curricula of military schools. I urge the Government of Chad to pursue accountability for violations against children, including sexual violence.

260. I welcome the efforts of the Government of the Niger to enhance the protection of children, and the fact that children released from armed groups transiting through the anti-terrorist cell in Diffa were increasingly handed over to civilian child protection actors. Authorities in the Diffa Region established a reintegration programme, including for children separated from armed groups.

261. I call upon the Governments of Chad and the Niger to continue to implement their respective handover protocols for children formerly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors. Children allegedly associated with armed groups must be treated primarily as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

262. The scale of grave violations perpetrated by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups in the Lake Chad basin region remains a serious concern, notably the abduction, killing and maiming of and the recruitment and use of children. I urge these groups to end and prevent all grave violations and immediately release all children.

### **Nigeria**

263. The United Nations verified 444 grave violations against 356 children (165 boys, 190 girls, 1 sex unknown) in north-east Nigeria, including 49 children who were victims of multiple violations.

264. A total of 63 children (9 boys, 54 girls), some as young as 6, were recruited and used by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups: Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (45) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (18) in Borno State, mostly following abduction.

265. A total of 45 boys were detained by the Nigerian Security Forces for their alleged association with armed groups. All but two boys were released following United Nations advocacy. The United Nations was unable to verify the number of children in detention, as access to detention facilities was denied by the Nigerian Security Forces.

266. The United Nations verified the killing (34) and maiming (54) of 88 children (53 boys, 34 girls, 1 sex unknown) attributed to ISWAP (57), unidentified perpetrators (19), the Nigerian Security Forces (7) and JAS (5) in Borno (77) and Yobe (11) States. Child casualties resulted mainly from gunshots.

267. The United Nations verified sexual violence perpetrated against 53 girls, including forced marriage (50) and rape (3), by JAS (44), ISWAP (6) and the Nigerian Security Forces (3) in Borno State.

268. A total of 15 attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (11) were verified and attributed to ISWAP (12), JAS (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in Yobe (8), Borno (5) and Adamawa (2) States. Incidents involved destruction and looting.

269. Some 211 children (115 boys, 96 girls) were abducted by ISWAP (110) and JAS (101) in Borno (167), Adamawa (43) and Yobe (1) States. Most of the children (122) escaped or were released, while 89 remain unaccounted for.

270. Fourteen verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to ISWAP (13) and the Nigerian Security Forces (1) in Borno (11) and Yobe (3) States.

### *Developments and concerns*

271. I commend the Civilian Joint Task Force for sustaining the progress on the 2017 action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, including through a child protection training plan and the establishment of child protection units in Civilian Joint Task Force formations in Borno State, in collaboration with the United Nations.

272. I welcome the signature into law by the Borno State Governor, in January 2022, of the Child Rights Act, which provides a framework for the protection of conflict-affected children.

273. I welcome the Government's commitment to the Safe Schools Declaration, including the hosting of the fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration.

274. I call upon the Government to urgently endorse and implement the handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors,

to provide access for the United Nations to all children in detention and to release all children from detention.

275. I am gravely concerned about the increase in the number of grave violations, particularly abductions and sexual violence, and by the elevated numbers of child casualties of killing and maiming, and of cases of the recruitment and use of children, mostly perpetrated by ISWAP and JAS. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and release all children.

### **Pakistan**

276. A total of 44 children (17 boys, 2 girls, 25 unknown) were reportedly killed (19) and maimed (25) by unidentified armed elements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (19), Balochistan (16), Sindh (8) and Gilgit-Baltistan (1). Incidents included the use of improvised explosive devices (18), rockets fired from Afghanistan (8), landmines (8), explosive remnants of war (7) and attacks of unknown origin (3).

277. Two grenade attacks on schools by unidentified armed elements were reported in Peshawar and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in July.

### *Developments and concerns*

278. I am concerned about incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan.

279. I encourage the Government to deepen its engagement with my Special Representative to develop preventive measures to protect children. I reiterate my call for the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

### **Philippines**

280. The United Nations verified 55 grave violations against 46 children (27 boys, 19 girls). In addition, four grave violations against four children (3 boys, 1 girl) that occurred in previous years were verified in 2021.

281. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 27 children (14 boys, 13 girls), attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) (23), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (4), Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) (1), Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (1) in Bukidnon (10), Davao del Norte (7), Agusan del Sur (4), Negros Oriental (2), Negros Occidental (2), Surigao del Sur (2), Agusan del Norte (1) and Sulu (1) Provinces. Two children were recruited and used twice by two different perpetrators. Children were used in combat (1) and support roles (24). In addition, the earlier recruitment and use of one boy by the Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group was verified in 2021.

282. The United Nations verified the detention of 24 children (13 boys, 11 girls) by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (9), the Philippine National Police (PNP) (3) and jointly by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police (12) in Sulu (11), Bukidnon (7), Lanao del Sur (2), Agusan del Sur (2), Maguindanao (1) and Cebu (1) Provinces. Fifteen children were released.

283. The killing (5) and maiming (16) of 21 children (15 boys, 6 girls) was attributed to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (7), NPA (6), the Philippine National Police (4), unidentified perpetrators (4), including resulting from crossfire between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) (2) and between the Armed Forces of the Philippines and NPA (1) and from improvised explosive devices (1). Child casualties occurred in Maguindanao (10), Agusan del Sur (2), Albay (2), Masbate (2), North Cotabato (2) and other provinces (2). In addition, the earlier maiming of one girl by NPA was verified in 2021.

284. No incidents of sexual violence were verified. An earlier case of sexual violence (forced marriage) affecting one girl and perpetrated by ASG was verified in 2021 by the United Nations.

285. Five attacks on schools and protected persons in relation to schools by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2), the Philippine National Police (2) and BIFF (1) were verified in Sultan Kudarat (2), Maguindanao (1), Bukidnon (1) and Cebu (1).

286. One boy was abducted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines in Agusan del Sur Province. In addition, the earlier abduction of a boy by NPA was verified in 2021 by the United Nations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

287. I welcome the signature by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the United Nations of the strategic plan to prevent and respond to grave child rights violations in situations of armed conflict in June 2021 and call for its implementation. I welcome efforts by the Council for the Welfare of Children to ensure the timely intervention and reintegration of children associated with armed groups or detained for alleged association.

288. I welcome the issuance by the Philippine National Police of its child protection policy, which incorporates provisions of the Republic Act No. 11188 (Special Protection of Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Act) and its Children in Situations of Armed Conflict Handling Protocol, to prevent grave violations against children. The training of 3,139 child protection actors by the Government on the Act and its Protocol are welcomed. I encourage the Government to pursue the implementation of its child protection policies, including its national policy framework of 2019 on learners and schools as zones of peace.

289. I welcome the incorporation of the protection of children in situations of armed conflict in the Bangsamoro Children's Code in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. The establishment of a regional reporting system on grave violations in Northern Mindanao by the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is welcomed.

290. I am concerned by the increase in the number of cases of the recruitment and use of children, and by ongoing grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and threats against school personnel. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and reiterate my call upon armed groups to engage with the United Nations to adopt measures, including action plans to end and prevent violations.

291. I encourage the Government to endorse the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

## **IV. Recommendations**

292. I welcome the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and commitments to protect children in armed conflict. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement handover protocols for children encountered or detained during military operations to civilian child protection actors. I request my Special Representative and the country task forces to engage with parties to prevent grave violations, including through engagement with



regional organizations on prevention modalities, and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in coordination with United Nations system entities.

293. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in line with the 2017 policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations, and to ensure that data and capacity on child protection are preserved and transferred during mission transitions. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in early warning, conflict analysis, the pacific settlement of disputes, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

294. I call upon Member States to adopt and implement policies to promote the rights of the child, including by becoming parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

295. I remain concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations committed against children. I call upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and to immediately end and prevent grave violations. I urge Member States and parties to conflict to define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years.

296. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation that criminalizes violations of relevant rules of international law, including on grave violations pertaining to the protection of children in armed conflict, and encourage Member States to adopt national accountability measures and to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms. I call for the inclusion of accountability provisions in action plans signed between the United Nations and parties listed in the annexes.

297. I am deeply concerned at the number of children deprived of liberty, and I reiterate that detention should be used only as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized and that children should never be detained solely for their or their parents' actual or alleged association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups, primarily as victims, to prioritize their best interest, to give child protection actors access to them and to continue to search for durable solutions, including voluntary repatriation and reintegration for those with alleged links to Da'esh in Iraq and in the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with international law. I am concerned about the impact of counter-terrorism measures on children and I call upon Member States to ensure their consistency with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

298. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, as well as access by children to services, assistance and protection, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that hospitals, schools and their personnel must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

299. I call upon the donor community to urgently provide financial support and technical assistance for sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive, survivor-centred and inclusive reintegration programmes for children, including for survivors of sexual violence. I encourage the international community to provide funding for

monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children and for strengthening child protection capacities on the ground.

300. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage with the United Nations to improve analysis, develop strategies to prevent grave violations and foster partnerships.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

301. In Colombia, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups have been listed under section A of annex I for the recruitment and use of children. In Burkina Faso, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin has been listed under section A of annex II for the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children. In the Lake Chad Basin region, Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, have been listed for the abduction of children under section A of annex II. These parties are listed following a substantial increase of these violations since my previous report. I request my Special Representative to promote enhanced monitoring capacity in the Central Sahel region and to continue to promote monitoring capacity in the Lake Chad Basin region.

302. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, there were substantial rocket strikes by the Palestinian armed groups, especially in May 2021, resulting in a significant increase in the number of cases of violence against children. If the high number of violations against children were to be repeated in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Palestinian armed groups, including Hamas' al-Qassam Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's al-Quds Brigades, should be listed. Palestinian parties must urgently engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations to prevent any more violations against children, and they must adopt clear and time-bound commitments to prevent violations against children.

303. During the May 2021 escalation of hostilities, there were substantial air strikes by the Israeli armed forces, resulting in a significant increase the number of cases of violence against children. So far this year, we have not witnessed a similar number of violations. However, should the situation repeat itself in 2022, without meaningful improvement, Israel should be listed. Israeli authorities are engaging with my Special Representative and the United Nations to prevent any more violations against children and adopt clear and time-bound commitments.

304. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, because of the continuous increase in cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence by the Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale and by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) armed groups, both parties have been listed under section A of annex I for this violation.

305. In Yemen, the Government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces, have been delisted for the violation of recruitment and use of children owing to progress in the implementation of their action plan and to the significant decrease in the number of cases of this violation. The delisting is conditional upon the finalization of all pending action plan activities and the continued decrease in the recruitment and use of children by the Government forces, including the Yemen Armed Forces. A continued United Nations monitoring and engagement period of 12 months will ensure the sustainability of all existing measures, as verified by the United Nations, and continued engagement with my Special Representative and the United Nations. Any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in my next

report. In South Sudan, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces, having signed a comprehensive action plan in 2020 and made progress in its implementation while a decrease in violations has been verified, will be delisted for the violation of attacks on schools and hospitals. I call upon the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces, and other signatories of the action plan to finalize the implementation of all provisions of the action plan and continue to significantly reduce cases of other violations against children.

306. There has been a technical delisting of one of the listed parties following their dissolution or cessation of activities. In Afghanistan, the Afghan National Army has been removed, as these government forces ceased to exist following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban on 15 August 2021.

307. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or from changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In Afghanistan, the Haqqani Network will be listed jointly with the Taliban, as the group is now part of the leadership of the Taliban. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed group Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) will be listed under section A of annex I owing to the lack of action in implementing signed commitments and because the party continued to recruit and use children in large numbers in 2021. In Mali, Platform, including affiliated groups, will be listed under section B of annex I, following the signature of action plans with the United Nations on 26 August 2021. In Somalia, the Somali Federal Defence and Police Forces will be listed as two separate entities for the same violations under section B of annex I. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias, will be listed under section B of annex I for all violations for which they are listed, following engagement with the United Nations on a draft comprehensive action plan and the national measures put in place in 2020 and 2021. This is conditional upon the signature of an action plan with the United Nations on ending and preventing grave violations against children and on the continued decrease in the number of verified cases of recruitment and use. Failure to do so would lead to a reversal of the listing of Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias, under section A of annex I in my next report.

308. The Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) will remain listed under section B of annex I, however I am concerned by the increase during 2021 of the levels of recruitment and use, despite the signature of an action plan and the promising start of activities in this regard. I urge the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units to reverse this negative trend, to continue engaging with the United Nations and to implement the provisions of its 2019 action plan. Any failure in this regard would result in being listed in section A of annex I for the same violation in my next report. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam armed groups (see the change in terminology in para. 310 below), has been listed under section B of annex I with respect to the killing and maiming of children following concrete engagement with the United Nations and the protection measures taken, but will continue to be listed under section A of annex I for the recruitment and use of children owing to the high number of children recruited and used during 2021. I urge the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, to continue engaging with the United Nations for the development of an action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children.

309. In Yemen, the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) have been listed under section B of annex I for the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals, following engagement with the

United Nations and the signature of an action plan on grave violations. If the Houthis implement the action plan and if there is a verified significant decrease in the number of grave violations, they should as a result be considered for a delisting in the annexes to my next report. I urge them to commence implementation of the recent action plan.

310. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the name of parties more accurately. In the Central African Republic, the local defence militias known as the anti-balaka will be listed as local militias known as the anti-balaka to reflect the fact that they do not always act in self-defence. In Colombia, the dissident groups of the former Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) will be listed as Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups to align with other United Nations reporting. In Mali, Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad will be listed as Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad. Should the group fail to make significant progress in the implementation of its 2017 action plan by the publication of my next report, I may consider listing the group under section A of annex I. In addition, Ansar Eddine will be listed as Ansar Eddine, as part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin. In the Syrian Arab Republic, the Syrian armed opposition groups (formerly known as the Free Syrian Army) will be listed as the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, to reflect the composition of these groups. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) will be listed as Da'esh following the adoption of resolution [75/291](#) by the General Assembly.

311. In view of the gravity and number of violations reported and, where possible, verified in Mozambique during 2021 (recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access), this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.

312. In view of the gravity of clashes in 2021 between the Ethiopian National Defence and Federal Police Forces, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and other parties, including militias and regional forces, and the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions, and the denial of humanitarian access, this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.

313. In view of the ongoing war in Ukraine, including violations against civilians, including children, because of the high intensity of this conflict, this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report. I request my Special Representative to engage with all parties to the conflict to urgently address child protection issues, including the prevention of violations against children.

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province<sup>a,b,d</sup>
3. Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani Network<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups<sup>a</sup>
2. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Local militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>
2. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>
3. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)<sup>b,c,d</sup>
4. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
5. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
6. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
7. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale<sup>a,c,e</sup>

\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

8. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
10. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b,c</sup>
11. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
12. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Iraq**

##### *Non-State actors*

Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in Mali**

##### *Non-State actors*

Ansar Eddine, as part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin<sup>a,c</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

##### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>b,c</sup>

##### *Non-State actors*

United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction<sup>a,f</sup>
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction<sup>a,f</sup>

#### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
3. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
2. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>
3. Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

## **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### *State actors*

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *State actors*

Popular Mobilization Forces<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>
2. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces<sup>a,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *State actors*

1. Somali Federal Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>
2. Somali Police Force<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,e,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>b</sup>

Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *Non-State actors*

Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>a,b,d,f</sup>



## Annex II

**Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

#### **Parties in Burkina Faso**

*Non-State actors*

Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin<sup>a,b,e</sup>

#### **Parties in the Lake Chad basin**

*Non-State actors*

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>e</sup>

#### **Parties in Nigeria**

*Non-State actors*

Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

*Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

### **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

*None*

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).



# Security Council

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## Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict

### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 15 of Security Council resolution 1379 (2001). The report reviews activities and progress made during the reporting period in the protection of children affected by situations of armed conflict and in post-conflict situations, as well as in the implementation of resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). As requested in paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001), a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of relevant international obligations, in situations of which the Council is seized, is annexed to this report.

2. The adoption of the document entitled “A world fit for children” (resolution S-27/2, annex) by the General Assembly at its special session on children reflects a renewed commitment to protecting children during armed conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law.

### II. A strengthened normative framework for the protection of children in armed conflict: moving towards an “era of application”

3. Since the Security Council adopted resolution 1379 (2001), two landmark international instruments have entered into force — the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (12 February 2002) and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1 July 2002). The Optional Protocol sets the age limit for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in hostilities at 18, and requires States parties to raise the minimum age for voluntary recruitment to at least 16. It prohibits insurgent armed groups “under any circumstances” from recruiting persons under 18 years or using them in hostilities. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides a mechanism of accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, including crimes specific to children. For example, the Statute classifies conscription, enlistment or use in hostilities of children below the age of 15 as a war crime in both international and internal armed conflicts. The entry into force of these two legal instruments strengthens the international framework for the

protection of children in situations of armed conflict. The challenge today is in ensuring their implementation on the ground.

4. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict has sought and obtained important commitments for the protection and well-being of children in conflict and post-conflict situations, and for observing obligations under international law, in countries such as Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and others. The Special Representative continues to monitor compliance with these commitments.

5. Many States are making efforts to harmonize their national legislation with relevant international child rights standards. The United Nations stands committed to offering technical and legal assistance to Member States in their efforts directed at applying child rights norms and standards.

6. The Security Council, in its deliberations and resolutions on country or region-specific situations, and on thematic issues, is encouraged to address the child protection recommendations included in my reports and to reflect the standards articulated in Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001) and the presidential statement on children and armed conflict (S/PRST/2002/12), the aide-memoire on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/PRST/2002/6, annex) and resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security.

### **III. Child protection on the peace and security agenda of the United Nations**

7. The reports to the Security Council over the past year have highlighted the plight of children affected by armed conflict. The Council has taken up my recommendations on child protection in several resolutions, including most recently on Angola and Sierra Leone, and in presidential statements. On 8 March 2002, Council members were briefed on the plight of girls affected by armed conflict by the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, and took the matter up again on 28 and 29 October in the open debate on women and peace and security.

8. An inter-agency working group, convened jointly by the Office of my Special Representative, UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, has prepared draft guidelines on the integration of child protection in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building. These will be submitted for the consideration of the Executive Committee on Peace and Security at the end of the year.

9. I have continued to recommend that child protection be an explicit feature in peacekeeping mandates and, where appropriate, that child protection advisers be deployed in United Nations peace operations. Their role in ensuring the implementation of the child protection dimension of the mandates of peacekeeping operations and advising the head of a peacekeeping mission in a given country is crucial. The Security Council endorsed my recommendations in its resolutions 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001), and there has been some progress in this area.

10. The Security Council endorsed the creation of a post of child protection adviser in the United Nations Mission in Angola and the adviser was deployed in October. Meanwhile, the Child Protection Units in the United Nations Organization

Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) were strengthened, with eight and two child protection advisers, respectively. I urge the Council to consider the recommendations of the Special Representative to establish such posts in other peace operations.

11. The working group on child protection training for peacekeeping personnel, convened jointly by the office of my Special Representative, UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden, in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, has completed a draft set of training materials that can be adapted to the mandate of any peace operation and employed to train military, police and civilian personnel. Efforts are under way to ensure comprehensive child protection training, to supervise staff conduct towards children in mission areas and to educate staff about sanctions that will be applied when appropriate standards of conduct are transgressed.

#### **IV. Progress achieved in implementing Security Council resolutions**

12. The resolutions of the Security Council form an integral part of the framework of standards for the protection of children in armed conflict. Progress achieved since my last report to the Council is reported below.

##### **Addressing impunity**

13. The Security Council, in resolution 1379 (2001), urged Member States to prosecute those responsible for egregious violations of the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and to exclude those crimes from amnesty provisions, where feasible. The entry into force of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court strengthens this objective considerably. Since children are likely to constitute important witnesses within proceedings of the Court, and in accordance with the Rome Statute, the Special Representative has urged that the Court have juvenile justice expertise in both the Prosecutor's office and the Victims and Witnesses Unit. It would be particularly important for the Prosecutor's office to protect the safety, physical and psychological well-being, dignity and privacy of child witnesses and victims when investigating and prosecuting crimes against children.

14. Since the Special Court for Sierra Leone has jurisdiction over specific crimes committed against children, such as child recruitment, as well as over persons who were between 15 and 18 years old at the time of an alleged crime, it is important that the Rules of Evidence and Procedure of the Special Court regulate all aspects of juvenile justice.

##### **Landmines and small arms**

15. In more than 80 countries children are at risk from landmines and unexploded ordnance, particularly when fleeing conflict or when returning. Although the Security Council resolutions increasingly include support for mine action programmes, enabling the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and its partners to intervene in a timely way in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kosovo, and Lebanon, among others, much work remains to be done; a major constraint is inadequate resources.

At the conclusion of his visits to areas of conflict, my Special Representative has consistently appealed to the international community to give greater support to mine action, including mine risk education programmes, and to the rehabilitation of child mine victims, including through the provision of prostheses. Child-focused mine risk education and assistance to mine survivors should be incorporated into post-conflict programmes for peace-building, wherever appropriate.

16. Efforts to sever the link between the proliferation and widespread use of small arms and light weapons and the victimization of children both as casualties and agents in armed conflicts have not made notable progress. I urge the international community to focus more attention on this important issue.

#### **Humanitarian access in zones of conflict**

17. Denial of humanitarian access by State or non-State actors is a violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Because non-State armed groups may exercise de facto control over areas of territory where population groups are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, negotiating humanitarian access with these armed groups has become integral to the work of humanitarian agencies. A manual is currently being drafted to guide United Nations agencies in their engagement and disengagement in such negotiations.

18. UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO) have successfully negotiated “days of tranquillity” and national immunization days with parties to conflict, allowing immunization against polio to be carried out in Afghanistan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and the Sudan, and large-scale measles immunization and provision of vitamin A supplements to be carried out in Afghanistan and Burundi and the quartering areas in Angola. Following the peace agreement in Angola, more than 1 million people living in areas formerly controlled by UNITA forces have become accessible for the first time in three decades and efforts are under way to provide them with humanitarian relief, and to reunite the estimated 100,000 children separated from their families. In northern Uganda and the southern Sudan, humanitarian access to internally displaced populations remains insecure and inconsistent because of armed attacks and constant displacements. In the Occupied Palestinian Territories, my Personal Envoy recently reported that stricter closures, curfews, roadblocks and checkpoints have created humanitarian problems, including frequent school closures and a drop in immunization levels.

#### **Mitigating the impact on children of illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones**

19. Only limited progress can be reported towards monitoring compliance with the exhortation in resolution 1379 (2001) that steps be taken to mitigate the impact on children of illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones. In its final report, of 16 October 2002 (S/2002/1146), the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted that children are being conscripted and used as forced labour in the extraction of natural resources by a number of military forces.

20. The recent endorsement of the process of certification of “conflict” diamonds in the Kimberly Process by representatives of many Member States and mining and diamond companies, at Interlaken, Switzerland, was an important step towards

reducing conflict and alleviating the plight of children caught up in war fuelled by the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

### **Displaced children**

21. When war displaces families and communities, children often spend their entire childhood in camps where they are at risk of exploitation and forcible recruitment by armed forces or groups. The need to take steps to locate camps and settlements at a reasonable distance from national borders, separate civilians and armed elements, and maintain the humanitarian and civilian character of camps and settlements for refugees and displaced persons was highlighted in my report of 2001 on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/2001/331) and in the aide-memoire endorsed by the Security Council in March 2002 (see S/PRST/2002/6). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees remains fully engaged, through its Agenda for Protection, established in 2002, in ensuring that such measures minimize the possibility of abduction, recruitment or exploitation of refugee children, especially those who are unaccompanied or separated from their families and are therefore most at risk.

### **Addressing the needs of girls**

22. In armed conflicts, girls and women are often targeted for rape, abduction, forced recruitment and trafficking, including across borders. Yet programmes specifically for girls are often overlooked during post-conflict reconstruction processes designed to foster rehabilitation, peace and stability, including disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, education and vocational training. More explicitly tailored strategies and adequate resources are needed to ensure that girls receive necessary assistance. After two decades of fighting in Afghanistan, the enrolment of girls in primary school had dropped to 8 per cent. The back-to-school campaign in Afghanistan specifically focused on encouraging girls to return to the classroom.

23. Girls and young women are also present in many of today's fighting forces. The war-related experiences and post-conflict needs of girl soldiers are distinct from those of their male peers, and United Nations programmes are seeking to document and address this. The Child Protection Unit within MONUC is helping to monitor the recruitment of girls and the roles that they play in armed forces and groups. The child protection advisers and the human rights staff of UNAMSIL, together with UNICEF and its implementing partners, are monitoring the reintegration needs of girls associated with the fighting forces in Sierra Leone.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

24. Recent United Nations investigations have revealed that conditions in the camps make refugees vulnerable to sexual and other exploitation, including by armed forces and groups, other refugees, aid workers and peacekeepers, and that children and women are most at risk. The Plan of Action submitted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises calls for the incorporation into all of the Committee's codes of conduct of six core principles, one of them being the prohibition of sexual activity with persons under the age of 18, regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. The Task Force has also called for better

management and delivery of humanitarian assistance, and complaint mechanisms for children and women threatened with abuse.

#### **Progress by regional and subregional organizations or arrangements**

25. In accordance with resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001), several regional and subregional organizations or arrangements, including the Group of Eight, the European Union, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the African Union, have incorporated the children and armed conflict agenda as a priority concern into their policies and programmes. Recently, a declaration on the use of child soldiers was adopted by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States. The Human Security Network has decided to devote particular attention to the protection of children in armed conflict and to develop concrete initiatives on advocacy and activities in collaboration with my Special Representative.

26. The initiative promoted by my Special Representative to integrate child protection concerns in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) resulted in the establishment of a Child Protection Unit in the ECOWAS secretariat in April 2002. The Unit plans to implement the Accra Declaration and Plan of Action; assess, document and harmonize child protection policy among ECOWAS member States; and encourage adherence to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and other relevant international and regional instruments. The Office of my Special Representative and the Child Protection Unit have agreed to conduct joint assessment missions in the subregion, beginning with the Mano River area.

## **V. Child soldiers**

#### **Preparation of the list annexed to the report**

27. As requested by the Security Council, the annex to the present report contains a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them, in situations that are on the Security Council's agenda or that may be brought to the attention of the Security Council by the Secretary-General, in accordance with Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations, which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security (resolution 1379 (2001)).

28. Factual information for the preparation of the list was sought from and verified with a wide range of sources, including entities of the United Nations system such as peace operations and country teams, international and local non-governmental organizations, and individual academics and experts. The preparation of the list posed numerous challenges; nevertheless the final product represents an important step forward in our efforts to induce compliance with international child protection obligations by parties to conflict. The Security Council is encouraged to consider the information provided in the list in its deliberations and actions on specific country situations.

29. In preparing the list it was decided to include (a) only those current armed conflict situations of which the Security Council was seized at the time of writing of the report; (b) identifiable parties to such a conflict; and (c) those parties that

continue to recruit or use children in violation of international obligations applicable to them.

30. The minimum international standard to which all Member States on the list are held is the Convention on the Rights of the Child. When appropriate, the conduct of States was also assessed in accordance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

31. The conduct of non-State armed groups was assessed in accordance with the widely accepted minimum international standard that children under age 15 shall not be conscripted or enlisted into armed forces or groups or used by them to participate actively in hostilities in either international or internal armed conflicts. This standard echoes the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In States that have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, non-State armed groups are held to that higher standard, prohibiting all recruitment and use of children under 18. Commitments made in peace agreements or to my Special Representative were also taken into account.

#### **Parties on the list**

32. Applying the above criteria to the information that has been gathered, 23 parties to conflict were found to be engaged in the recruitment or use, or both, of children in the conflicts. These 23 parties to conflict are involved in five situations of which the Security Council is seized (see S/2002/30): Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Somalia.

33. In Afghanistan, over the past 20 years of conflict, various State and non-State actors conscripted child soldiers. Following the fall of the Taliban government, there was significant demobilization of soldiers, including children. Recent reports indicate, however, that some armed groups in various parts of the country have resumed recruitment, including under-age boys. The new Afghan National Army, which is designed to replace all other armed groups, will not be employing under-age soldiers.

34. In Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, members of the United Nations country teams are working with relevant government departments, and when possible with non-State armed groups, to facilitate the demobilization of child soldiers.

35. In Burundi, the Government has requested the assistance of UNICEF to conduct a census of child soldiers and to prepare a demobilization plan; this process is currently under way.

36. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Pretoria and Luanda Agreements with the Governments of Rwanda (July 2002) and Uganda (September 2002), which support the principles laid down in the Lusaka Agreement of 1999, provide a concrete opportunity to move forward with disarmament, demobilization and



reintegration and the withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan forces, coordinated by MONUC. In May 2001, several parties appearing on the list in the Democratic Republic of the Congo made commitments to my Special Representative to refrain from recruiting children into their armed forces or groups. These same parties are also signatories to the Lusaka Agreement, which imposes a similar restriction. In addition, in November 2001, the Democratic Republic of the Congo ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, setting 18 as the age limit for all recruitment into the armed forces. A disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process for child soldiers has been initiated with the Government and RCD-Goma.

37. In Liberia, while United Nations and civil society partners are engaged in advocacy to convince the Government to acknowledge the problem of child recruitment, there are indications that renewed fighting has led to new recruitment of children by armed forces and groups.

38. In Somalia, the United Nations has limited ability to monitor recruitment or mount responsive interventions because of insecurity and lack of access. A small pilot demobilization project is under way in Mogadishu for 120 children, including 20 girls.

39. Three parties included in the list are Government armed forces, of which one is legally obliged not to recruit or enlist persons under age 18. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a party to the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and has declared an age limit of 18 for voluntary enlistment in the armed forces. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

**(c) Situations of concern not included in the list**

40. Other situations of concern with regard to recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, which are not included in the list, are described below.

**Conflict situations not on the agenda of the Security Council**

41. Such situations include that in Colombia, where armed groups like the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) and paramilitaries AUC (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia), AUSC (Autodefensas Unidas del Sur del Casanare) and ACCU (Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Uraba) continue their decades-long practice of recruiting boys and girls for use in combat. In Northern Ireland, paramilitaries continue to recruit and use children. In the Republic of Chechnya of the Russian Federation, insurgency groups continue to enlist children and use them to plant landmines and explosives.

42. In Myanmar, Human Rights Watch has reported that large numbers of children are forcibly recruited into the national armed forces, as well as by armed groups. Testimonies received by UNICEF confirm this. In his report to the General Assembly (A/57/290 and Corr.1), the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Myanmar expressed concern about reports of abuses on the part of armed opposition groups, notably the Karenni National Liberation Army, which is accused of forced conscription of male villagers, including under-age youths.

43. In Nepal, the United Nations country team and non-governmental organizations report forced and involuntary recruitment by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), although access to the relevant areas of the country is restricted.

44. In the Philippines, the United Nations country team reports recruitment of children by several armed groups, including the New People's Army, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, the Moro National Liberation Front, and Abu Sayyaf.

45. In the Sudan, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has released some children since March 2001, but the number of children remaining in its ranks is unknown. The Machakos peace process should facilitate the demobilization of child soldiers.

46. In northern Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continues to use children to fight and as sexual slaves. Some 100 children were recently released by LRA and several others escaped, but hundreds more have been abducted since April 2002, when fighting intensified in the southern Sudan and northern Uganda following the Government of Uganda's launch of Operation Iron Fist. It is believed that a large number of children remain in the ranks of LRA, while many children abducted by LRA over the last decade are still missing.

47. In Sri Lanka, the current peace negotiation under the auspices of Norway is a welcome development. The commitment made to my Special Representative by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during his visit to Sri Lanka in 1998 not to recruit or use children has been formally accepted in the current round of negotiations. Demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers from the ranks of LTTE should be accorded priority attention.

#### **Situations on the agenda of the Security Council where conflicts have recently ended**

48. Situations of which the Security Council is seized where conflicts have recently ended, and where there is no evidence of either recruitment or use of children at this time, have not been included in the list. In some situations, such as those in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Kosovo, the Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone, demobilization and/or reintegration programmes are under way.

49. Other situations where conflicts have been over for some time and peace is being consolidated, as in Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique and Nicaragua, have not been included in the list. Nonetheless, the legacy of the recruitment and use of child soldiers remains and their full rehabilitation and integration is still a challenge.

#### **Situations of conflict where children have not been recruited or used**

50. My Special Representative reported after his visit to Ethiopia and Eritrea that there had been no recruitment or use of children in either country during the border conflict. This is good news and lessons should be learned from this example.

#### **Demobilization of child soldiers**

51. In Sierra Leone, education, family and community support programmes and continued monitoring are essential for more than 6,850 demobilized child ex-

combatants, 6,500 of whom have been reunited with their families. These children remain at risk of being recruited again to fight across the border in Liberia.

52. In Guinea-Bissau, since the cessation of the armed conflict two years ago, UNICEF and the United Nations Peace-building Support Office continue to work with the Government to demobilize children from the armed forces.

53. In Angola, following a ceasefire in April 2002 and progress in negotiating a permanent peace, the need for the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants is urgent. It is estimated that between 6,000 and 8,000 children under the age of 18 served in the ranks of UNITA.

54. In the Republic of the Congo, those who fought as children in armed groups, a small number of whom were recently demobilized, are considered by the United Nations country team to be at risk of being recruited again in renewed fighting. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some of the children from Bunia, who were released and reunited with their families in 2001, were reportedly recruited again in the Iturri region in North Kivu.

55. In the Great Lakes region, the World Bank and donor Governments have undertaken to provide resources (\$500 million) to support the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, including child soldiers. This joint international effort — involving donors and United Nations funds and programmes — was launched by the World Bank in December 2001, in support of a regional Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme for the Greater Great Lakes Region. The Programme involves nine countries — Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe — and includes a regional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy and programme with a multi-country approach, to provide a mechanism that will allow demobilization to occur simultaneously in countries affected by regional conflicts. The World Bank and Programme partners have made a commitment to give priority to the unconditional and urgent demobilization of child soldiers.

56. Demobilization and reintegration programming is central to breaking the cycle of violence for children and the provision of adequate resources for such programming is crucial. The Security Council and Member States are urged to provide sustained and adequate resources to all relevant actors, in particular peace operations, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations, engaged in implementing demobilization and reintegration programmes for children (see A/56/342-S/2001/852, action point 14).

## **VI. Field visits by the Special Representative**

57. In the reporting period, the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict continued to advocate, raise awareness and promote as well as strengthen the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict. Particularly important are his field visits, which provide an opportunity to systematically assess and draw significant attention to the situation of children affected by conflict and allow him to make targeted recommendations. These visits have resulted in commitments from parties to conflict and encouraged donor resources for programmatic activities for the benefit of war-affected children. In the

course of the past year, the Special Representative undertook visits to Afghanistan, Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guatemala, the Northern Caucasus in the Russian Federation, and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. With respect to situations where there are United Nations-mandated peace operations, the findings of the Special Representative are summarized below.

#### **Ethiopia and Eritrea (March 2002)**

58. The recent border war has been particularly devastating for the children and youth of Ethiopia and Eritrea, who make up a large segment of the population, and has added to the legacy of long years of war. Many children have known nothing but war and thus suffer from severe psychosocial trauma. The plight of children who are displaced and separated from their families in both countries is a matter of particular concern; thousands are still living in camps in Ethiopia and Eritrea, and thousands more in camps in Djibouti, Kenya, the eastern Sudan and Yemen or housed with host families. Displacement and loss of family members have led to an increase in the number of orphans and children living on the streets without family or community support. The extensive presence of landmines and unexploded ordnance from successive cycles of conflict is a source of grave risk to the civilian population, children in particular. Education has also been a casualty of war: many schools have been destroyed and there is a dearth of trained teachers.

59. The Special Representative called for the creation, with donor support, of conditions for the return and resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, in particular the provision of water supply, sanitation, housing, schools, health centres, and mine action programmes. Mine awareness initiatives aimed at children and the provision of prostheses are urgently required. More attention and resources also need to be allocated to initiatives for the reunification of families and for the rehabilitation of orphans and street children. The Special Representative also called for child protection to be made an explicit objective of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), including through the establishment of the post of child protection adviser, and for children and conflict issues to be integrated into the agenda of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development so that the protection of children becomes a subregional priority.

60. The Special Representative established that there had been no systematic recruitment or use of child soldiers during the conflict in either country. Thanks to the effective organization and delivery of humanitarian assistance to displaced populations by local authorities, elders and community leaders, there were no reports of the use of food in any exploitative manner. The excellent rapport between UNMEE and the local population, resulting in effective implementation of quick-impact projects, is also commendable.

#### **Angola (May 2002)**

61. During his visit to Angola, the Special Representative found universal conviction among Angolans that the three-decade-long war had come to a definitive end, as well as widespread sentiment in favour of reconciliation and national unity — the most positive indicator of a hopeful future for Angola's children.

62. The encouraging spirit of the population was in contrast, however, to the grave humanitarian crisis. There is an urgent need for food, medicine, water and shelter,

especially for displaced persons emerging from the former UNITA-held areas. Another key challenge was the need for the immediate rehabilitation of social services that particularly benefit children, such as schools, nutritional programmes and medical centres. Special attention needs to be paid to the demobilization and reintegration of child combatants, including family reunification where possible, the clearance of landmines and unexploded ordnance, and mine awareness campaigns, given the high casualty rates among children.

63. In my report of 26 July 2002 to the Security Council on the situation in Angola (S/2002/834), the findings of the Special Representative during his visit to the country were highlighted. I recommended that the Council consider the deployment of a child protection adviser with the United Nations Mission in Angola in view of the magnitude of the problems associated with the rehabilitation of children and the needs of youth. The Council considered this recommendation favourably and, pursuant to resolution 1433 (2002), a child protection adviser was deployed with the Mission in October.

#### **Afghanistan (July 2002)**

64. During his visit to Afghanistan, the Special Representative was encouraged by the universal expression of relief at the emergence of peace and the remarkable signs of recovery in the places that he visited. For the children of Afghanistan to reap the benefits of peace, he proposed urgent attention to education, including rehabilitation of schools, provision of educational materials, revision of curricula and the paying of teachers. Reversing chronic malnutrition through income-generating projects and other initiatives designed to help reduce severe poverty, as well as special focus on maternal and child health, which has suffered because of the lack of access to basic health services, especially in rural areas, must be prioritized. The Special Representative found the condition of displaced children unacceptable, particularly in Spinboldak camp and the no-man's land between Afghanistan and Pakistan, where there is a lack of water, food, medical services and education and the weather conditions are extreme. He recommended that priority be accorded to the resettlement of those displaced persons, as well as sustained support for landmine clearance and mine awareness campaigns.

65. To help translate the concerns of children into national and international priority-setting, policy-making and resource allocation, the Special Representative recommended the establishment of a national commission for children. The Security Council may wish to consider my Special Representative's recommendation for the inclusion of a post of child protection adviser in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to ensure that the protection, rights and rehabilitation of children and young people are a priority in all aspects of the United Nations activities in Afghanistan.

#### **Guatemala (February 2002)**

66. The peace accords in Guatemala are the basis of lasting peace, but they have not yet been fully implemented. The Children's and Adolescents' Code providing an updated legal and institutional framework for minors has not yet been enacted into law, nor have the recommendations of the Commission for Historical Clarification on missing children been implemented or the National Commission for the Search for Disappeared Children in Guatemala officially recognized. The Special

Representative urged the Guatemalan authorities to implement these important initiatives, as well as to meet the education, health and nutrition needs of formerly displaced populations and demobilized combatants in the resettlement areas and to compensate war-affected groups, including relatives of the disappeared, widows and orphans. He also recommended that the Government accelerate the implementation of programmes to address high levels of malnutrition among children and mothers.

67. The Special Representative noted commitments made by the Government, other political leaders and civil society organizations to the peace process, in particular the President's ongoing support for children and youth. Increased resource allocations for education, health and nutrition are vital for ensuring long-term peace and stability. The positive impact of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala and the cooperation between the peace mission and the United Nations country team are also commendable.

## **VII. Observations**

68. Since my first report to the Security Council, impressive gains have been made in codifying international norms and standards for the protection and well-being of children. As requested by the Council, a list of violators of those norms and standards is annexed to the present report, demonstrating clearly the will of the international community that those who violate the standards cannot do so with impunity. More needs to be done; there is a need to promote and disseminate these standards and norms, and to raise awareness about them on the ground. Similarly, there is a need to put in place strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanisms to identify the violators and take measures against them. Dissemination, advocacy, monitoring and reporting are the key components that an "era of application" must encompass. My Special Representative will be devoting particular attention to these issues. I also urge the members of the Security Council to reflect upon them during their deliberations.

## **Annex**

### **Parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers**

#### **The situation in Afghanistan**

1. Remnants of the Taliban
2. Factions associated with the former Northern Alliance
3. Factions in the south of Afghanistan

#### **The situation in Burundi**

1. Government of Burundi
2. PALIPEHUTU/FNL (Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu/Forces nationales pour la libération)
3. CNDD/FDD (Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Front pour la défense de la démocratie)

#### **The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo
2. Mouvement national de libération du Congo (MLC)
3. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)-Goma
4. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)-National
5. Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)-Kisangani/ML
6. Union des patriotes congolais (UPC) (Hema militia)
7. Masunzu's forces
8. Lendu militias
9. Ex-FAR/Interahamwe
10. Mai-Mai

#### **The situation in Liberia**

1. Government of Liberia
2. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

#### **The situation in Somalia**

1. Transitional National Government
2. Juba Valley Alliance
3. Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council
4. Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council — Mogadishu
5. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA)



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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), by which the Council requested me to submit a report on the implementation of that resolution and its resolutions 1379 (2001) and 1460 (2003), providing information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict by those parties mentioned in my 2003 report (A/58/546-S/2003/1053 and Corr.1 and 2), including information on other grave violations and abuses (see resolution 1539 (2004), para. 15 (a)); the action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism (*ibid.*, para. 2); incorporation of best practices for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes (*ibid.*, para. 15 (c)); and measures to control illicit subregional and cross-border activities that are harmful to children (*ibid.*, para. 3).

#### II. Information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children and other violations being committed against children

2. The present report provides information on developments covering the period from the issuance of my last report, on 10 November 2003, through December 2004.

3. The preparation of the present report involved broad consultations within the United Nations, particularly with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at Headquarters, peacekeeping missions and country teams, as well as with Member States, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. United Nations peacekeeping missions and United Nations country teams were the primary sources of the information contained in the report. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict brought to the attention of United Nations peacekeeping missions and



country teams the provisions of the resolution and its implications for their roles at the country level, emphasizing in particular their primary responsibility for ensuring effective follow-up to that resolution and other resolutions related to children and armed conflict.

4. The United Nations field representatives have encountered various constraints in the collection of information, including security problems, non-cooperation of parties and the absence of a coherent and functioning mechanism for monitoring and reporting at the country level. Because of similar constraints, there have been relatively few cases where United Nations representatives in the field have initiated dialogue as specific follow-up to and in implementation of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004). However, in several cases dialogue had been ongoing, typically concerning humanitarian access and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

5. The experience of the United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams in seeking to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1539 (2004) and to compile information for the present report underscores particularly the urgent importance of establishing a systematic and comprehensive monitoring and reporting mechanism.

6. Progress made by the parties listed in annexes I and II below and named in the body of my 2003 report has been assessed with respect to whether the parties have engaged in dialogue with United Nations field representatives as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004); whether, through this dialogue, or in the context of other processes, such as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration planning, they have developed action plans to end the use of child soldiers; whether they have, in fact, ceased recruiting and using child soldiers; and whether they have refrained from committing other grave violations against children.

7. In the context of the present report, it should be emphasized that there is no universally applicable definition of “armed conflict” in general, and in particular that the mandate of my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict does not contain a definition of the term. In the performance of his mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of concern, rather than dwelling on the definition of the term “armed conflict”. Reference in the present report to any State or situation should not be construed as a legal determination that there exists a situation of armed conflict within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

## **A. Information on compliance and progress in situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

### **Developments in Afghanistan**

8. Although skirmishes continued in Afghanistan between Government forces, remnants of the Taliban regime and regional and local warlords, the recruitment and use of child soldiers have declined significantly. In the reporting period, the United Nations country team could not obtain specific and reliable information on which factional armed groups may have continued to use children. No commitments have been made by these groups to end this practice. There have been no reported cases

of recruitment of children into the Afghan National Army. Meanwhile, the country team has continued to engage in dialogue with local commanders throughout the country in order to implement the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, launched in February 2004. Through a parallel child-specific demobilization and reintegration programme led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), over 3,820 children were demobilized by September 2004 in the north-eastern, eastern, central highland and central regions.

### **Developments in Burundi**

9. While the majority of parties in Burundi have made commitments to end the use of child soldiers and have begun to participate in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, several armed groups have continued to recruit and use children. Since November 2003, child soldiers have been integrated into the national general disarmament and demobilization Joint Operations Plan. Through the Child Soldiers National Structure, more than 2,260 child soldiers from Forces armées burundaises (FAB) and allied civil defence militias (Gardiens de la paix) had been demobilized and reintegrated in their families by September 2004.

10. In conformity with Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), the executive secretariat for the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB) facilitated dialogue between the Child Soldiers National Structure and the Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (Kaze-FDD) of Jean Bosco Ndayikengurukiye, the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD) of Leonard Nyangoma, the Forces nationales de liberation-Icanzo (FNL-Icanzo) of Alain Mugabarabona and the armed political parties Parti libérateur du peuple (PALIPE)-Agakiza of Etienne Karatasi and Front de libération nationale (FROLINA) of Joseph Karumba. This dialogue resulted, in early July 2004, in commitments from these five armed groups to cease recruitment of persons under the age of 18, to adhere to the normative standards protecting children against recruitment and to adopt the guiding principles of the child-soldiers demobilization process.

11. Representatives of the five armed groups were appointed to the Child Soldiers National Structure, and focal points were assigned to assembly areas where combatants — including children — awaited demobilization. By the end of August 2004, coordinators and focal points were trained by the Child Soldiers National Structure in many aspects of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, and action plans were designed for the demobilization of children by the end of 2004. The Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie — Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) of Pierre Nkurunziza has engaged in dialogue with the United Nations field team and has also appointed representatives to coordinate and facilitate the demobilization of children in their ranks. In December 2004, a second intensive phase of demobilization of child soldiers was launched. 618 children in the ranks of the six armed movements mentioned above were demobilized between 6 and 15 December. These children were transferred to the Gitega demobilization centre, which was reserved solely for children. By 31 December, all of the children were reintegrated in their communities.

12. Despite the above-mentioned progress, concerns remain regarding the recruitment of children by CNDD-FDD of Pierre Nkurunziza for civil defence

militias and by CNDD-Nyangoma in Bururi province (in the communes of Buyengeru, Bururi, Matana, Songa and Burambi), where more than 40 youths left secondary schools in June 2004 for military training camps.

13. The Parti de libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) of Agathon Rwaswa has continued to use and recruit children. ONUB initiated dialogue with this armed group as a follow-up to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004); however, no commitments were received to end these practices, and dialogue was suspended after the massacre in the Gatumba refugee transit camp on 13 August 2004, for which FNL-Rwaswa claimed responsibility. Armed attackers torched 7 of 15 shelters and killed more than 160 Congolese refugees, including children and women. An independent investigation into the Gatumba massacre, conducted by ONUB, the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR), confirmed the responsibility of FNL-Rwaswa but did not provide conclusive evidence of the identity of other perpetrators. In April 2004, FNL-Rwaswa destroyed a therapeutic nutritional centre in Kabezi. Renewed fighting in rural Bujumbura during July and August included attacks on schools, such as the Mutumba secondary school of Kabezi, which was targeted by FNL.

#### **Developments in Côte d'Ivoire**

14. In the 30 July 2004 Accra III Agreement, which was aimed at consolidating further the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire, parties committed themselves to the commencement of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process by 15 October 2004. UNICEF established dialogue with the Forces armées nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) and the Forces armées des forces nouvelles (FAFN). This resulted in the release of 273 child soldiers from FAFN and the declaration by FAFN on 15 September 2003 that it would halt the recruitment of children within its ranks and those of allied militia groups under its control. Although no specific and reliable information has been obtained in the reporting period on recruitment by armed groups now integrated into the FAFN forces, children continue to be present in the ranks of the following, formerly independent, armed groups: the Mouvement pour la paix et la justice (MPJ), the Mouvement populaire ivoirien pour le Grand Ouest (MPIGO) and the Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that approximately 20 child members of the *Lima force supplétive* — which operates alongside FANCI — were recruited from the Nicla camp for Liberian refugees in western Côte d'Ivoire.

#### **Developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

15. Since the establishment of the Transitional Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Forces armées congolaises (FAC, the armed forces of the former Government), the Mouvement de libération du Congo (MLC), the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Goma (RCD-Goma), the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-Kisangani/Mouvement de libération (RCD-K/ML), the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie-National (RCD-N) and the main Mai-Mai groups represented at the inter-Congolese dialogue are being integrated into the new national army, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). While this is a positive step, the various military

units have yet to be fully integrated; in many cases the units are only nominally FARDC, and some of them continued to use children. The slow progress in this restructuring has resulted in continued insecurity in many areas and has been one of the obstacles to ending armed conflict, thereby contributing as well to ongoing risks of recruitment and use of children.

16. In early 2004, the Transitional Government adopted a national policy and procedural framework for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children in FARDC and all other armed groups. Reflecting constitutional and legislative provisions that had come into force over the past year, this framework reinforced the commitment that no persons under 18 years of age should be recruited into or present in any armed group or force. The Commission nationale de désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion, the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration body established in March 2004, has been actively planning the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme with the Structure militaire d'intégration, MONUC, the United Nations country team and NGOs. A certificate formalizing the release of children came into effect in May 2004. During the reporting period, MONUC, UNICEF and child protection partners have been collaborating with the Commission nationale in the ongoing separation of children from armed forces and groups, as well as in other child-related aspects of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. They have also continued dialogue with military officials to advocate and plan the separation of children. This dialogue has involved direct contact with field-level commanders, the Ministry of Defence and the FARDC leadership. Since the designation of FARDC regional military commanders in October 2003, some 5,000 children, a small number of them girls, have been released from armed forces and groups. The planning of reintegration projects has also continued.

17. In Ituri, some progress has been made through dialogue with various armed groups as well as through collaborative disarmament, demobilization and reintegration planning by the United Nations country team and NGOs. In May 2004, the Forces armées populaires congolaises (FAPC), the Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI), the Parti pour l'unité et la sauvegarde du Congo (PUSIC), the Union des patriotes congolais (UPC)-Thomas Lubanga faction and UPC-Floribert Kisembo faction formally committed themselves to participate in the disarmament and community reintegration programme, which first became operational in early September 2004. As of mid-December, almost 700 children had passed through this programme. An unspecified number of children had been released from these groups prior to the disarmament and community reintegration process. In November and early December there were a number of reports of harassment, arrest and re-recruitment of children who passed through the disarmament and community reintegration process in Kpandroma and Mahagi. There have been allegations, now under investigation, that three children who wished to enter the process were executed by elements of FAPC. Subsequently, MONUC intervened and dismantled the FAPC camp where these killings and other abuses reportedly took place in December. Three bodies, which could be those of the above-mentioned children, were subsequently found at the site.

18. Despite some of the advances mentioned above, thousands of children remain in the armed forces and armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and recruitment, though not systematic, has continued. The *etat-major*, though reiterating its commitment to separate all children from FARDC, has not yet

provided adequate information about the presence of children in its numerous brigades. Although some regional and local commanders have released children, no mass release of children has yet taken place. Mai-Mai groups, some of them integrated into FARDC and mainly stationed in the Kivus, Maniema and Katanga, still have a high percentage of children in their ranks, and some have recruited children during the reporting period. The Ituri armed groups and Mudundu — 40 have used and at times recruited or re-recruited children in violation of commitments made. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in his 12 August 2004 letter to the Minister of Defence, raised concerns regarding the continuing recruitment and use of children, while noting the positive steps taken to initiate legal proceedings against a commander accused of recruitment of children in Bukavu. In response, the Minister of Defence passed the information to the Interior Minister and also to the Auditeur militaire of the FARDC *etat-major* for follow-up action. Further, the Minister of Human Rights urged the Interior Minister to remind the armed groups of their responsibilities.

19. The disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration staff and child protection advisers of MONUC have established dialogue with the Force démocratique de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and FDD, and during the past year these groups have released a small number of children, who have been repatriated to Rwanda and Burundi. However, security problems have been a major obstacle to the United Nations assessment of the compliance of these groups.

20. In addition to the above-mentioned groups, the dissident armed group led by Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebutsi recruited and used children during the Bukavu crisis in May and June 2004. This dissident armed group also engaged in rape and other sexual violence against children.

21. In areas affected by conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the majority of the above-mentioned groups have committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. In Ituri, an increase in the number of rapes of girls and women, often by armed men in uniform but of unidentified affiliation, was reported in and around Bunia and Mahagi in November and December. Judicial authorities in Ituri, reinstalled in 2004, have made efforts to prosecute those responsible for abuse but face many constraints. Most cases of rape of children in various parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were committed with impunity. It is hoped that the sentencing of an FARDC corporal in December to 20 years imprisonment for the rape of four young children and sexual abuse of four others will send a strong message that these crimes will not be tolerated.

22. Although the level of conflict has decreased since the establishment of the Transitional Government, there have been incidents where schools, hospitals and nutritional centres have been pillaged and attacked, notably in South Kivu by Nkunda and Mutebutsi's armed group in June 2004. The resumption of the conflict in North Kivu in December has caused more than 150,000 people to flee their villages. Although the exact number of children is unknown, it is likely that they constitute a significant proportion of the total. Reports were received of a massacre — primarily of women and children — allegedly carried out by ex-RCD-Goma rebels in Nyabiondo on 18 and 19 December in revenge for an attack by ex-Mai-Mai in the same area. MONUC is also looking into reports of killings and abductions by ex-RCD-Goma as they marched from Walikale to Masisi. It confirmed one killing by ex-RCD-Goma in Buramba (North Kivu). Reports of

killings of children by Mai-Mai, FDLR, FNI and FAPC were also received over the past year. Eight children were killed by FNI, in Lengabo (Ituri) in September 2004.

### **Developments in Liberia**

23. The signing of the Liberia peace accord in Accra in August 2003, by the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the former Government of Liberia, led to the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia. MODEL, LURD and the former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) participated in the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme that was initially launched in December 2003 and resumed in April 2004 in Gbarnga, Bong County. By October 2004, more than 10,000 children — including more than 2,300 girls — had been disarmed and demobilized and more than 9,600 children were reunified with their families.

24. Some 120 children from Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire have been demobilized from Liberian former fighting forces, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) continued cross-border tracing and reunification. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), ICRC and the relevant Government ministries cooperated in ensuring the protection and security of the children during the repatriation and reunification process.

25. Rape and other acts of grave sexual violence were committed against girls who were recruited or abducted by the former armed forces and other armed groups in Liberia. Approximately 75 per cent of demobilized girls who passed through the interim care centres reported having suffered some form of sexual abuse or exploitation. Despite the cessation of hostilities, reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence have persisted in camps for internally displaced persons, and girls have continued to be trafficked in and out of Liberia for sexual purposes.

### **Developments in Somalia**

26. Substantial progress in the peace process in Somalia was made with the completion of the Somali National Reconciliation Conference and the formation of the Transitional Federal Government. Although several of the main faction leaders pledged to demobilize their militias, several of these used significant numbers of child soldiers during the reporting period. These include the United Somali Congress/Somali Salvation Alliance (USC/SSA)-faction of Muse Sudi Yalahow, the Juba Valley Alliance, the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) of Mohamed Ibrahim Habsade and the Lower Shabelle Administration (all alliance member factions of the Somali National Salvation Council (SNSC)); the Puntland Administration, the Middle Shabelle Administration, the Somali Patriotic Movement/Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SPM/SRRC) and the RRA/SRRC of Mohamed Nir "Sharti gadud" (all alliance member factions of the SRRC); and the USC of Mohamed Kanyare Afrah and the USC of Omar Mohamed. The Somalia United Nations country team is in the process of preparing a "deed of commitment" document on protection and human rights, with provisions concerning the cessation of recruitment and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers, to which adherence by all armed parties will be sought. With the current peace process in its final phase and fighting still ongoing in parts of the country, there is no national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Nevertheless, local child-soldier disarmament, demobilization and reintegration projects have been implemented in Mogadishu, Merca and Kismayo, where 360 children were demobilized by September 2004.

#### **Developments in the Sudan**

27. The United Nations has actively facilitated the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-led north-south peace talks between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which resulted in the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 31 December 2004, as well as assisting African Union efforts to find a political solution for the ongoing crisis in Darfur.

28. Ongoing dialogue between the United Nations and SPLM/A — particularly concerning the recruitment and use of child soldiers and their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration — resulted in the demobilization of 800 children in Western Upper Nile in early 2004. A draft interim policy for SPLM/A on the prevention of the recruitment and use and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers has been developed for inclusion in the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Nevertheless, SPLM/A has continued its recruitment and re-recruitment of children.

29. The United Nations country team has not yet been able to initiate dialogue with the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM), which continued to recruit and use children and has not developed an action plan to halt this practice.

30. The Janjaweed have used children within their ranks in Darfur, have killed and maimed children and have committed widespread rape and other grave sexual violence against women and children.

31. In July and August 2004, a Human Rights Watch mission to Darfur observed child soldiers with the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The African Union Ceasefire Commission has reported recruitment of child soldiers by SLM/A. The United Nations team was planning to engage in dialogue with SLM/A at the time of the writing of the present report.

#### **Developments in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel**

32. The continued Israeli-Palestinian conflict has had a deep impact on the lives of children. Both Palestinian and Israeli children have been exposed to high levels of violence, including killing, maiming and injury. In several instances, Palestinian children have been wounded or killed while on the premises of schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Israeli children have been among the victims of Palestinian suicide bombings and other violence during the reporting period.

#### **Developments in Iraq**

33. Because of security concerns it has not been possible to make a comprehensive United Nations assessment on the situation of children in Iraq. However, numerous other sources have established that many children have been killed or maimed as a consequence of the violence there. Numerous children were killed or injured during air bombings and other military operations carried out by Coalition/multinational

forces and Iraqi forces in urban centres. In some cases, access to hospitals was hindered by such military operations. Children were also the victims of numerous attacks by armed groups. The Iraqi Ministry of Health reported that approximately 125 children had died throughout Iraq as a result of military acts between April and August 2004. Children are also among the many Iraqis abducted for ransom by Iraqi armed groups.

34. Threats to children posed by unexploded ordnance, landmines and other live ammunition within Iraq persisted throughout 2004; in Baghdad alone, there were an estimated 800 hazardous sites, the majority containing cluster bombs and caches of dumped ammunition.

35. The unstable security situation in 2004 not only severely constrained the reconstruction of health and educational infrastructure, but resulted in attacks on schoolchildren, schools and hospitals.

## **B. Information on compliance and progress in situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern**

### **Developments in Colombia**

36. Some progress has been made in ending the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups in Colombia. Following its December 2002 ceasefire, the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) stated that it would release all children under the age of 18 from its ranks. Since that date, the Bloque Central Bolívar, the Bloque Cacique Nutibara, the Bloque Metro and the Bloque Calima of AUC have handed over nearly 180 children to joint commissions composed of representatives of the Government of Colombia's High Commissioner for Peace, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare, the Office of the Ombudsperson and UNICEF. With the active support of the Government of Colombia, UNICEF undertook informal exploratory talks with AUC and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN). However, despite the willingness demonstrated by these groups to engage in dialogue, no commitments were made to halt the recruitment and use of children. The Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), the Autodefensas Unidas del Sur del Casanare (AUSC), the Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (ACCU), the Autodefensas de Magdalena Medio (ACMM), the Autodefensas del Meta (AM), the Autodefensas Campesinas del Sur del Cesar (ACSC), the Bloque Centauros, the Bloque Norte, the Bloque Mineros, the Bloque Pacífico, the Autodefensas del Puerto Boyaca (APB) and the Autodefensas de Cundinamarca (AC) also continued to recruit and use children and have not made a commitment to stop these practices.

37. Despite this unacceptable situation, the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme of the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare has assisted over 800 children who left illegal armed groups between November 2003 and December 2004. Another 550 children were assisted during the last two years by the International Organization for Migration's disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for indigenous and Afro-Colombian children in Chocó and Cauca provinces.

38. Members of illegal armed groups were alleged to have killed and maimed children as well as committed rape and other forms of sexual violence against



children. In September 2004, FARC killed a 15-year-old girl whom they had kidnapped in 2003. Landmines and unexploded ordnance continued to claim the lives of children.

### **Developments in Myanmar**

39. Although ceasefire agreements between the Government of Myanmar and 17 non-State armed groups remained in force, there continued to be skirmishes between the Government armed forces (Tatmadaw) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Karenni Army (KA), the Shan State Army-South (SSA-South) and small armed opposition groups in Mon state. In January 2004 the Government established the Committee for the Prevention of Military Recruitment of Under-Age Children. The Committee developed a plan of action, adopted in early October 2004, which included provisions for the discharge of children under 18 from military service and their reintegration into their families and communities.

40. Although practical constraints have prevented a comprehensive assessment of the use of minors by Government armed forces and non-State armed groups in 2004, there continued to be reliable reports from the United Nations country team, diplomatic missions and NGOs about the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces and a range of non-State armed groups. No commitments to halt such practices were received from KNLA and KA, parties which were mentioned in my 2003 report.

### **Developments in Nepal**

41. The United Nations country team in Nepal has initiated contacts with the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M), mainly regarding general humanitarian principles and access, and in May 2004 it initiated engagement with CPN-M commanders at the local level to discuss issues concerning women and children, including under-age recruitment. However, no commitment or action plan to halt the recruitment and use of children emerged from these discussions, nor have child disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes been established. Intensified conflicts between CPN-M and Government forces resulted in large numbers of children being trained as soldiers in CPN-M strongholds in the districts of Jumla and Jajarkot, in mid-western Nepal. Since January 2002, the Maoists have abducted several thousand children, girls as well as boys. Although the majority of abducted children have been allowed to return to their homes, after a couple of weeks of ideological indoctrination and military training, they have remained "on call" for operational duties and, when required, have often been attached to the main armed groups in their areas.

42. CPN-M has engaged in the killing and maiming of children; between January and June 2004, over 50 children were killed and 110 injured. Some children suspected of involvement with CPN-M have been killed by security forces, including unarmed children accused of serving in non-combatant roles.

43. A large number of schools were closed due to the efforts of CPN-M to mobilize students into its "student wing", the All Nepal National Independent Student Union (Revolutionary) (ANNISU-R); these activities sometimes involved the abduction and murder of teachers.

### **Developments in Northern Ireland**

44. In the reporting period, it was not possible to obtain specific and reliable information concerning the recruitment of children by paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland. No commitments were made by any of these groups to end this practice or to refrain from other abuses against children, including paramilitary-style assaults and paramilitary-style shootings.

### **Developments in the Philippines**

45. Significant progress has been made in the Philippines with the 14 February 2004 agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front to establish the Joint Monitoring Committee to monitor the implementation of the 1998 Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process and the Council for the Welfare of Children reactivated the Inter-Agency Committee for Children Involved in Armed Conflict. The Inter-Agency Committee has identified strategies to provide for the protection of such children, including the provision of legal and judicial assistance, direct negotiations with armed groups to stop the recruitment and use of children, services for the healing and reintegration of child former combatants and the development of a communications plan and database. The Inter-Agency Committee was mandated to initiate projects for the prevention of recruitment and for the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of children involved in armed conflict. In September 2004, President Arroyo unveiled the basic framework of a new Government peace plan that includes stipulations for the prevention of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, as part of the continuation and conclusion of formal peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the National Democratic Front-New People's Army (NDF-NPA), parties known to have child soldiers in their ranks.

46. As of September 2004, no measures for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers had been taken by NDF-NPA or MILF. A joint needs assessment of MILF communities — conducted under the auspices of the World Bank, the United Nations country team and the Government — will provide information and guidance for recruitment prevention and reintegration of child soldiers; these initiatives will be pursued once a peace agreement is reached with MILF. The United Nations country team has been further engaged in dialogue with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process in order to develop a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. No reports were received on continuing recruitment or use of children by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which became largely inactive as an armed group, and no reports exist of recruitment by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

### **Developments in the Russian Federation**

47. The targeting and terrorizing of children by Chechen illegal armed groups reached an unprecedented level in the September 2004 hostage-taking of children, parents and teachers at Middle School No. 1 in Beslan, North Ossetia, of the Russian Federation. This act of terror, for which Shamil Basayev's illegal armed group claimed responsibility, resulted in the deaths of over 330 people, more than half of whom were children. Over 200 children were injured. The Prosecutor-General of the Russian Federation is conducting an official investigation into the

hostage-taking tragedy in Beslan. In the reporting period, the United Nations country team in the Russian Federation was not able to obtain specific and reliable information on recruitment or use of children by these groups. No commitments were made by any of these illegal armed groups to end this practice.

#### **Developments in Sri Lanka**

48. Despite some progress achieved in Sri Lanka with the July 2003 signing by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) of the Action Plan for Children Affected by War, in which that armed group agreed to halt recruitment and release all children within its ranks, LTTE has continued to use and recruit children. During 2004, more than 1,000 cases of new recruitment and re-recruitment were reported to UNICEF, a high percentage of the recruits being girls. Re-recruitment was particularly high in the eastern part of the country. Altogether, there have been more than 4,700 cases of child recruitment, some involving children as young as 11, since April 2001. Of these children, more than 2,900 have returned or been released to their families, including approximately 1,230 who were formally released and over 1,660 who went home following fighting in eastern Sri Lanka in April 2004 and the fall of the Karuna faction of LTTE. In addition, at least 550 children have run away from LTTE during the reporting period.

49. LTTE has often carried out recruitment by force, abducting children while on their way to school or during religious festivities, and beating families and teachers who resisted the seizure of the children.

#### **Developments in Uganda**

50. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continued to recruit and use children in northern Uganda. Efforts were under way at the end of 2004 to negotiate a cessation of hostilities, and a first direct meeting between a delegation of the Government of Uganda and LRA took place on 29 December in northern Uganda. However, no dialogue on the issue of the recruitment and use of children had been established with LRA, nor had it made commitments to end these practices. Between October 2003 and July 2004, LRA abducted at least 3,000 children, including some 1,600 in the Gulu district and nearly 250 in the Kitgum district. In the same period, local reception centres facilitating the reintegration of formerly abducted children in the Gulu, Pader, Kitgum and Lira districts received 2,133 new child escapees.

51. LRA has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children. For example, 15 children were killed in the massacre of 42 civilians at Lukodi in May 2004. LRA has also been involved in widespread sexual violence against girls whom it has abducted. A particularly horrendous massacre took place in February 2004 in the Barlonyo camp for internally displaced persons in Lira district. Out of more than 200 persons killed, 67 were children. To date, no independent investigation has been conducted into the Barlonyo massacre.

52. UNICEF and child protection NGOs have engaged in dialogue with the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) and affiliated Local Defence Units (LDUs) regarding the recruitment and use of children. The Human Rights Desk of UPDF reported that it had been given responsibility for screening new recruits to ensure compliance with the national legislation forbidding conscription under the age of 18. However, UPDF had not yet established an operational system for determining whether recruits are of age.

53. Despite this progress, spot checks by child protection agencies, facilitated by UPDF, have found some children in the ranks of the UPDF 105 battalion, largely comprising re-recruited LRA members, and in LDUs.

### **C. Sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel**

54. Notwithstanding the fact that tens of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers serve with distinction across the world, in 2004 the number of allegations of sexual misconduct against United Nations peacekeeping personnel increased significantly. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a large number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of local women and children were made against both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel. A series of United Nations investigations into these allegations have so far resulted in cases for disciplinary action being made against 20 military personnel. In addition, allegations relating to five civilian peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have led to one resignation and one civilian being held in detention in France on criminal charges. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is continuing investigations into all outstanding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

55. In October 2004, my Adviser on sexual exploitation and abuse, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations, undertook a preliminary assessment of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Further to that visit and the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services investigation into sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I am deeply concerned to learn that the problem appears to be more serious and widespread than previously known. Peacekeeping personnel come to help countries and communities torn by war. It is imperative that, whether civilian or uniformed, they uphold the trust that the local population and the international community have placed in them.

56. Procedures to address sexual exploitation and abuse have been in place in the past in peacekeeping operations. However, our current approach to addressing this problem needs to be seriously reviewed across all peacekeeping operations. To this end, informal consultations with troop- and police-contributing countries have been initiated to identify joint solutions to the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping contexts.

### **D. Recommendation**

57. In view of the widespread and unacceptable patterns of violations recorded in the present report, I recommend that the Security Council take targeted and concrete measures where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties named in the lists annexed to my reports, in accordance with its resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). Such measures should include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restrictions on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

### **III. Action plan for the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism**

#### **A. Introduction**

58. The present section of the report is in response to the request of the Security Council in its resolution 1539 (2004), paragraph 2, for the devising of an action plan for a systematic and comprehensive monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism.

59. The proposals discussed below represent an action plan for the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism, composed of various bodies and actors, each of which brings the role and added value of its area of jurisdiction, mandate, competence and expertise. The proposed actions, taken together, are designed to create a critical mass of response to ensure compliance and bring about the “era of application”. This action plan builds on the proposals for monitoring and reporting submitted to the Security Council in 2003 and my report to the General Assembly (A/59/331) of 3 September 2004, and draws on extensive consultations on this issue conducted among all stakeholders, particularly Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations and NGOs.

60. The Graça Machel report of 1996 on the impact of armed conflict on children laid the foundation for the children and armed conflict agenda and constituted a seminal call to action. In the course of the past several years, my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has led collective efforts, involving UNICEF and other United Nations entities, Governments, regional organizations and NGOs, to develop and transform the children and armed conflict agenda into concrete actions and initiatives. These have yielded important, tangible results and generated strong momentum for the children and armed conflict agenda:

(a) There is greatly increased visibility, global awareness and advocacy on children and armed conflict issues;

(b) The protection of war-affected children has been firmly placed on the international peace-and-security agenda;

(c) An impressive and comprehensive body of children and armed conflict norms has now been put in place;

(d) The protection and well-being of children are increasingly reflected in the mandates, training and reports of United Nations peacekeeping operations;

(e) Key regional organizations — such as the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization of American States, the African Union, the Commonwealth, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Human Security Network and the Group of Eight industrialized countries — have adopted children and armed conflict concerns as part of their own agendas through important political declarations, advocacy and programme activities;

(f) Children’s concerns are increasingly being considered in peace negotiations, peace accords and post-conflict programmes for rehabilitation and rebuilding;

(g) A major movement for advocacy and operational activities on the children and armed conflict agenda has developed among NGOs;

(h) The mainstreaming of children and armed conflict issues is taking hold in several institutions and mechanisms, within and outside the United Nations;

(i) Transitional justice processes and mechanisms have incorporated children and armed conflict concerns to hold accountable those responsible for crimes against children;

(j) Important local initiatives on children and armed conflict issues have been developed in several countries;

(k) The establishment of the role of child protection advisers, and their deployment, in peacekeeping operations represents an important innovation designed to ensure that children and armed conflict concerns are integrated in a significant way into all aspects of peace operations;

(l) The practice of listing offending parties in the Secretary-General's annual reports to the Security Council represents a landmark development for monitoring and reporting;

(m) The systematic practice of obtaining concrete commitments and benchmarks from parties to conflict is being developed;

(n) There are initiatives to develop the systematic documentation of abuses against children in conflict situations, such as the databases on abduction in Uganda and on recruitment in Sri Lanka, developed by UNICEF.

61. In spite of these advances, the situation for children remains grave and unacceptable on the ground. The international community is now faced with a cruel dichotomy. On the one hand, clear and strong children and armed conflict protection standards and important concrete initiatives, particularly at the international level, have been developed. On the other hand, atrocities against children and impunity for violators continue largely unabated on the ground.

62. The key to bridging this gulf lies in a systematic campaign for the "era of application". My Special Representative has made the campaign for the era of application a leitmotif of his advocacy, urging the international community to redirect its energies from the normative task of the elaboration of standards to the compliance mission of ensuring their application on the ground.

63. The call for the era of application has been endorsed by the Security Council, and in its resolution 1539 (2004), the Council called for the urgent establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism.

64. The campaign for the era of application encompasses four key components: advocacy and dissemination of children and armed conflict norms; developing and strengthening local civil society networks for protection, monitoring and rehabilitation; mainstreaming children and armed conflict issues into the programmes and mechanisms of key institutions, within and outside the United Nations; and the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism to ensure compliance with children and armed conflict norms.

## **B. Monitoring and reporting, leading to action**

65. The purpose of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism is to provide for the systematic gathering of objective, specific and reliable information on grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict, leading to well-informed, concerted and effective responses to ensure compliance with international and local children and armed conflict protection norms. An objective of the present report is to set out an action plan for the development of such a mechanism.

66. The present section of the report addresses several pertinent issues concerning the establishment of a monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism, in particular the following:

- (a) The most grave violations that should be particularly monitored;
- (b) Standards that constitute the basis for monitoring;
- (c) Parties whose activities should be monitored;
- (d) The gathering and compilation of information at the country level;
- (e) The review and integration of information and the preparation of reports at the Headquarters level;
- (f) Bodies that constitute “destinations for action” for monitoring reports.

67. The proposed monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism draws on existing resources at both the national and the international level. Thus, no new entity or structure will be established for this purpose. The mechanism operates at three principal levels: information-gathering, coordination and action at the country level; coordination, scrutiny and integration of information and preparation of reports at the Headquarters level; and concrete actions to ensure compliance, to be taken particularly by bodies that constitute “destinations for action”. My Special Representative and UNICEF will play a particularly important role in the establishment and implementation of this mechanism.

## **C. The most grave violations that should be particularly monitored**

68. Certain practices should receive priority attention, both because they constitute especially egregious violations against children and because they can be monitored. Specifically, monitoring efforts should focus on the following six grave violations:

- (a) Killing or maiming of children;
- (b) Recruiting or using child soldiers;
- (c) Attacks against schools or hospitals;
- (d) Rape or other grave sexual violence against children;
- (e) Abduction of children;
- (f) Denial of humanitarian access for children.

Although some of the above-stated abuses may occur in non-conflict situations, the monitoring and reporting regime proposed here is specific to situations of armed

conflict. Within this framework, particular priorities may vary according to specific situations.

#### **D. The standards that constitute the basis for monitoring**

69. A credible monitoring, reporting and compliance mechanism must be based on specific and clear standards. There is now a comprehensive body of such instruments and norms in place for the protection of war-affected children. These standards, listed below, are specific and provide well-defined yardsticks for monitoring and reporting violations against children in situations of armed conflict.

70. At the international level these standards include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000); the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998); International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999); the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child (1999); the Geneva Conventions (1949) and their two Additional Protocols (1977); and Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2001), 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004), which are devoted to the subject of children and armed conflict.

71. In addition to these international instruments and norms, national legislation exists that provides for the protection, rights and well-being of children. There are also concrete commitments on children and armed conflict which have been entered into by parties to conflict.

72. Peace accords incorporating children and armed conflict commitments, such as the 1998 Good Friday Agreement on Northern Ireland, the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone, the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi and the 2003 Accra Peace Agreement on Liberia, also constitute clear standards for the protection of children and their prioritization in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

73. Significantly, various societies can draw on their own traditional norms governing the conduct of warfare. Societies throughout history have recognized the obligation to provide children special protection from harm, even in times of war. Distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable practices have been maintained, as have time-honoured taboos and injunctions proscribing the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations, especially children and women.

#### **E. Parties whose activities should be monitored**

74. An effective monitoring, reporting and compliance regime must monitor and seek to influence the conduct of all parties to conflict, Governments as well as insurgency groups. In this respect, it is also important to monitor the conduct of international peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel.

75. The international instruments and standards listed above, which constitute the normative yardsticks for monitoring violations, address and place obligations at the doorsteps of all parties to conflict. It is crucial to engage in protection dialogue with all entities whose actions have a significant impact on children, without any



implications as to their political or juridical status. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF have developed a systematic practice of engaging in dialogue with and obtaining concrete commitments from all parties to conflict, and the Security Council has called on all parties to conflict to observe the concrete commitments they have undertaken.

76. The lists submitted to the Security Council, which identify the offending parties, encompass all offending parties, while preserving a clear distinction between parties in situations on the agenda of the Security Council and parties in situations not on the agenda of the Council and other situations of concern.

77. At political and practical levels there are levers of influence that can have significant sway with all parties to conflict. In today's world, parties to conflict cannot operate as islands unto themselves. The viability and success of their political and military projects depend on networks of cooperation and good will that link them to the outside world, to their immediate neighbourhood as well as to the wider international community. There are, consequently, powerful factors that can influence all parties to conflict: the force of international and national public opinion; the desire of the parties for acceptability and legitimacy at the national and the international level; international accountability as enforced by the International Criminal Court and ad hoc tribunals; restrictions on the external provision of arms, financial flows and illicit trade in natural resources; the growing strength and vigilance of international and national civil societies; and media exposure.

## **F. Gathering, vetting and compiling information at the country level**

78. At the forefront of efforts to advocate, monitor and ensure compliance for the era of application are country-level child protection actors, some of which are already engaged in various levels of monitoring and reporting activities. United Nations peacekeeping operations and United Nations country teams, under the leadership of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and resident coordinators, respectively, are present and active in virtually all conflict-affected situations. Their presence, knowledge and ongoing operations provide unique opportunities for advocacy, monitoring and reporting. As reaffirmed in Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), the primary responsibility for follow-up, coordination and monitoring of children and armed conflict issues at the country level belongs to the United Nations field teams, both peacekeeping operations and country teams, consistent within their respective mandates.

79. Child protection networks, which bring together all stakeholders concerned with child protection and rehabilitation in informal networks and forums for dialogue and collaboration, now exist in several war-affected countries and situations. These informal networks should provide resources for building a structured and concerted children and armed conflict monitoring and reporting system on the ground. Child protection networks are typically composed of United Nations actors, relevant Government ministries or institutions, international NGOs and local NGOs and civil society organizations, which undertake a range of advocacy and programmatic activities for the benefit of children. Where they are not yet in place, UNICEF and United Nations peacekeeping operations (child protection advisers) should undertake to facilitate the formation of child protection networks in those war-affected countries.

80. In each country where children and armed conflict is an issue, a task force on monitoring and reporting will be constituted, involving key members of the child protection network. The task force on monitoring and reporting should be the primary focus and locus for action on monitoring and reporting at the country level — gathering, vetting and integrating field-level information and providing reports to the country Special Representatives of the Secretary-General or resident coordinators, who, in turn, transmit the reports to my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

81. It is crucial to support and strengthen national institutions for the protection and rehabilitation of children in conflict and post-conflict situations. The development and strengthening of civil society networks for advocacy, protection, monitoring and rehabilitation, at the national and the subregional level, should become a particular priority. This is the best way to ensure local ownership and sustainability. It will require enhanced support and assistance from international partners.

*Actions to be undertaken by United Nations field teams*

82. Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and resident coordinators are ultimately responsible for ensuring United Nations-wide follow-up, mainstreaming, coordination and monitoring and engaging in dialogue with parties to conflict on children and armed conflict issues; they are the focal points at the country level. They may delegate day-to-day responsibility for these tasks to the task forces on monitoring and reporting. The direct leadership and personal involvement of Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and resident coordinators, in consultation with UNICEF, is critical with respect to key issues such as dialogue, action plans and specific political démarches at the country level with Government authorities and other concerned parties.

83. Task forces on monitoring and reporting should be constituted and, whenever possible, draw particularly from child protection networks on the ground. A task force on monitoring and reporting should be a selected and cohesive group of those United Nations actors (peacekeeping operations, UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNHCR, UNHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) and NGO actors that have experience in and are most directly concerned with monitoring and reporting. The task force on monitoring and reporting would serve as both the locus and the focus of action, responsible for determining the division of labour; coordinating the gathering of information on the ground; vetting and confirming the accuracy of information received; integrating and providing quality control for the information received; providing feedback to local communities and civil society organizations; providing guidance and training in methodology, as well as in ethical and security matters, to information gatherers; making determinations on practical and political constraints, with recommendations to Special Representatives of the Secretary-General or resident coordinators, as necessary; and preparing the monitoring and compliance country reports. Where there is a peacekeeping mission, the task force on monitoring and reporting would be coordinated and co-chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General and a UNICEF representative, with the former serving as the reporting conduit to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. In a country without a peacekeeping mission, the UNICEF

representative would chair the task force and report in this regard to the resident coordinator.

84. In order to perform effectively the functions of protection, monitoring and reporting, UNICEF, UNHCR, peacekeeping operations, UNHCHR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as United Nations entities with important child-protection mandates, will take concrete steps to strengthen the capacities of their field presence in terms of personnel, training and funding. Similarly, NGOs involved in monitoring and reporting should also strengthen their capacities for this purpose.

85. In peacekeeping missions, advocacy and monitoring and reporting on child protection should constitute a core function for child protection advisers. Other personnel, such as human rights officers, humanitarian affairs officers and military observers, should be fully briefed on child protection issues during their pre-deployment and in-mission training with a view to facilitating their mainstreaming into the mission's activities. Within United Nations country teams, these functions depend particularly on UNICEF providing leadership, in close cooperation with UNHCR, UNHCHR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. In carrying out their respective roles, a collaborative division of labour should be developed to ensure inter-agency coordination at the country level.

86. To ensure the reliability of information and devise a system for quality control and confidentiality, each task force on monitoring and reporting should establish a rigorous and systematic procedure for vetting information gathered, protecting sources and ensuring the security of the raw data. Although general monitoring and reporting practices may be the same across country situations, country-level particularities will necessitate specific approaches by the task force. Ultimately, it is critical that information transmitted be objective, accurate and precise. Typically, such information should include concise descriptions, specifying incidents of violations, where and when the incidents occurred and the identity of parties responsible for committing the violations.

87. Task forces on monitoring and reporting should prepare annual country reports, monthly reports on relevant developments and alert reports as necessary.

88. Under the coordination and management of UNICEF, a task force on monitoring and reporting should establish and maintain a monitoring and reporting information database at the country level, which feeds into the central monitoring and reporting information database at the Headquarters level.

89. In order to encourage and develop effective "neighbourhood initiatives" to address cross-border and subregional children and armed conflict concerns, it is necessary to constitute a neighbourhood consultation framework — "neighbourhood watch" — that would periodically bring together UNICEF, United Nations peacekeeping operations (child protection advisers) and other child protection actors within neighbouring countries to address common challenges, strengthen collaboration, share information and explore joint initiatives and reporting, in cooperation with the Governments concerned.

90. Task forces on monitoring and reporting should undertake periodic assessments of best practices and lessons learned, in the context of children and armed conflict monitoring and reporting. Lessons learned at the country level should be shared with Headquarters and the "neighbourhood watch".

91. In order to promote children and armed conflict protection and mainstreaming, the Security Council should, when necessary, consider including child protection in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General should take concrete steps, consistent within their mandates, to ensure that their country reports devote specific sections to child protection, as stipulated by the Council in its resolutions 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004).

### **G. Review and integration of information and the preparation of reports at the Headquarters level**

92. Information gathered at the country level is transmitted to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict by Special Representatives of the Secretary-General or resident coordinators, for review, consolidation and compilation into monitoring and compliance reports. This Headquarters exercise is spearheaded by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, which is the focal point for the preparation of the Secretary-General's report and the convener of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict. The Task Force, established since May 2000, consists of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office of Legal Affairs, UNHCHR, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Department for Disarmament Affairs, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, UNHCR, UNDP and ILO.

93. Working in close consultation with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict will be responsible for scrutinizing and consolidating the country reports and compiling the information into an annual monitoring and compliance report. In the preparation of this report, the Office of the Special Representative will coordinate the consolidation of information and the preparation of monitoring reports; scrutinize information received and seek necessary clarification from United Nations field teams; draft the monitoring and compliance reports; prepare lists of offending parties, while maintaining a clear separation between parties in situations on the agenda of the Security Council and parties in situations not on the agenda of the Council; distribute draft reports to members of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict for their review, inputs and comments; convene the Task Force for reviews of and consultations on structure, content, monitoring lists and scrutiny of draft reports; and consult with and solicit inputs and comments from delegations, regional organizations, ICRC and NGOs.

94. The annual report should be comprehensive in approach, encompassing the aforementioned six categories of grave violations, in situations of armed conflict and other situations of concern. It should provide concise, objective and accurate information on violations. Where applicable, the report should also record concrete examples of protection and compliance measures undertaken by parties to conflict.

95. A steering committee of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict will be convened to undertake a regular review of overall progress in monitoring and reporting, focusing particularly on the implementation and functioning of the

mechanism. The steering committee, which will meet at the level of principals twice a year and at the level of experts every month, will be composed of the following members of the Task Force: the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHCR and UNHCHR.

96. In the context of preparing monitoring reports and lists, it should be emphasized that there is no universally applicable definition of “armed conflict” in general, and in particular that the mandate of my Special Representative does not contain a definition of the term. In the performance of his mandate, my Special Representative has adopted a pragmatic and cooperative approach to this issue, focusing on ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to situations of concern, rather than on the definition of the term “armed conflict”. The mention or discussion of any particular State or situation should not be construed as a legal determination that there exists a situation of armed conflict within the meaning of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

97. Monitoring lists are not intended to name countries as such; the purpose is to identify particular parties to conflict that are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are cited only in order to indicate the locations or situations where the offending parties are committing the violations in question.

*Actions to be undertaken by the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict at the Headquarters level*

98. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, working with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, will continue to prepare an annual monitoring and compliance report, which will be submitted to the following “destinations for action” for their review and action in the context of their respective mandates and competences: the Security Council, the General Assembly, regional organizations, national Governments, the International Criminal Court and the Commission on Human Rights.

99. The Office of the Special Representative and the Task Force will also compile ad hoc reports as necessary for transmission to other “destinations for action”, in particular, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the proposed working group of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

100. The Office of the Special Representative and the Task Force will monitor progress concerning the integration of children and armed conflict issues into key peace-and-security activities, particularly in relation to mandates of peace operations, planning of new peace missions, reports from peacekeeping missions and country-specific and relevant thematic Security Council resolutions.

101. The Office of the Special Representative and the Task Force will keep under regular review significant children and armed conflict developments in specific situations, in order to propose actions and raise timely alerts as necessary.

102. The Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF will establish and manage a central monitoring and reporting information database on behalf of the steering committee, drawing on the monitoring databases compiled at the country level.

103. Each United Nations entity that is a member of the Task Force will designate a senior-level or mid-level dedicated departmental focal point for children and armed conflict, and the focal points should become regular participants in the Task Force.

104. In order to provide common approaches and guidelines for the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF will compile monitoring and reporting guidelines, drawing on experience to date and working with the Task Force, United Nations peacekeeping operations, United Nations country teams and NGOs.

105. Members of the Task Force, particularly the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF, UNHCHR, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, will continue to play their respective advocacy roles actively, drawing on the information provided through the mechanism.

106. After the launch of the mechanism, its smooth implementation and full operationalization will require intensive interaction, including regular field visits by the Office of the Special Representative and UNICEF, and regular guidance between the Task Force and United Nations field teams, to ensure ongoing review, feedback and a smooth two-way flow of information. A formal assessment of the implementation of the mechanism will be conducted one year after its launch.

## **H. Bodies that constitute “destinations for action”, with responsibility for taking necessary action based on the monitoring reports**

107. Reports compiled should serve as triggers for action on the part of the appropriate international, regional and national bodies, each employing the means and levers of influence at its disposal to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of war-affected children. Such actions may range from calls for compliance to condemnation of violations to the application of targeted measures. The key “destinations for action” are national Governments, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the International Criminal Court, the Commission on Human Rights and regional organizations.

### **1. National Governments**

108. Governments have the most direct formal, legal and political responsibility to ensure the protection of all children exposed to armed conflict within their countries. It is important to stress both the centrality and the immediacy of the role of national authorities to provide effective protection and relief to all children in danger. In this regard, national Governments constitute the first “destination for action”, the first line of response. Any actions by United Nations entities and international NGOs at the country level should always be designed to support and complement the protection and rehabilitation roles of national authorities, never to supplant them. In situations where national protection institutions have been greatly weakened by the experience of protracted armed conflict, international partners should make it a priority to support the rebuilding of local institutions and capacities for protection and rehabilitation.

*Actions to be undertaken by national Governments*

109. National Governments should enact and apply relevant national legislation to ensure the protection, rights and well-being of children and should ensure the protection and rehabilitation of war-affected children within their jurisdiction. Whenever appropriate, relevant Parliamentary committees, such as committees covering human rights, development, humanitarian action and foreign affairs, should be encouraged to receive periodic national and international monitoring and compliance reports on children and armed conflict, for their own review and action. In the context of their international responsibility, Governments should promote the children and armed conflict agenda within multilateral organizations and in their bilateral cooperation.

**2. Security Council**

110. Because of its primary responsibility for peace and security, the Security Council has a special responsibility for ensuring the protection and well-being of children exposed to armed conflict. With respect to ensuring compliance with children and armed conflict protection norms, the Security Council is by far the most important international “destination for action”.

*Actions to be undertaken by the Security Council*

111. The Secretary-General’s annual report to the Security Council serves as the primary vehicle for transmitting monitoring and compliance information. The annual debate by the Security Council on children affected by armed conflict is intended to serve as a systematic review of the state of monitoring and compliance on the ground.

112. It is recommended that the Council review monitoring and compliance whenever a specific country situation is under consideration and ensure that children and armed conflict concerns are incorporated into ensuing resolutions.

113. Whenever the Council conducts fact-finding field missions, it may wish to include a checklist of specific children and armed conflict monitoring and compliance concerns in its briefs and discussions.

114. In order to promote children and armed conflict protection, mainstreaming and monitoring, the Council should consider the inclusion of child protection in the mandates of all peacekeeping missions.

115. Monitoring and compliance reports received by the Security Council serve as triggers for action. In order to end impunity, it is critical that grave and persistent violations lead to targeted and concrete measures of response by the Council. The Council may wish to consider targeted and concrete measures where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties listed in my reports, in accordance with its resolutions 1379 (2001), 1460 (2003) and 1539 (2004). Such measures could include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders, their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, a ban on the export or supply of small arms, a ban on military assistance, restrictions on the flow of financial resources to offending parties and a ban on illicit trade in natural resources.

### **3. General Assembly**

116. The annual regular session of the General Assembly provides an important opportunity to review the monitoring and compliance reports and take appropriate action. The annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict, which records grave abuses and lists parties responsible for the violations, is being submitted simultaneously to the General Assembly to enable it to take appropriate action within the context of its own mandate.

#### *Actions to be undertaken by the General Assembly*

117. Under its agenda item “Promotion and protection of the rights of children”, the General Assembly may wish to devote a dedicated resolution to children and armed conflict monitoring and compliance. Such a resolution might include calls for compliance, condemnation of grave violations and specific recommendations on corrective measures to be undertaken by offending parties.

118. When considering human rights in country-specific situations, relevant monitoring and compliance information on children and armed conflict issues could be incorporated into the discussion and ensuing resolutions.

### **4. Economic and Social Council**

119. The annual consideration of the report and resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights provides the Economic and Social Council with the opportunity to review actions taken at the level of the Commission.

#### *Action to be undertaken by the Economic and Social Council*

120. The Economic and Social Council could periodically devote its high-level segment to a review of the subject of children and armed conflict, focusing particularly on the issue of monitoring and reporting.

### **5. International Criminal Court**

121. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is important because of both its deterrence effect and the prospect of prosecution for war crimes against children.

#### *Actions to be undertaken by the International Criminal Court*

122. Concrete steps should be taken to ensure the earliest possible prosecution of persons responsible for war crimes against children. Some initiatives are already under way in this direction. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and the task forces on monitoring and reporting can contribute to this by providing the International Criminal Court Prosecutor with relevant information at their disposal.

123. The deterrence role of the International Criminal Court needs to be actively promoted through proactive advocacy and public information activities by United Nations and NGO actors at all levels.



## 6. United Nations human rights regime

124. The cluster of mechanisms that comprise the United Nations human rights regime could be more systematically channelled to promote effective children and armed conflict monitoring and compliance. Their roles are crucial in this context.

### *Actions to be undertaken by the Commission on Human Rights*

125. The Commission on Human Rights receives the annual children and armed conflict monitoring and compliance report. This could constitute the basis for annual review and action through a resolution dedicated to this purpose, at the regular session of the Commission.

126. When considering country-specific human rights situations in countries affected by armed conflict, the Commission could incorporate specific children and armed conflict concerns into its discussion and resulting resolutions.

### *Actions to be undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*

127. UNHCHR could undertake public advocacy, fact-finding and, where appropriate, independent investigation of specific episodes of atrocities and other grave violations against children. Children and armed conflict concerns could be systematically integrated into the tasks and capacities of human rights field officers.

### *Actions to be undertaken by the Committee on the Rights of the Child*

128. The Committee on the Rights of the Child could incorporate monitoring and accountability on children and armed conflict issues in its scheduled reviews of country reports. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict currently provides children and armed conflict-specific supplementary information ahead of country reviews; this practice could be expanded in collaboration with the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and task forces on monitoring and reporting.

### *Actions to be undertaken by Special Rapporteurs of the Commission on Human Rights*

129. There are special rapporteurs and independent experts focusing on specific situations, including several conflict-affected countries. When the special rapporteurs prepare their reports, children and armed conflict-specific sections, focusing particularly on the six grave violations identified in section III.C above, could be incorporated.

130. It is also important that the special rapporteurs invoke the international instruments and norms listed in section III.D above as a basis for proactive advocacy for children and armed conflict concerns and draw on information in reports issued by treaty supervision bodies of the United Nations system.

131. There are special rapporteurs who cover thematic issues that are pertinent to children and armed conflict concerns, particularly the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; the Special Rapporteur on trafficking

in persons, especially women and children; and the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons.

*Action to be undertaken by the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights*

132. A standing working group on children and armed conflict could be constituted under the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to undertake a regular review of children and armed conflict monitoring and compliance in specific situations, and to make recommendations for appropriate action by the Subcommission based on information provided by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict.

**7. Regional and subregional organizations**

133. In the course of the last several years, several regional organizations, working with Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, have incorporated the protection of war-affected children into their agendas and programmes. The Security Council has urged and encouraged this development. Regional organizations can make important contributions to a concerted monitoring and compliance regime on children and armed conflict. The Office of the Special Representative will continue to transmit the annual monitoring reports to regional organizations, for review and action within their mandates and jurisdictions.

*Actions to be undertaken by regional organizations*

134. Regional organizations should incorporate and mainstream the protection of children affected by armed conflict in their advocacy, policies and programmes. They should develop peer review and monitoring and reporting mechanisms, while also including monitoring activities, child protection staff and training in their peace operations and field presence. In addition, they should undertake subregional initiatives to end activities harmful to children in times of conflict, in particular cross-border recruitment and abduction of children, illicit movement of small arms and illicit trade in natural resources.

135. The European Union and ECOWAS, for example, have already taken important initiatives in some of these areas. Other regional organizations, such as the African Union, the Organization of American States, the League of Arab States, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Association of South-East Asian Nations, could develop similar initiatives, working in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

**8. Role of non-governmental and civil society organizations**

136. NGOs and civil society organizations, both local and international, have crucial roles to play in developing and strengthening the children and armed conflict monitoring and reporting regime. A major movement has developed among them on the children and armed conflict agenda. For the specific purpose of promoting monitoring and reporting, three categories of actors are especially important: international advocacy networks, such as the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child

Soldiers; international NGOs devoted to conducting operational programmes on the ground, such as World Vision and Save the Children; and the growing movement of local NGOs and civil society groups devoted to advocacy, protection and rehabilitation at the front line. Specifically, the roles of NGOs and civil society organizations are important in the following areas:

(a) International NGO networks, such as the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, can contribute by continuing to develop and deepen monitoring projects in their areas of specialization. The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, on the other hand, covers monitoring and reporting on all aspects of children and armed conflict; its activities could also be developed and strengthened;

(b) As well as issuing their own independent monitoring reports, these NGOs can provide important inputs into the United Nations monitoring and compliance reports;

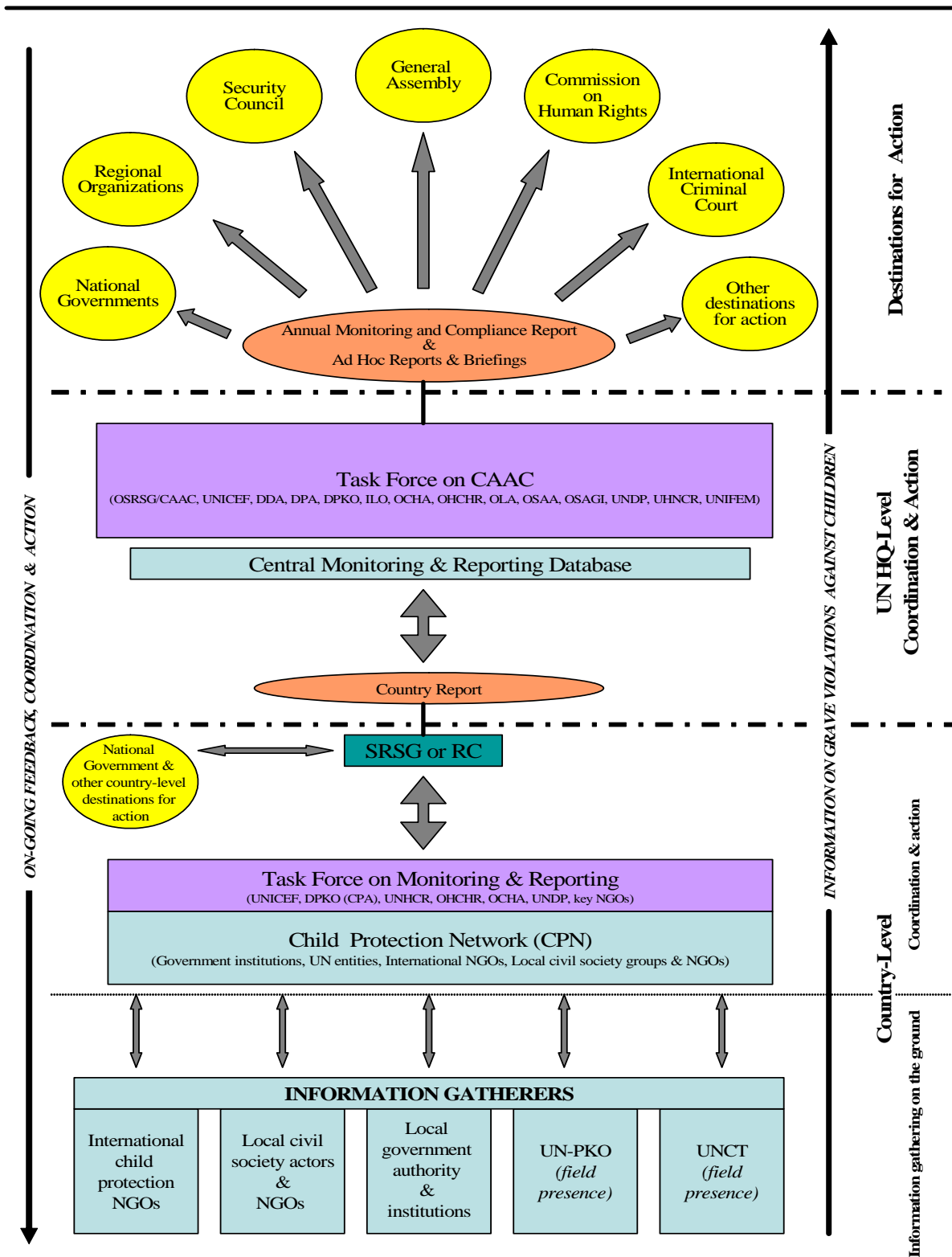
(c) NGOs should continue to provide briefings to the Security Council under the Arria formula;

(d) International NGOs which focus mainly on protection and rehabilitation activities on the ground are well placed to make important contributions through their active participation in child protection networks and task forces on monitoring and reporting;

(e) Local NGOs and civil society organizations, such as women's associations, teachers' and parents' associations, chiefs and elders, communities of faith, and youth groups, play an indispensable role in the gathering and confirmation of information. Equally important is their active participation in child protection networks and task forces on monitoring and reporting, as part of their activities for advocacy, protection and rehabilitation at the front line.

137. Along with their contribution to monitoring and reporting activities as outlined above, all categories of NGOs and civil society organizations should continue to play their critical advocacy roles, drawing on information provided through the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

## Flow chart for monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict



#### **IV. Incorporation of best practices in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children**

138. The present section of the report is in response to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), paragraph 15 (c), requesting an update on the incorporation of best practices for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

139. During the reporting period, a number of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children were initiated or continued in both conflict and post-conflict situations. While there is no single effective model for such programmes, important lessons have emerged, as reflected in my 2003 report. Since then, these lessons were applied to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration exercises in Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone to varying degrees. A United Nations inter-agency Working Group on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which is currently developing policies, guidelines and procedures for the planning, implementation and monitoring of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, is incorporating into its initiatives best practices and lessons learned relating to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children. As part of the initiative “Towards a United Nations approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in a peacekeeping environment”, a module on children and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is being finalized.

140. *The demobilization of children should be sought at all times, and separate and child-specific programmes should be organized for demobilized children.* In Burundi, approximately 2,260 children were demobilized from armed forces and groups ahead of adult combatants, through the Child Soldiers National Structure. However, many children formerly associated with armed groups were cantoned in assembly areas where they waited for over eight months to return to their families; this delay was due to the lack of commitment of some leaders, lengthy negotiations over global demobilization and inadequate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration resources. In Liberia, child-specific programmes, including literacy classes, psychosocial care and recreational activities, were organized by NGOs through interim care centres, where demobilized child soldiers could stay for up to three months. Peacekeeping missions and United Nations agencies should seek to benefit from local expertise and NGO child protection capacity in developing and implementing such comprehensive child-specific disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Issues that require further attention and consideration include the duration of hosting and types of activities undertaken in care centres, appropriate ways to approach child drug abuse and options for assisting children without families.

141. *Children associated with fighting forces who have crossed into a country of asylum should be accorded a legal status, protection and assistance that promotes their rehabilitation and reintegration.* Refugee status should be accorded to children who flee armed conflict due to their well-founded fear of being subjected to forced military recruitment, sexual slavery or other serious child rights violations. From 2002 to 2004, 168 disarmed Liberian child soldiers were granted prima facie refugee status in Sierra Leone and were placed in camps for Liberian refugees; children whose families were traced were voluntarily repatriated. This process incorporated child protection elements such as proper identification of children immediately upon entry to the country of asylum; prompt separation from commanders;

accommodation in a civilian environment conducive to rehabilitation (instead of together with adult foreign combatants in internment camps); sensitization of refugee communities to facilitate community-based integration; access to education, counselling and other psychosocial programmes; and community-based interim care, tracing, family reunification and voluntary repatriation in safety and dignity.

142. *The eligibility criteria should be sufficiently broad and based upon the Cape Town Principles for children associated with armed forces or groups.* Children should not be required to hand in weapons in order to participate in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, and there should be no cash remuneration for weapons relinquished. Unfortunately, even where disarmament, demobilization and reintegration planning has incorporated these widely accepted principles, as in the case of Liberia, their application has been uneven. Some children associated with armed forces or groups in Liberia were actually prevented from entering demobilization sites because they were not armed. The promise of a cash allowance upon presentation of a weapon has also proved problematic in Liberia; reports indicate that commanders have posed as guardians to former child soldiers, or have taken arms away from them and given the weapons to their own children, in order to obtain the cash payments. Commanders have even sold weapons to children so they could enter the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Alternatives to cash allowances should be employed in order to prevent these practices and should contribute directly to the education and sustainable livelihood of former child soldiers.

143. *Children who escape, are released or are captured from any armed force or group should not be considered or treated as enemy combatants.* In accord with this principle, and in implementation of article 6 of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, a group of children associated with a Colombian armed group and arrested by the Venezuelan authorities were immediately offered protection and reintegration assistance. The Government of Colombia established legal and administrative procedures ensuring that children who leave armed groups are handed over to the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. Unfortunately, this principle has not been observed in a number of conflict situations where children were detained for their participation in armed groups and, subsequently, sometimes used for intelligence-gathering purposes.

144. *Reintegration activities should adopt an integrated community approach, and interventions should avoid singling out former child soldiers.* Both of these practices were employed in Afghanistan: demobilized child soldiers were provided the same services as other war-affected children through the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme, and communities played a central role in demobilization efforts by participating in the screening of eligible child participants. In Liberia, however, there was increased evidence that the payment of cash allowances to demobilized children adversely affected their acceptance and reintegration into the community.

145. *Special attention must be given to the specific needs of girls.* Despite the establishment of separate facilities for boys and girls and gender-specific programmes in certain countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, girls in the majority of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration situations remain at a disadvantage in access to demobilization and in reintegration into their

communities. In many conflict situations — such as in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo — combatants have been reluctant to release girls to transit care facilities, holding them captive as “wives”. Girls who have become pregnant in these circumstances have encountered stigmatization upon returning to their communities. As has been implemented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes should include special attention to girl victims of sexual exploitation and girl heads of households.

146. *In order to support community reintegration activities for children formerly associated with armed forces or groups, long-term donor support is required.* The Government of Sierra Leone requested continuing assistance for the reintegration of demobilized children through the Community Education Investment Programme, which provided educational materials to schools whose enrolment included demobilized children and children returning from neighbouring countries. This support facilitated the reintegration of over 3,000 former child combatants and returnee children.

## **V. Measures to control illicit subregional and cross-border activities harmful to children**

147. The present section of the report is in response to Security Council resolution 1539 (2004), paragraph 3, requesting information on measures to control illicit subregional and cross-border activities that are harmful to children.

148. Illicit cross-border activities, intrinsically related in terms of their root causes and dynamics, have deleterious consequences for children and peace and security. The cross-border abduction and recruitment of children, the trafficking of small arms and light weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources all serve to intensify the vulnerability of children in conflict situations, as well as in transitional and post-conflict situations. Such activities expose children to further atrocities and abuse and undermine efforts at establishing peace, security, legitimate economic activities and the rule of law. The cross-border abduction of children for forced recruitment and training by armed forces and groups, and other forms of exploitation, such as domestic, manual and sexual labour, and the trafficking of small arms and light weapons strongly correlate with the use of child soldiers. The documented link between illegal resource exploitation by armed groups and the procurement of small arms and light weapons with the proceeds is of special concern, as this is a form of double jeopardy for children. The illicit exploitation of natural resources is often accompanied by forced labour and displacement of children and, at the same time, diverts resources from services and programmes for children.

149. The following proposed measures are intended to promote international and regional cooperation in efforts to prevent and control illicit cross-border activities harmful to children. In particular, measures to enforce international standards and plans of action are required to ensure the rights, protection and well-being of war-affected children in conflict, transitional and post-conflict situations.

## **General recommendations**

150. Member States and regional organizations should make a commitment to combat illicit cross-border activities harmful to children through the development of bilateral, multilateral and regional arrangements, including initiatives for the development of preventive and early warning systems, and establish coordination and monitoring mechanisms for strengthening the gathering, analysis and dissemination of information among law enforcement, border and customs control agencies and other relevant actors.

151. Member States should ratify and implement the provisions of existing international conventions relevant to the aforementioned cross-border activities, such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2003) and its supplementary Protocols, as well as ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) and ILO Convention 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (1930).

152. Member States should criminalize activities associated with the aforementioned illicit cross-border activities and cooperate in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for wrongful behaviour.

153. Mechanisms for cross-border cooperation among peacekeeping missions — such as those developed by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, UNMIL and the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire in West Africa and MONUC and ONUB in the Great Lakes region of Africa — should be implemented in order to enhance a subregional approach in carrying out the respective mandates of these missions in the area of child protection. Coordination between child protection agencies and peacekeeping missions should also be ensured.

154. The Security Council should consider targeted measures against parties to armed conflict and complicit actors in neighbouring countries whose actions contribute to illicit cross-border activities harmful to children and to the consequent fuelling of conflict.

## **Recommendations relating to cross-border abduction and recruitment**

155. Child protection units within regional organizations, such as the one in ECOWAS, should develop and implement comprehensive strategies that address the particular cross-border dynamics of the abduction and recruitment of children. These units should facilitate exchange of information, joint training and projects among national child protection agencies and those working on gender equality. Regional organizations should establish a database of individuals and groups suspected of engaging in the trafficking of child soldiers, to be shared with the relevant national and international judicial authorities.

156. Child victims of cross-border abduction, recruitment and trafficking should be accorded appropriate protection and assistance in the host country, including identification, safe release, legal status (which may include refugee status), interim community-based care, access to education, counselling, family tracing, medical and legal assistance and facilitation of voluntary repatriation or other appropriate



durable solutions. Subregional inter-agency cooperation should be enhanced, particularly on cross-border tracing, reunification and repatriation.

157. Governments, NGOs and United Nations agencies should provide adequate protection, support and services to children who have been victims of abduction, recruitment, trafficking or sexual exploitation. Local, national and international civil society organizations, including the private sector, religious leaders and women's groups, should be engaged throughout this process. Support should be provided for local grass-roots participation and media efforts in raising public awareness about the protection of affected children.

158. Regional plans of action to combat the cross-border abduction and recruitment of children should include comprehensive, criminal justice-related responses, such as awareness-raising and training for law enforcement, guidelines on the investigation and prosecution of cases and protection and support for victims and witnesses.

### **Recommendations relating to the trafficking of small arms and light weapons**

159. Member States should fully implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

160. National commissions on small arms and light weapons should incorporate in their national plans of action public-awareness campaigns on the protection of children in armed conflict.

161. Member States should more vigorously enforce arms embargoes and consider coercive measures against those who deliberately violate them.

162. Member States should establish necessary legislative or other measures to ensure effective control over the export, import, transit and retransfer of small arms and light weapons, including the use of authenticated end-user certificates.

163. The work of United Nations agencies that undertake data collection on the impact of small arms and light weapons on children in armed conflict, transitional and post-conflict situations should be supported.

### **Recommendations relating to the illicit exploitation of natural resources**

164. Multinational enterprises and international investors should take into account the impact on child rights in their operations in zones of conflict where illicit exploitation of natural resources takes place, with a view to preventing and mitigating violations, and abide by appropriate and uniform ethical guidelines.

165. Appropriate verification and certification schemes for natural resources — such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme — should be monitored by impartial external observers and strengthened in order to foster transparency and accountability in the natural resource sectors. Coercive measures should be directed

at companies and individuals involved in these activities, such as the imposition of travel bans and freezing of personal assets.

## **VI. Annexed lists**

166. The present report contains two annexes. Annex I lists parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children. Annex II lists parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, also bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children.

167. The other grave violations and abuses taken into account are the killing or maiming of children; rape and other grave sexual violence against children; attacks on schools and hospitals; and abduction.

168. It should be noted that the annexes do not list countries as such. The purpose of the annexed lists is to identify particular parties to conflict which are responsible for specific grave violations against children. In this respect, the names of countries are referred to only in order to indicate the locations or situations where offending parties are committing the violations in question.

## Annex I

### **List of parties that recruit or use children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Burundi**

1. Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD) of Leonard Nyangoma
2. Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) of Pierre Nkurunziza
3. Parti de libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération (PALIPEHUTU-FNL)-Agathon Rwasa

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in Côte d'Ivoire**

1. Forces armées des forces nouvelles (FAFN)
  - (a) Mouvement pour la paix et la justice (MPJ)
  - (b) Mouvement populaire ivoirien pour le Grand Ouest (MPIGO)
  - (c) Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI)
2. LIMA *force supplétive*

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)
2. Laurent Nkunda and Jules Mutebutsi, dissident elements of FARDC

*This party has also been responsible for rape and other grave sexual violence against children and attacks on schools and hospitals in the reporting period.*

3. Force démocratique de libération du Rwanda (FDLR)

*This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

4. Forces armées populaires congolaises (FAPC)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

5. Front nationaliste et intégrationniste (FNI)

*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*

6. Mai-Mai in the Kivus, Maniema and Katanga  
*This party has also been responsible for the killing and maiming of children in the reporting period.*
7. Mudundu-40
8. Parti pour l'unité et la sauvegarde du Congo (PUSIC)
9. Union des patriotes congolais (UPC)-Thomas Lubanga and Floribert Kisembo factions

**Parties in Somalia**

1. Lower Shabelle Administration<sup>a</sup>
2. Juba Valley Alliance<sup>a</sup>
3. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA/SNSC) of Mohamed Ibrahim Habsade<sup>a</sup>
4. United Somali Congress/Somali Salvation Alliance (USC/SSA)-faction of Muse Sudi Yalahow<sup>a</sup>
5. Middle Shabelle Administration<sup>b</sup>
6. Puntland Administration<sup>b</sup>
7. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA/SRRC) of Mohamed Nir "Sharti gadud"<sup>b</sup>
8. Somali Patriotic Movement/Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SPM/SRRC)<sup>b</sup>
9. United Somali Congress (USC) of Mohamed Kanyare Afrah<sup>c</sup>
10. United Somali Congress/Somali Salvation Alliance (USC/SSA) of Omar Mohamed<sup>c</sup>

**Parties in the Sudan**

1. Janjaweed  
*This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming, abducting and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*
2. Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)
3. South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM)
4. Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A)
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A)

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<sup>a</sup> Alliance member factions of the Somali National Salvation Council (SNSC).

<sup>b</sup> Alliance member factions of the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC).

<sup>c</sup> Alliance member factions of the Group 8.

## Annex II

### **List of parties that recruit or use children either in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council or in other situations of concern, bearing in mind other violations and abuses committed against children**

#### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)
  - (a) Autodefensas Unidas del Sur del Casanare (AUSC)
  - (b) Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá (ACCU)
  - (c) Autodefensas de Magdalena Medio (ACMM)
  - (d) Autodefensas del Meta (AM)
  - (e) Autodefensas Campesinas del Sur del Cesar (ACSC)
  - (f) Autodefensas del Puerto Boyaca (APB)
  - (g) Autodefensas de Cundinamarca (AC)
  - (h) Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia — Bloque Centauros
  - (i) Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia — Bloque Norte
  - (j) Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia — Bloque Mineros
  - (k) Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia — Bloque Pacífico
2. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)
3. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC)

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>a</sup>
2. Karenni Army (KA)<sup>b</sup>
3. Tatmadaw Kyi (Government army)

#### **Parties in Nepal**

Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-Maoist)

*This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming and abducting children in the reporting period.*

#### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)
2. New People's Army (NPA)

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<sup>a</sup> KNLA is the military wing of the Karen National Union (KNU), named in the 2003 report.

<sup>b</sup> KA is the correct name for the "Karenni National Liberation Army (KNLA)", named in the 2003 report.

**Parties in Sri Lanka**

1. Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

*This party has also been responsible for the abduction of children in the reporting period.*

**Parties in Uganda**

1. Local Defence Units (LDUs)
2. Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

*This party has also been responsible for killing, maiming, abducting and committing rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the reporting period.*

3. Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF)
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# General Assembly Security Council

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Promotion and protection of the rights of children:  
promotion and protection of the rights of children

Security Council  
Seventy-eighth year

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2022, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2022, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, but provides United Nations-verified trends in grave violations against children, given that access for

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo ([S/2022/745](#)), Iraq ([S/2022/46](#)), Mali ([S/2022/856](#)), Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)), the Philippines ([S/2022/569](#)), Somalia ([S/2022/397](#)) and the Sudan ([S/2022/627](#)), and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/52/60](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2147 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



monitors remains a challenge. The report presents trends and patterns of violations, and engagement with parties responsible for violations that might lead to behavioural change, including promotion of accountability and compliance with child protection provisions in peace processes. In the report, it is noted that attacks or threats of attacks against community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation is not a legal determination, and reference to a non-State actor does not affect its legal status. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures. Where measures undertaken by listed parties had a positive impact on children or where ongoing conduct is of concern, this is highlighted. On the basis of enhanced engagement with parties, the annexes distinguish between listed parties that have put in place measures aimed at improving the protection of children during the reporting period and those that have not.

## **II. Situation of children and armed conflict**

### **A. Overview of trends and patterns**

4. In 2022, children continued to be disproportionately affected by armed conflict, and the number of children verified as affected by grave violations increased compared with 2021. The United Nations verified 27,180 grave violations, of which 24,300 were committed in 2022 and 2,880 were committed earlier but verified only in 2022. Violations affected 18,890 children (13,469 boys, 4,638 girls, 783 sex unknown) in 24 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement. The highest numbers of violations were the killing (2,985) and maiming (5,655) of 8,631 children, followed by the recruitment and use of 7,622 children and the abduction of 3,985 children. Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (2,496), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons.

5. My Special Representative and the United Nations made progress in engaging with parties to protect children in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Israel and the State of Palestine, Nigeria, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Engagement with parties to conflict resulted in positive changes for children. More than 12,460 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups received protection or reintegration support during 2022.

6. Multidimensional conflicts, including across regions, chronic crises and new armed actors have had an adverse impact on children's lives. Hostilities spreading into new areas contributed to an increase in grave violations of 140 per cent in Myanmar. The splintering of armed groups and intercommunal violence affected children, contributing to a 135 per cent increase in grave violations in South Sudan. An upsurge in the activity of armed groups, including those designated by the United Nations as terrorist groups, caused severe deterioration of the situation in the central Sahel, in particular in Burkina Faso, leading to an 85 per cent increase in grave violations. Grave violations also increased in Colombia, Israel and the State of



Palestine, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In contrast, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic and the Philippines saw a decrease in grave violations. The signing of the truce in Yemen contributed to a 40 per cent decrease in violations, underlining the importance of peace in achieving security for children.

7. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Israel and the State of Palestine, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine, Afghanistan and Yemen. The monitoring and verification of grave violations remained extremely challenging, including owing to access constraints, leading to the underreporting of such violations and an increase in violations verified in 2022. Verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against children (1,165 children) decreased by 12 per cent, but such violence continued to be vastly underreported owing to stigmatization, fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence or lack of access to services, impunity and safety concerns, as also reported in my report on conflict-related sexual violence ([S/2023/413](#)).

8. The denial of humanitarian access<sup>3</sup> remained very high, with 3,931 verified incidents. The situation is expected to worsen with the adoption of restrictive laws, decrees and regulations increasing control over humanitarian work and workers, notably in Afghanistan, Myanmar and parts of Yemen. Verified incidents of recruitment and use increased by 21 per cent, abductions by 15 per cent and killing and by maiming 5 per cent. The use of live ammunition against children and the excessive use of force increased, in particular in Israel and the State of Palestine and Myanmar.

9. There was a 112 per cent increase in attacks on schools (1,163) and hospitals (647), in particular in Ukraine, Burkina Faso, Israel and the State of Palestine, Myanmar, Mali and Afghanistan.

10. While non-State armed groups were responsible for 50 per cent of grave violations, government forces were the main perpetrator of the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access.

11. Gender norms shaped the exposure of children to grave violations. Boys continued to be more affected by recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction, while girls were disproportionately affected by conflict-related sexual violence. While the verified number of girls facing grave violations decreased, it increased for boys. Gender, age and disability were among the many factors shaping the vulnerability of children to grave violations.

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

12. Blatant and systematic disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law continues to severely affect the protection of children. Among factors having the most severe impact was the use of explosive weapons, including those with a wide impact area, notably in populated areas, such as Gaza, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen, which led to greater child casualties and damaged schools and hospitals, depriving children of education and health services. The use of explosive ordnance, including explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and landmines, represented some 26 per cent of the methods used in the killing and maiming of children. Mine action operations are

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<sup>3</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not reflect the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

challenged and disrupted by insecurity and restrictions on movement and access. Ensuring safety, security and access for mine action operations, child-sensitive explosive ordnance risk education and victim assistance must be prioritized, in particular in Afghanistan, Iraq, Myanmar, Somalia, South Sudan, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. In addition, children with disabilities are more vulnerable at the time of armed conflict and are likely to face stigma and discrimination and to lack access to basic services.

13. The adoption of protocols for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian protection actors is a critical tool to standardize operating procedures and strengthen coordination between military and civilian actors. Subsequently, children can gain access to adequate age- and gender-sensitive and survivor-centred reintegration and assistance programmes. Handover protocols were adopted in Burkina Faso, Nigeria and the Philippines. Support must continue to fund reintegration programmes for children separated from armed groups, notably in Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Sudan and Yemen. Progress was also made by countries concerned in the repatriation of children to countries of origin, notably from the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for family unity and the best interests of the child.

### **III. Information on grave violations**

#### **A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

##### **Afghanistan**

14. The United Nations verified 1,797 grave violations against 970 children (783 boys, 187 girls) and 14 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 494 boys by the Taliban that had occurred in previous years.

15. The recruitment and use of 54 children (53 boys, 1 girl) by the Taliban (38), the National Resistance Front (15) and unidentified perpetrators (1) were verified. Children were used in combat (32) and support roles (22).

16. A total of 69 boys were detained by the Taliban for alleged association with the National Resistance Front. Of those, 29 were released and 2 died in custody.

17. The United Nations verified the killing (253) and maiming (656) of 909 children (732 boys, 177 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (694), Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP) (112), the Taliban (98) and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (5). Casualties resulted mainly from explosive ordnance (718) and targeted killings (26).

18. Sexual violence perpetrated against 13 children (2 boys, 11 girls) by the Taliban (7), unidentified perpetrators (5) and former pro-government militia (1) were verified in the central (11), northern (1) and southern (1) regions. Cases involved rape (9), forced marriage (3) and *bacha bazi* (1).<sup>4</sup>

19. The United Nations verified 95 attacks on schools (72) and hospitals (23), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, which were attributed to the Taliban (77), unidentified perpetrators (14) and ISIL-KP (4).

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<sup>4</sup> *Bacha bazi* is a harmful practice whereby boys are used by men for entertainment. The boys are made to dance at parties and are often dressed in female clothes and subjected to sexual violence.

Most attacks involved violence against protected persons, including killing (79), and damage to facilities (41).

20. The military use of 54 schools and 3 hospitals by the Taliban was verified.

21. The abduction of 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) by the Taliban (3) and unidentified perpetrators (5) was verified. Most children were abducted for the purposes of sexual violence (5).

22. A total of 718 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (706), unidentified perpetrators (11) and ISIL-KP (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

23. I note the adoption by the Taliban of a code of practice preventing the recruitment and use of boys without signs of puberty, and the demobilization of approximately 141 children. However, I reiterate my call upon the Taliban to define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, and to respect the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

24. I condemn all grave violations committed by all parties to the conflict. I am concerned by the number of children killed and maimed, including by explosive ordnance, and by attacks on and the military use of schools and hospitals. I call upon the international community to support explosive ordnance clearance and risk education. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

25. I am concerned by the increasing restrictions on humanitarian access and call upon the Taliban, and all parties, to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children. I urge the Taliban to revoke their decision to ban women from working for international and national non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.

#### **Central African Republic**

26. The United Nations verified 437 violations against 321 children (179 boys, 142 girls), including 47 children who were victims of multiple violations. The United Nations verified in 2022 336 grave violations against 317 children that had occurred in previous years (201 boys, 116 girls).

27. A total of 134 children (111 boys, 23 girls), between the ages of 7 and 17, were recruited and used, by armed groups (88): Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (57) (Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (45), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (6), anti-balaka (2), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (2), Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) (1), an unidentified CPC group (1)); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)-Achaye (23); and LRA/Zaïko Langa-Langa (8). Forty boys served in combat roles. A total of 46 children were used by other security personnel (27), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (8), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (7) and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (4) as cooks, porters, for fetching water and at checkpoints. The United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 307 children that had occurred in previous years (199 boys, 108 girls) by CPC (268) (FPRC (188), anti-balaka (42), FPRC/MPC/UPC (15), FPRC/MPC (15), UPC (6), 3R (2)); and FPRC (36), anti-balaka (1), UPC (1) and LRA-Achaye (1).

28. A total of 11 boys detained for alleged association with armed groups in previous years were released, including 7 following the granting of presidential clemency in December 2022.

29. The killing (21) and maiming (59) of 80 children (47 boys, 33 girls) caused by gunshots (42), explosive remnants of war (28), physical assault (5), arson (2), stabbing (2) and crossfire (1) were verified. Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (36) (including 1 in crossfire between FPRC and MPC); CPC (32) (3R (21), anti-balaka/FPRC/MPC (4), UPC (2), anti-balaka (2), anti-balaka/3R (2), an unidentified CPC group (1)); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (6); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (5) and internal security forces (1). The United Nations verified in 2022 the killing of two boys by 3R in 2021.

30. The United Nations verified 76 cases of rape perpetrated against 75 girls by CPC (33) (UPC (10), anti-balaka (9); 3R (7) FPRC (6), an unidentified CPC group (1)); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (16); LRA-Achaye (15); other security personnel (3); internal security forces (3); LRA/Zaïko Langa-Langa (2); unidentified former Séléka (2); special mixed security units (1); and unidentified perpetrators (1). In all, 1 girl was gang-raped twice, and 19 girls were raped during association with armed groups. Two Armed Forces of the Central African Republic elements were arrested. The United Nations verified in 2022 sexual violence perpetrated against 16 girls that had occurred in previous years by CPC (12) (FPRC (5), FPRC/MPC (2), anti-balaka (2), 3R (2), UPC (1)); LRA-Achaye (1); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (1); internal security forces (1); and other security personnel (1).

31. Some 18 attacks on schools (7) and hospitals (11), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were attributed to CPC (11) (unidentified CPC groups (4), anti-balaka (2), UPC (2) 3R (2), 3R/FPRC (1)); unidentified perpetrators (6); and other security personnel (1). Incidents involved looting/robbery (11), killing and injury of and threats against protected personnel (4) and destruction (3). The United Nations verified in 2022 two attacks on schools by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel in 2021.

32. A total of 14 schools were used by other security personnel (6); CPC (4) (unidentified CPC groups (2), MPC (1), UPC (1)); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (2); and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2). All schools were vacated. One school and one hospital used since 2021 by other security personnel were vacated, while the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic has continued to use a school since 2021 in Ouaka Prefecture.

33. The United Nations verified the abduction of 79 children (40 boys, 39 girls) by CPC (44) (anti-balaka (22), 3R (9), UPC (5), anti-balaka/3R (4), MPC (2), FPRC (1), an unidentified CPC group (1)); LRA-Achaye (19); anti-balaka/Darlan faction (5); LRA/Zaïko Langa-Langa (4); unidentified perpetrators (3); other security personnel (2); and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2). Most children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence (44). A total of 18 children remained in LRA-Achaye captivity, while 61 escaped or were released. The United Nations verified in 2022 the abduction of seven children that had occurred in previous years (1 boy, 6 girls) by 3R (4), FPRC/MPC (2) and LRA-Achaye (1).

34. A total of 50 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to CPC (31) (anti-balaka (10), UPC (6), unidentified CPC groups (4), FPRC (2), FPRC/MPC (2), MPC (2), anti-balaka/MPC (2), 3R (1), anti-balaka/FPRC (1), anti-balaka/FPRC/MPC (1)); unidentified perpetrators (13); UPC (1); unidentified former Séléka (1); the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (1); other security personnel (1);

internal security forces (1); and the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/ other security personnel/internal security forces (1). Incidents involved robbery, threats, abduction and assaults on humanitarian personnel. The United Nations verified in 2022 two incidents of denial of humanitarian access by 3R and internal security forces that had occurred in previous years.

#### *Developments and concerns*

35. I welcome the adoption in April by the Government of a national plan to counter trafficking in children, with a focus on preventing the use of children by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, and a circular prohibiting the presence of children around Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic military bases. I also welcome Government efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, to develop a national prevention strategy on grave violations against children, and I call upon the Government to prioritize its finalization and adoption. However, I remain concerned by the number of grave violations attributed to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and other security personnel, notably recruitment and use and sexual violence. I call upon the Government to establish an interministerial committee to address grave violations, appoint child protection focal points in the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and issue command directives applicable to all forces, including other security personnel. I urge the Government to investigate grave violations and hold perpetrators accountable and to finalize and adopt a protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian protection actors.

36. I welcome the adoption by CPC in June of a command directive prohibiting grave violations against children, yet I remain concerned by the scale of violations attributed to the group. I urge CPC to implement the command directive and further urge FPRC, MPC and UPC, all of which have signed action plans with the United Nations, to implement their commitments. I call upon all parties to adopt concrete measures to cease all grave violations, unconditionally release associated children and protect schools and hospitals from attacks.

37. I welcome the dialogue between LRA-Achaye and the United Nations on the release of abducted children, and I urge LRA to immediately and unconditionally release all abductees and end and prevent other violations against children.

38. I urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence against children. I call upon the Government, with United Nations support, to ensure that adequate programmes are accessible to all survivors, including child-friendly and safe reporting and response mechanisms.

39. I welcome the efforts of the Government, with the support of the United Nations and partners, to reintegrate 1,375 children affected by conflict and the establishment of a vocational training centre in Ouaka Prefecture for conflict-affected children. I encourage the authorities to continue to ensure the effective and gender-sensitive reintegration of all children released, and urge donors to fund reintegration and vocational training.

#### **Colombia**

40. The United Nations verified 290 grave violations against 209 children (122 boys, 83 girls, 4 sex unknown), including 12 Venezuelan and 4 Ecuadorian children, and 44 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 four grave violations that had occurred in previous years.

41. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 130 children (77 boys, 53 girls), between the ages of 11 and 17. Perpetrators were the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups (87), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (18), Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) (AGC) (15) and unidentified perpetrators (10). Fifty children were used in a combat role. Most of the children were released (100), while 18 were killed and 12 remain associated. The United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 4 children that had occurred in previous years (2 boys, 2 girls) by ELN (3) and Los Caparrapos (1). According to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, 220 children formerly associated with armed groups entered its protection programme.

42. A total of 84 children (53 boys, 27 girls, 4 sex unknown) were killed (50) and maimed (34) by FARC-EP dissident groups (32), unidentified perpetrators (29), Colombian armed forces (CAF) (12), ELN (7) and AGC (4). Child casualties resulted from gunshots (52), explosive ordnance (22), air strikes (9) and torture (1).

43. Sexual violence perpetrated against 18 girls by FARC-EP dissident groups (8), AGC (5), ELN (4) and CAF (1) was verified.

44. A total of 25 attacks on schools (22), hospitals (3) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified and attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups (14), unidentified perpetrators (5), ELN (4) and AGC (2). Incidents involved threats and attacks against protected personnel (20), damages to schools (4) and attacks on an ambulance (1).

45. A total of 10 schools were militarily used by FARC-EP dissident groups (6), CAF (1), AGC (1), ELN (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). All schools were vacated.

46. A total of 23 children (18 boys, 5 girls), between the ages of 12 and 17, were abducted by FARC-EP dissident groups (11), ELN (5), AGC (4) and unidentified perpetrators (3), and in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in areas at the border with Colombia (2), mostly for recruitment and use purposes. A total of 3 children were killed, 15 escaped or were released and the status of 5 is unknown.

47. A total of 10 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to AGC (5), unidentified perpetrators (3) and ELN (2).

#### *Developments and concerns*

48. I commend the Government for the progress made in preventing and responding to grave violations against children and for the suspension in August 2022 of air strikes against armed groups' camps where children may be present. I encourage the strengthening of programmes that prevent grave violations against children, in particular programmes benefiting Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children. I call upon the Government to avoid the organization of civilian-military activities involving children.

49. I welcome the continued progress made by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace in case No. 07 on the recruitment and use of children, as well as the Truth Commission's recommendations and its special focus on children in its June 2022 report. I also welcome the endorsement by the Government of the Safe Schools Declaration in November and urge its swift implementation.

50. During her visit to Bogotá in December 2022, my Special Representative highlighted the inclusion of child rights in the Government's total peace policy agenda and offered United Nations expertise in prevention initiatives.

51. I am encouraged by the resumption of negotiations between the Government and ELN, which provides opportunities for the protection of children. I urge the parties to include child protection priorities from the beginning of this dialogue and any other future negotiations.

52. I am concerned by the continued increase in grave violations, notably the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, by armed groups, in particular FARC-EP dissident groups. I am also concerned by the increase in the number of girls and Indigenous and Afro-Colombian children who are victims of grave violations. I urge armed groups to immediately end violations, unconditionally release children and adopt concrete time-bound commitments to ending and preventing grave violations. I reiterate my call upon all parties to take all necessary measures to protect children.

53. I am concerned by the increase in sexual violence against girls, including while associated with armed groups. I urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence. I call upon the Government to ensure that adequate and child-friendly programmes are accessible to all survivors and to swiftly bring perpetrators to justice.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

54. The United Nations verified 3,377 grave violations against 2,420 children (1,680 boys, 740 girls). In addition, 981 violations against 792 children (558 boys, 234 girls), including abductions (579), sexual violence (200), recruitment and use (152), killing and maiming (32), attacks against schools and hospitals (17) and denial of humanitarian access (1), that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022. Some 1,009 children were victims of multiple violations.

55. A total of 1,545 children (1,293 boys, 252 girls), as young as age 5, were verified as having been recruited and used. Children were used in support roles (643), in combat (585), as guards (206), spies (54) and fetish keepers (26), and in unspecified roles (31).

56. The United Nations verified the new recruitment and use of 392 children (335 boys, 57 girls), all of whom were recruited and separated in 2022, by Nyatura (84), Mai-Mai Mazembe (59), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (35), the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) (31), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (29), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (26), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise (AFRC) (18), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (14), Union des patriotes pour la défense du Congo (UPDC) (14), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (11) and other armed groups (71).

57. In addition, 1,153 children (958 boys, 195 girls), recruited in previous years, were used until their separation in 2022 by Nyatura (305), Mai-Mai Mazembe (277), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (125), FDLR-FOCA (114), APCLS (91), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (83), ADF (71), and other armed groups (87), including Twigwaneho (39).

58. The United Nations verified the detention of 117 children (97 boys, 20 girls), between the ages of 9 and 17, for alleged association with armed groups by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (109), the Congolese National Police (7) and the National Intelligence Agency (1). All the children were released in 2022.

59. The killing (409) and maiming (290) of 699 children (445 boys, 254 girls), between the ages of 3 months and 17 years, were perpetrated by CODECO (256), M23 (97), ADF (63), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (53), Mai-Mai Zaïre (51), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (31), unidentified perpetrators (27), Nyatura (26), the Congolese National Police (7), the National Intelligence Agency (1)

and other armed groups (87). Casualties resulted mainly from targeted attacks (584), crossfire (34), explosive ordnance (32), torture (22) and attacks on schools (17).

60. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 284 children (1 boy, 283 girls), between the ages of 4 and 17, by Nyatura (67), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (56), CODECO (41), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (23), M23 (22), ADF (17), the Congolese National Police (9), the National Intelligence Agency (1) and other armed groups (48). Verified cases involved rape (189), forced marriage (40), gang rape (36), sexual slavery (15) and attempted rape (4). The suspects arrested were 12 members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 4 members of the Congolese National Police.

61. A total of 108 attacks on schools (70) and hospitals (38) by the following were verified: M23 (39), CODECO (21), ADF (10), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (7), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (7), Mai-Mai Mazembe (6), Twigwaneho (4), Mai-Mai Malaika (3), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (3), Mai-Mai Zaire (2), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (1), Nyatura (1), Raia Mutomboki (1), Mai-Mai Kijangala (1), the Forces républicains fédéralistes Gumino (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, 13 schools were used for military purposes by Mai-Mai Mazembe (6), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (4), M23 (1), ADF (1) and Nyatura (1).

62. A total of 730 children (469 boys, 261 girls), between the ages of 1 and 17, were abducted. Abductions were attributed to ADF (202), Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (121), Nyatura (95), Raia Mutomboki (61), CODECO (59), M23 (58), Mai-Mai Mazembe (50), APCLS (16), FDLR-FOCA (13), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (9) and other armed groups (46). Children were abducted for recruitment and use (260) and used as porters (155) and for the purposes of extortion (104), sexual violence (47), torture (3) and unknown purposes (161).

63. A total of 11 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by CODECO (2), unidentified Mai-Mai groups (2), the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1), ADF (1), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (1), Raia Mutomboki (1), Twigwaneho (1), Mai-Mai Toronto (1) and Mai-Mai Mutetezi (1) were verified. Incidents included threats and violence against humanitarian personnel and assets, abduction, access restrictions and extortion.

#### *Developments and concerns*

64. I welcome the commitment of the Government to implementing the 2012 action plan and urge the Government to prioritize the implementation of its action plan related to sexual violence against children.

65. I commend the cooperation between the Government and the United Nations on screening, age verification and separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo recruitment process. It is necessary to implement age verification at an early stage across the country and to ensure that directives on age verification and legal enrolment conditions are followed.

66. I welcome the adoption of a national strategy for a disarmament, demobilization and community recovery and stabilization programme and reiterate the need to prioritize children, especially through the provincial operational plans. I call upon donors to support reintegration programmes for children separated from armed groups.

67. I welcome the Government's ongoing efforts to hold perpetrators of grave violations accountable, and I urge them to continue to do so, including for crimes of sexual violence.



68. I welcome the signature of the unilateral commitments to protect children by Mai-Mai Machine and the release of 272 children by armed groups following United Nations advocacy.

69. I remain deeply troubled by the devastatingly high number of grave violations against children, in particular by armed groups, and the increase in killing and maiming, abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals. I am deeply concerned about the deterioration of the security situation, in particular in North Kivu and Ituri, including owing to the resurgence of M23, and the resulting access restrictions on the United Nations to monitor violations.

### **Iraq**

70. The United Nations verified 202 grave violations against 173 children (125 boys, 48 girls), including 8 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 17 grave violations affecting 15 children that had occurred in previous years (6 boys, 9 girls) were verified in 2022.

71. A total of 32 children (18 boys, 14 girls), as young as age 11, were recruited and used by the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK) (28) and Da'esh (4). In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of one boy by HPG/PKK that had occurred in previous years. Children were used in combat and at checkpoints.

72. As at December 2022, 936 children (927 boys, 9 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily Da'esh.

73. A total of 126 children (101 boys, 25 girls) were killed (55) and maimed (71) by unidentified perpetrators (100), Turkish military air strikes against Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) targets (15), Da'esh (6), HPG/PKK (3) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2). Most incidents occurred in areas previously under the control of Da'esh. Child casualties resulted from explosive remnants of war (85), ground engagement (17), air strikes (17) and crossfire (7). In addition, the killing (1) and maiming (6) of 7 children by the international counter-Da'esh coalition (4) and unidentified perpetrators (3) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

74. Sexual violence perpetrated against five girls by Da'esh was verified. The violations began in 2014, when the girls were abducted, and continued until 2022, when the girls were rescued. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 sexual violence perpetrated against three girls by Da'esh that had occurred in previous years.

75. Two attacks on schools were verified and attributed to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In total, 7 instances of the military use of schools were verified by Iraqi security forces (4), the Iraqi Federal Police (1), the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) (1) and HPG/PKK (1). Some 35 schools remained militarily used by the Iraqi Federal Police (23), Iraqi security forces (7), PMF (4) and Peshmerga (1).

76. The abduction of 18 children (9 boys, 9 girls) by Da'esh (10), HPG/PKK (4) and unidentified perpetrators (4) was verified. A total of six children were abducted for recruitment and use and/or sexual violence purposes. A total of 11 children were released, and 7 children remain in captivity. The United Nations verified in 2022 the abduction of six girls by Da'esh that had occurred in previous years.

77. A total of 19 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to Iraqi security forces (13), PMF (5) and the Iraqi police (1).

*Developments and concerns*

78. I welcome the signature of an action plan by the Government with the United Nations on 30 March 2023 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by PMF and the absence of verified cases of recruitment and use of children by PMF. I urge the Government to fully implement the action plan.

79. I welcome the decrease in verified humanitarian access restrictions, in particular by Iraq security forces, and call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.

80. I am gravely concerned by the recruitment and use of children by HPG/PKK. I urge HPG/PKK to end the recruitment and use of children and to release all children from its ranks.

81. I am concerned that explosive ordnance is the leading cause of child casualties. I urge the Government to fully implement international conventions on landmines and explosive remnants of war to which it is a party. I call upon the Government to continue the clearance of areas contaminated by explosive hazards, explosive ordnance risk education, including prior to any movement by internally displaced persons to contaminated areas, and to prioritize victim assistance.

82. I note the release of 230 children detained on national security-related charges, but I remain concerned by the continued detention of children, including on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with Da'esh. I reiterate that the children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. Children should only be detained as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. I call upon the Government to release the children to child protection actors.

83. I commend the Government for the repatriation of 1,448 Iraqi children from the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call upon all countries concerned to facilitate the voluntary repatriation and reintegration of children, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, with respect for family unity and the best interests of the child, and in accordance with international law.

84. I encourage the Government to facilitate the reintegration of all children affected by armed conflict, with the support of the United Nations.

**Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>5</sup>**

85. The United Nations verified 3,133 grave violations<sup>6</sup> against 1,139 Palestinian children (1,057 boys, 82 girls) and 8 Israeli children (5 boys, 3 girls) in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

86. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 4 Palestinian children (3 boys, 1 girl) by Israeli forces as human shields (3) and by the Nasser Salah al-Din Brigades (1) as combatants in the occupied West Bank (3) and the Gaza Strip (1). Two children reported that the Israeli forces had attempted to recruit them as informants.

87. The United Nations verified the detention of 852 Palestinian children for alleged security offences by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (527), including 17 held under administrative detention. The United Nations received the testimonies of 82 children who reported ill-treatment by Israeli forces while in detention.

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<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

<sup>6</sup> Of which 563 were caused by tear gas inhalation. See para. 89.

88. A total of 55 children (54 Palestinians, including 1 Palestinian child with Israeli citizenship, and 1 Israeli; 48 boys, 7 girls) were killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (37), in Gaza (17) and in Israel (1), by Israeli forces (42), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (9), other Palestinian perpetrators (2), Israeli settlers (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in the context of simultaneous fire from Israeli forces and Israeli settlers. Most children killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were killed by live ammunition by Israeli forces (34), simultaneous fire by Israeli forces and Israeli settlers (1), and by Israeli settlers (1), during Israeli forces' law enforcement operations and resulting in clashes (20), in relation to attacks or attempted attacks on Israeli civilians or forces (2), confrontations involving stone-throwing or Molotov cocktails (12) and during demonstrations (2). In Gaza, 17 children were killed during the August 2022 escalation of hostilities, mostly by rockets fired by Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (9) and by Israeli forces' strikes (8). In addition, one Israeli boy was killed in an improvised explosive device attack in Jerusalem by a Palestinian perpetrator.

89. A total of 524 children (517 Palestinians, 7 Israelis; 462 boys, 62 girls) were maimed and 563 (548 boys, 15 girls) required medical assistance after inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli forces. Violations occurred in Gaza (162), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (923), and in Israel (2), by Israeli forces (370 maimed, 563 tear gas injuries), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (100), Israeli settlers (33), Palestinian perpetrators (5) and unidentified perpetrators (16), including by explosive remnants of war (14). Most children were maimed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, in the context of Israeli forces' law enforcement operations (473). The main causes of maiming by Israeli forces were live ammunition (153), rubber-coated metal bullets (136) and strikes in Gaza (44). A total of 100 Palestinian children were maimed by Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (100), in Gaza, by rockets fired during the August escalation. The 7 Israeli children were maimed by Palestinian perpetrators during stone-throwing incidents in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (3), by improvised explosive device attacks by Palestinian perpetrators (2) and by stray bullets in the occupied West Bank (2).

90. The United Nations verified 123 attacks on schools (9) and hospitals (114), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (88), attributed to Israeli forces (110), Israeli settlers (11), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (118), and in Gaza (5). Incidents involved attacks on medical personnel (83) and ambulances (28), threats against school personnel (4), air strikes (3), attacks on education and health facilities (3), a rocket attack (1) and an explosion (1). Separately, 173 other interferences with education (170) and health (3) by Israeli forces (164), Israeli settlers (4), Palestinian armed groups (1) and unidentified perpetrators (4) were verified. Most involved Israeli forces firing weapons at or in the vicinity of schools (74) and intimidation, closures and denial of teachers' and students' access through checkpoints (44). In addition, the presence of a tunnel beneath a school in Gaza for potential use by Palestinian armed groups was verified.

91. The United Nations verified the abduction of one Palestinian boy by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, during which the child was subjected to severe violence. The child was released after two hours.

92. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli forces (1,863) was verified in Gaza (1,861) and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (2). A total of 1,861 permit applications (1,070 for boys, 791 for girls) to Israeli authorities for children to exit through the Erez crossing to gain access to specialized medical treatment outside Gaza were denied or not approved in time to reach the children's scheduled hospital appointments, while 4,106 applications were approved. Five children died while

waiting for approval, or after repeated delays. In two incidents in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli forces imposed movement restrictions and closures of between 5 and 22 days, impeding humanitarian access to the populations of Shu'fat refugee camp and Nablus.

*Developments and concerns*

93. I welcome the collaboration and constructive engagement extended by Israeli and Palestinian parties to my Special Representative, including during her visit to Israel and the State of Palestine in December 2022, as was requested in my previous report ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#), paras. 302 and 303).

94. I welcome the exchange of letters with Israel, the appointment of a focal point and the identification of practical measures, including those proposed by the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children, including those related to the killing and maiming of children, accountability, denial of humanitarian access and attacks on and interference with health care and education.

95. I welcome the letters received from Palestinian Islamic Jihad and from Hamas, the appointment of focal points and the identification of practical measures, including those proposed by the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children, including those related to the killing and maiming and the recruitment and use of children.

96. I reiterate my call upon all parties to end and prevent any more violations against children and to adopt road maps to implement clear and time-bound commitments. I reiterate my call upon all parties to deepen their engagement with my Special Representative and the United Nations, especially the United Nations working group on the ground, on a regular basis. I request that my Special Representative coordinate with the United Nations the strengthening and broadening of that working group to cover Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

97. I am extremely alarmed by the continuing high level of grave violations against children, in particular the increasing level of violence in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and I urge all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

98. I note a meaningful decrease in the number of children killed by Israeli forces, including by air strikes, as compared with my previous report. Nevertheless, I remain deeply concerned by the number of children killed and maimed by Israeli forces during hostilities and through the use of live ammunition during law enforcement operations, and by the persistent lack of accountability for these violations. I express deep concern regarding the excessive use of force and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to end and prevent any excessive use of force against children. I note the existing procedures, and I urge Israel to immediately implement the practical measures discussed with my Special Representative to prevent any excessive use of force, including during law enforcement operations. I also call upon Israel to abide by its obligations under international humanitarian law and to ensure that civilians, including children, are not targeted during hostilities and that all necessary precautions are taken to protect them. I further urge Israel to pursue accountability for violations against children and to continue to investigate each case where live ammunition was used. I exhort Israel to better protect schools and hospitals, including medical personnel and ambulances. I further call upon Israel to ensure Palestinian children's access to essential health care, including by promptly granting travel permits, and I welcome the willingness of Israel to continue to engage with the United Nations on concrete measure to facilitate the issuance of permits.

99. I am deeply concerned by the continuing increase in the number of children detained by Israel and by the reports by children of physical violence directed against them during detention. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, to end the administrative detention of children, and to prevent any violence and ill-treatment in detention.

100. I am deeply concerned by the increase in the killing and maiming of children by Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades. I call upon all Palestinian armed groups to cease indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated areas in Gaza towards Israeli civilian population centres. I urge all Palestinian armed groups to protect children, including by preventing them from being exposed to the risk of violence and by abstaining from instrumentalizing them for political purposes. I reiterate my call upon armed groups to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and to abide by their domestic and international legal obligations. I exhort Palestinian armed groups to better protect schools.

### **Lebanon**

101. The United Nations verified 67 grave violations against 66 children (63 boys, 3 girls).

102. The recruitment and use of 48 children (47 boys, 1 girl), between the ages of 11 and 17, by unidentified armed groups (45), Fath al-Islam (1), Jund Ansar Allah (1) and Hizbullah (1), was verified.

103. Children (2) were arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges.

104. A total of 18 children (16 boys, 2 girls) were killed (6) and maimed (12) by unidentified perpetrators as a result of armed clashes (13) and explosive remnants of war (5).

105. One school was attacked by unidentified perpetrators in a Palestine refugee camp.

### *Developments and concerns*

106. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

107. I welcome the increased application of the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics by the Palestinian National Security Forces.

108. I am concerned about increased recruitment and use of children by armed groups, and urge them to immediately cease this practice.

109. I remain concerned about the detention of children on national security grounds. I reiterate my call upon the Government to release these children to civilian child protection actors and to treat them primarily as victims, employing detention only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time.

110. I am disturbed by continued armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps and their negative impact on children's access to education, including school closures in October and November 2022, and to health services.

### **Libya**

111. The United Nations verified 102 grave violations against 63 children (44 boys, 10 girls, 9 sex unknown), including 29 children who were victims of multiple

violations. In addition, three grave violations affecting one boy that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

112. A total of 24 boys were used as cleaners by Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade affiliated with the Libyan National Army (LNA) in Sabha.

113. The United Nations received reports of the detention of some 64 children, with their mothers, of several nationalities, for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh, by the Judicial Police, in Judaydah prison, and by LNA and affiliated forces in Kuwayfayah prison.

114. The killing (13) and maiming (12) of 25 children (15 boys, 5 girls, 5 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (23), including through explosive remnants of war (11) and in crossfire (10), and the Stability Support Apparatus (2), were verified. In addition, the maiming of one boy by the Internal Security Agency that had occurred in previous years was verified in 2022.

115. Sexual violence perpetrated against 5 girls was verified and attributed to the Masked Men armed group (2) and armed groups affiliated with the Ministry of Interior (3).

116. A total of 9 attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (5) were verified and attributed to unknown perpetrators. One attack on a school by the Internal Security Agency that had occurred in previous years was verified in 2022.

117. The abduction of 38 children (29 boys, 5 girls, 4 sex unknown) by the Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade affiliated with LNA (26), armed groups affiliated with the Ministry of Interior (7), a Bani Walid criminal group led by Aseel Al-Senussi Ashnishah (2), the Masked Men (2) and the Ramzi al-Lafia Brigade (1) was verified. Most children were abducted for recruitment and use and/or sexual violence purposes (29). The United Nations verified in 2022 the abduction of one boy by the Internal Security Agency that had occurred in previous years.

118. One denial of humanitarian access was verified and attributed to unidentified perpetrators in western Tripoli.

#### *Developments and concerns*

119. I welcome the efforts of the Libyan authorities to engage with the United Nations regarding the repatriation of children detained for alleged association with Da'esh. I encourage the Libyan authorities to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children allegedly associated with Da'esh and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate their voluntary repatriation and reintegration, in line with the principle of non-refoulement and with respect for the best interests of the child and in accordance with international law.

120. I am concerned about the increase in abductions of children and about the prevalence of killing and maiming of children, in particular by explosive remnants of war and crossfire between parties. I urge all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I further call upon Libya to become a party to international conventions on explosive ordnance.

121. I urge the Libyan authorities to engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent all violations against children, and to ensure that child protection provisions are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts.

122. I am appalled by reports of violations against refugee and migrant children, including torture and sexual violence. I urge the Libyan authorities to immediately end child detention, pursue alternatives to detention and facilitate access by the United

Nations and other humanitarian agencies to detention centres and disembarkation points.

## **Mali**

123. The United Nations verified 1,024 grave violations against 757 children (606 boys, 137 girls, 14 sex unknown), including 88 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 271 grave violations against 249 children (189 boys, 60 girls) that had occurred in previous years.

124. A total of 452 children (416 boys, 36 girls), between the ages of 10 and 17, were recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators (91); Platform (90) (Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (35), Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad des Daoussak (MSA-D) (31), Ganda Lassal Izo (20), Front de libération des régions du nord (FLN) (2), Ganda Izo (2)); Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (74) (Front de libération du Macina (FLM) (40), unidentified JNIM (34)); Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (72); Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (16) (unidentified CMA (7), Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (4), Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (3), MAA-CMA (Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA)-CMA) (2)); Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (20); and Dozo traditional hunters (5). A total of 84 children were used by the Malian armed forces in support roles, of which 79 were released. The United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 237 children that had occurred in previous years (181 boys, 56 girls) by CMA (134) (HCUA (73), MNLA (38), MAA (15), unidentified CMA (8)); unidentified perpetrators (40); Platform (30) (MAA (13), GATIA (12), Ganda Lassal Izo (3), Ganda Izo (1), FNL (1)); Dozo traditional hunters (14); MSA (8); the Malian armed forces (5); JNIM (3) and ISGS (3).

125. A total of 30 boys were captured during military operations or arrested by the Malian Defence and Security Forces and international forces for alleged association with armed groups. Of the total, 25 boys were handed over to child protection structures in accordance with the Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups, signed in 2013 by the Government of Mali and the United Nations. Five children were detained by national authorities for longer periods, in contravention of the Protocol.

126. The United Nations verified the killing (106) and maiming (139) of 245 children (172 boys, 59 girls, 14 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (157), including 17 during crossfire between parties, JNIM (43) (FLM (28), Katiba Serma (10), unidentified JNIM (5)); ISGS (19); the Malian armed forces (17), including jointly with foreign security personnel (3); Dan Nan Ambassagou (DNA) (4); MSA-D (3); MAA-CMA (1); and MSA (1). Most casualties resulted from gunshot during attacks on villages, and explosive ordnance (98). The United Nations verified in 2022 the killing (1) and maiming (6) of 7 children (5 boys, 2 girls) by MNLA (5) and JNIM (2) in 2021.

127. The rape of 36 girls by unidentified perpetrators (28), MSA-D (4), DNA (2), Ganda Koy (1) and the Malian armed forces (1) was verified. The United Nations verified in 2022 sexual violence perpetrated against seven girls by unidentified perpetrators (6) and the Malian armed forces (1).

128. A total of 97 attacks on schools (83) and hospitals (14), including on protected persons in relation to schools/hospitals, were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (87), including during clashes between the Malian armed forces and FLM (2), JNIM (8), (FLM (5), Katiba Serma (3)); DNA (1); and the Malian armed forces (1). Incidents involved destruction, looting, attacks and threats against protected persons, including their killing and abduction, and the explosion of an ambulance.

129. A total of 3 schools were militarily used by FLM (2) and the Malian armed forces (1). The Malian armed forces used the school for a few hours.

130. A total of 109 children (90 boys, 19 girls) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (56), JNIM (40) (FLM (20), unidentified JNIM (11), Katiba Serma (9)); ISGS (9); DNA (2); MSA (1); and Ganda Koy (1). Children were abducted mostly for recruitment and use and/or sexual violence purposes (54) and as punishment for not respecting rules imposed by armed groups (33). A total of 96 children escaped or were released. The United Nations verified in 2022 the abduction of 20 children (15 boys, 5 girls) by unidentified perpetrators that had occurred in previous years.

131. A total of 85 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (71), the Malian armed forces (9), JNIM (3) (FLM (1), Katiba Serma (1), unidentified JNIM (1)); and ISGS (2). Incidents involved robberies and killing, abduction, detention and intimidation of humanitarian personnel.

#### *Developments and concerns*

132. I welcome the transitional Government's efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, to develop a national prevention plan regarding all grave violations against children, and I call for its adoption and implementation.

133. I am concerned by the elevated number of cases of recruitment and use of children by the Malian armed forces. I urge the transitional Government to notify the United Nations of children associated with the government forces and to release them. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize the revision of the Child Protection Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those between the ages of 15 and 17, to finalize and adopt the bill on the protection of education from attacks, and to investigate violations and hold perpetrators accountable. I welcome the cooperation with the United Nations on the 2013 handover protocol, but I further call for its full implementation and upon the transitional Government to release all children in its custody.

134. I welcome the adoption by the transitional Government in November 2022 of a decree on compensation for human rights violations. I welcome the fact that, with United Nations support, 529 children formerly associated with armed groups received reintegration services.

135. I welcome the adoption by CMA and Platform of road maps to accelerate the full implementation of their action plans and I call upon both parties to collaborate with the United Nations. I remain concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children by CMA and Platform. I call upon both to release all children from their ranks to prevent further recruitment and use and other grave violations.

136. I remain alarmed at the elevated number of grave violations against children. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations, unconditionally release associated children, protect schools and hospitals and allow the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors.

#### **Myanmar**

137. The United Nations verified 1,226 grave violations against 939 children (601 boys, 225 girls, 113 sex unknown). In addition, 39 violations against 39 children that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

138. The recruitment and use of 235 children (215 boys, 20 girls), as young as age 12, attributed to the Myanmar armed forces (112), the border guard forces (35), the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (49), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (18), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) (7), the



Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)/Shan State Army (SSA) (7), the Chin National Front (2), the Karen National Liberation Army (2), the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) (2) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (1), mostly in Rakhine, Kachin and Kayin states and regions, was verified. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 33 children that had occurred in previous years (32 boys, 1 girl) by the Myanmar armed forces (26), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (6) and KIA (1).

139. The detention of 129 children (115 boys, 14 girl) by the Myanmar armed forces for their alleged association with armed groups was verified.

140. The killing (149) and maiming (372) of 521 children (342 boys, 175 girls, 4 sex unknown), some as young as a few months old, by the Myanmar armed forces and other security forces (377), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (9), Pyu Saw Htee (1), TNLA (1) and unidentified perpetrators (133), including those resulting from explosive ordnance (87) and crossfire (33), were verified, mostly in Sagaing, Shan, Kayin, Kayah, Rakhine, Chin, Mon, Yangon, Magway and Kachin states and regions. In addition, the maiming of 5 children (4 boys, 1 girl) by the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and the Myanmar armed forces (1) in 2021 was verified in 2022.

141. The rape of 2 girls by TNLA (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the rape of one girl by a Myanmar armed forces-aligned militia that had occurred in previous years.

142. The United Nations verified 105 attacks on schools (78) and hospitals (27), attributed to the Myanmar armed forces (66), unidentified perpetrators (26), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (12) and the Karenni National People's Liberation Front (1), mostly in Sagaing, Kayin and Kayah states and regions.

143. The military use of 115 schools and 7 hospitals by the Myanmar armed forces, including with aligned militias (118), the Arakan Army (3) and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1) was verified.

144. The abduction of 286 children (134 boys, 43 girls, 109 sex unknown), some as young as a few months old, by the Myanmar armed forces (206), KIA (40), TNLA (24), MNDAA (7), Pyu Saw Htee (3), SSPP/SSA (2), DKBA (2), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified.

145. A total of 77 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by the Myanmar armed forces (61), unidentified perpetrators (7), the Myanmar armed forces and the Myanmar Police Force (4), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (3), the Arakan Army (1) and Pa-O National Army (1) were verified, mostly in Shan, Chin, Sagaing and Kayah states and regions. Humanitarian access has worsened owing to administrative and physical impediments to the movement of aid, increased arrests and violence against humanitarian workers, and high insecurity.

#### *Developments and concerns*

146. I strongly condemn the violations against children, and I am concerned by the spread of clashes to new areas and the multiplication of armed actors. I am alarmed by the scale of abductions and the killing and maiming of children, in particular by the Myanmar armed forces. I urge the Myanmar armed forces and other parties to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, to take measures to protect children during operations, to cease and prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected persons, and to prevent the military use of schools and hospitals. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

147. I am extremely concerned by the high number of children recruited and used by the Myanmar armed forces, notably in Rakhine State. I call for the full implementation of the joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children, in close cooperation with the United Nations. I am gravely concerned by the pattern of indiscriminate and targeted attacks by the Myanmar armed forces on civilians, including children, internally displaced persons and humanitarian workers. I reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces to sign a joint action plan with the United Nations to end the killing and maiming of children and prevent sexual violence.

148. I welcome the ongoing coordination with KIA towards the reintegration of children and call upon other armed groups to strengthen their engagement with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations.

149. I am alarmed by increased restrictions on humanitarian access and call upon the Myanmar armed forces and other parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

150. I am concerned by the high number of children in detention and by cases of torture, and urge the Myanmar armed forces to immediately release detained children and comply with international juvenile justice standards. I call for the respect and implementation of the July 2019 Child Rights Law.

### **Somalia**

151. The United Nations verified 2,783 grave violations against 2,282 children (1,810 boys, 472 girls), including 431 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, five violations that had occurred in 2021 were verified in 2022.

152. A total of 1,094 children (1,022 boys, 72 girls), as young as age 8, were verified as having been recruited and used by Al-Shabaab (902); regional forces (68) (Puntland forces (23), Puntland police (21), “Somaliland” forces (8), Galmudug police (6), Jubbaland forces (5), Galmudug forces (3), Jubbaland police (1), Hirshabelle police (1)); clan militias (65); government security forces (37) (Somali National Army (22), the Somali Police Force (14), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (1)); “community defence forces” (15); and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama‘a (ASWJ) (7). Children were used in combat (101), in support roles (146) and for unknown purposes (847).

153. A total of 176 boys, of which 104 were released and 1 was killed, were detained for their alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (93), the Somali National Army (41), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (7), regional forces (34) (Southwest Police (8), Jubbaland forces (5), Galmudug police (5), Hirshabelle police (5), Puntland forces (4), Jubbaland police (6), Galmudug forces (1)); and the Ethiopian Liyu Police (1).

154. The killing (166) and maiming (546) of 712 children (550 boys, 162 girls) by unidentified perpetrators (254); Al-Shabaab (223); government security forces (90) (Somali National Army (58), the Somali Police Force (28), the National Intelligence and Security Agency (4)); clan militias (73); regional forces (59) (Puntland police (28), Puntland forces (18), Jubbaland forces (8), Jubbaland police (2), Hirshabelle police (1), the Puntland Maritime Police Force (1), South-West forces (1)); Da’esh (5); ASWJ (4); AMISOM (3); and the Ethiopian Liyu Police (1) were verified. The main causes of casualties were small arms and light weapons (384), including during crossfire, indiscriminate shootings and targeted killings, and explosive ordnance (276).

155. Sexual violence perpetrated against 221 children (2 boys, 219 girls) by unidentified perpetrators (132); government security forces (32) (Somali National Army (23), the Somali Police Force (8), joint operations of the Somali National

Army/National Intelligence and Security Agency (1)); Al-Shabaab (30); clan militias (21); regional forces (4); (Jubbaland forces (2), Jubbaland police (1), Puntland police (1)); the Ethiopian Liyu Police (1); and “community defence forces” (1) was verified. Cases included rape (146), attempted rape (37) and forced marriage (28).

156. A total of 44 attacks on schools (39) and hospitals (5), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified. Incidents were attributed to Al-Shabaab (40), clan militias (2) and unidentified perpetrators (2). Most incidents involved the abduction, killing or injury of protected persons (30). The United Nations also verified one military use of a school by Al-Shabaab.

157. A total of 694 children (639 boys, 55 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (663); clan militias (6); government security forces (3) (Somali Police Force (2), the Somali National Army (1)); and unidentified armed elements (22). Most children were abducted for recruitment and use (334), owing to alleged association with opposing parties to conflict (76), and indoctrination and alleged recruitment (69). Some escaped or were released (144).

158. A total of 18 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by clan militias (5), the Somali National Army (4), Al-Shabaab (4), jointly by “Somaliland” security forces/unidentified armed elements (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and the Southwest Police (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

159. I welcome the Federal Government’s continued efforts to implement the 2019 road map to expedite the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, including at the federal member state level. I commend the establishment of an interministerial committee on children and armed conflict. I note with concern the increase in violations by security and police forces at the federal member state level and urge the Government to prioritize the implementation of its commitments to ending conflict-related sexual violence and other grave violations. I call upon the Government to ensure that the “community defence forces” end and prevent grave violations.

160. I note the Federal Government’s continued implementation of the 2014 standard operating procedures for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups, including the establishment of a child protection screening unit in the Ministry of Internal Security to support the handover of children. I welcome the transfer of 341 children to the United Nations Children’s Fund for reintegration support. I am concerned by the continuing high number of children detained for alleged association with armed groups, the prosecution of minors through military courts and the death penalty being imposed on children in Puntland. I urge the Federal Government and federal member states to treat children primarily as victims and to detain them only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time.

161. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and urge the Government to expedite the endorsement of the child rights bill, the juvenile justice bill and age verification guidelines, and to adopt the sexual offences bill of 2018.

162. I am appalled by the ongoing high number of violations attributed to Al-Shabaab, in particular the recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction of children.

163. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

## South Sudan

164. The United Nations verified 466 grave violations against 335 children (201 boys, 129 girls, 5 sex unknown), including 25 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, three violations that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

165. A total of 110 children (107 boys, 3 girls), including some 30 children under age 15, were recruited and used by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition Kit-Gwang (SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang) (27), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) (25), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) (25), forces loyal to General Moses Lokujo (17), forces loyal to General James Nando (7), the South Sudan National Wildlife Services (4), the South Sudan National Police Service (2), the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (2) and the National Prison Service of South Sudan (1). Children were used in combat and as bodyguards, porters and cooks.

166. The killing (46) and maiming (34) of 80 children (61 boys, 17 girls, 2 sex unknown) were carried out by unidentified perpetrators (37), including resulting from explosive ordnance (30) and crossfire between SSPDF and SPLM/A-IO (1) and SPLM/A-IO and Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition Agwelek (SPLM/A-IO Agwelek) (2), SSPDF (30), SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (9), forces loyal to General Stephen Buay Rolnyang (2), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (1) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) (1).

167. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 94 girls, as young as age 7, by SSPDF (74), SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (10), SPLM/A-IO (4), the South Sudan National Police Service (2), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (2) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

168. A total of 62 attacks on schools (51) and hospitals (11) were attributed to SSPDF (30), unidentified perpetrators (20), including in crossfire between SPLM/A-IO and SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (16) and SPLM/A-IO Agwelek and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (1), NAS (8), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (2), SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (1) and SPLM/A-IO (1). In addition, the military use of 24 schools and 2 hospitals by SSPDF (16), the Necessary Unified Forces (2), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (2), SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (2), SPLM/A-IO (1) and NAS (1) was verified.

169. The abduction of 76 children (36 boys, 37 girls, 3 sex unknown) by SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (33), SSPDF (18), NAS (10), the National People's Alliance Movement (6), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (3), SPLM/A-IO (3), unidentified perpetrators (2) and the South Sudan United Front/Army (1) was verified.

170. A total of 44 incidents of denial of humanitarian access by SSPDF (16), NAS (12), the South Sudan National Police Service (7), SPLM/A-IO (3), unidentified perpetrators (3), SPLM/A-IO Agwelek (2) and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (1) were verified.

### *Developments and concerns*

171. I welcome the commitment of the Government to the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations against Children and reiterate my call for the Government to prioritize its implementation and to budget accordingly. I underline the importance of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including its provisions relating to children.

172. I encourage the continued access to barracks provided by the Government to the United Nations for age screening, but I remain concerned by the number of children recruited and used, in particular by government security forces.

173. I am gravely concerned about the significant increase in grave violations, especially sexual violence, abduction and attacks on schools and hospitals, notably by government security forces. I call upon all parties to immediately cease and prevent violations, to facilitate humanitarian access, including by preventing bureaucratic impediments and protecting humanitarian personnel, and to release associated children.

174. I am concerned about the escalating subnational and communal violence affecting children, which may be linked to the overall security situation.

175. I urge the Government to combat the prevalent impunity for grave violations, including through the designation of a focal point on children and armed conflict in the Ministry of Justice.

176. I encourage the continued cooperation of parties to the conflict with the United Nations and the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission. I reiterate the need for reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups, services and assistance programmes for survivors of sexual violence, security sector reform and demining. I call upon the Government to invest in these efforts.

## **Sudan**

177. The United Nations verified 306 grave violations against 253 children (164 boys, 82 girls, 7 sex unknown), including 10 girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 15 violations that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

178. A total of 68 children (59 boys, 9 girls), between the ages of 9 and 17, were verified as recruited and used by the Sudanese Alliance (34), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction (SPLM-N Malik Agar) (17), the Third Front-Tamazuj (10), the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) (2), the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) (2), the Gathering of the Sudan Liberation Forces (1), the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) (1) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army-Transitional Council (SLM/A-TC) (1) in West Darfur (30) and North Darfur (38). Children were used in combat (40), support roles (23) and unknown capacities (5).

179. The killing (74) and maiming (76) of 150 children (102 boys, 41 girls, 7 sex unknown), some as young as 7, were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (146), including owing to explosive remnants of war (50), the Rapid Support Forces (1), SAF (1), the Sudan Police Force (SPF) (1) and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) (1).

180. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 35 girls, between the ages of 12 and 17, by unidentified perpetrators (26), the Rapid Support Forces (5) and the Chadian National Army (4).

181. A total of 33 attacks on schools (22) and hospitals (11) by unidentified perpetrators (28), the Sudan Police Force (2), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM/N-al Hilu) (1), the Rapid Support Forces (1) and SAF (1) were verified. In addition, the military use of schools (11) by unidentified perpetrators (5), the Rapid Support Forces (3), JEM (1) and SLA/AW (1) was verified.

182. The abduction of 10 children (3 boys, 7 girls), between the ages of 9 and 17, by unidentified perpetrators (9) and the Rapid Support Forces (1) was verified.

183. A total of 10 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (8), SAF (1) and SPLM/N-al Hilu (1).

*Developments and concerns*

184. While it was not during the reporting period, I am deeply alarmed at the recent outbreak of hostilities and call upon all parties to immediately cease hostilities, fully comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, including by protecting schools and hospitals, and facilitate humanitarian access.

185. I welcome the collaboration between the Sudanese authorities and the United Nations on the basis of the 2021 road map based on the 2016 action plan on ending and preventing child recruitment and use by national authorities and armed groups signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement. I commend the operationalization of the high-level and technical committees overseeing its implementation. I reiterate my call upon the Sudanese authorities to engage with the United Nations on a longer-term national plan to prevent all grave violations.

186. I encourage the continued cooperation of the national authorities and armed group signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement with the United Nations on the screening of forces to identify children and facilitate their release.

187. I am concerned by the impact of intercommunal violence, especially in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, on children. I urge the Sudanese authorities and the signatories to the Juba Peace Agreement to implement the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians, including by preventing grave violations against children, and to deploy the Joint Security-Keeping Force in Darfur to protect civilians.

188. I call upon the Sudanese authorities to ensure the safety of and access to mine action operations, including explosive ordnance risk education, and call upon donors to support such operations.

189. I urge all factions of SLA/AW to engage with the United Nations to sign an action plan, and call upon JEM, SLA/MM, SPLM/N-al Hilu and SPLM-N Malik Agar to fully implement their respective action plans and other commitments, including under their respective 2020 and 2021 road maps.

190. I am concerned about the increase in killing and maiming, recruitment and use, sexual violence, and attacks on schools and hospitals during the reporting period. I urge all parties to immediately release, unconditionally, all children to civilian child protection actors and to immediately vacate schools and hospitals.

**Syrian Arab Republic**

191. The United Nations verified 2,438 grave violations against 2,407 children (2,059 boys, 312 girls, 36 sex unknown), including 7 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 10 grave violations against 10 children (9 boys, 1 girl) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

192. A total of 1,696 children (1,593 boys, 103 girls) were verified as recruited and used by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (637) (the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (633), other components of SDF (4)) and the Internal Security Forces, under the umbrella of the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria (21) (the Internal Security Forces); the opposition Syrian National Army (SNA) (611) (Ahrar al-Sham (27), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (25), Faylaq al-Rahman (17), Faylaq al-Sham (15), Suqur al-Sham (14), Sultan Murad Division (10), Jaysh al-Sharqiyah (10), Hamzah Division (9), Jabhah al-Sharqiyah (6), Firqa al-Sahiliyah (1), unidentified factions (477)); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (383); Syrian government forces (15) and pro-government militias (10); the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (10); Nour al-Din al-Zanki (5); and Da'esh (4). Most children (1,688) were used in combat. In addition, the recruitment and use of 3 children

(2 boys, 1 girl) by YPG/YPJ (2) and the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (1) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

193. Two boys were detained by Syrian government forces (1) and YPG/YPJ (1) for alleged association with armed groups. At the end of 2022, over 600 children, including foreigners, reportedly remained detained for alleged association with armed groups, mainly Da'esh, in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic, and over 55,500 persons, mostly women and children, with suspected family ties to Da'esh continued to be held in Hawl and Rawj camps in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic.

194. The United Nations verified the killing (307) and maiming (404) of 711 children (466 boys, 209 girls, 36 sex unknown), attributed to Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (178) (including pro-government air forces (44) and the National Defence Forces (NDF) (1)); SDF (73) (YPG/YPJ (44), other components of SDF (29)) and the Internal Security Forces (1); opposition SNA (47); Da'esh (38); the Turkish Armed Forces (6); the international counter-Da'esh coalition (3); Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1); and unidentified perpetrators (364). Casualties resulted mainly from explosive ordnance (375), ground shelling (217), air strikes (63) and live ammunition (52). In addition, the killing (2) and maiming (5) of 7 boys by pro-government air forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (6) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

195. Rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against three girls by Da'esh were verified.

196. The United Nations verified 17 attacks on schools (13) and hospitals (4), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (5), including pro-government air forces (2); Da'esh (3); opposition SNA (2); SDF (1); the Internal Security Forces (1); Turkish armed forces (1); and unidentified perpetrators (4). Attacks resulted mainly from ground shelling (5), air strikes (5) and live ammunition (4).

197. The military use of 50 schools (48) and hospitals (2) was attributed to YPG/YPJ (42), Syrian government forces, pro-government forces and militias (6) and opposition SNA (2).

198. The abduction of 4 children (1 boy, 3 girls) by YPG/YPJ (2) and the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (2) was verified. All the children were abducted for recruitment and use.

199. A total of 7 incidents of denial of humanitarian access were verified and attributed to Da'esh (3); SDF (1); opposition SNA (1); pro-government air forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). Incidents included damages to humanitarian facilities (4) and attacks on humanitarian personnel (3).

#### *Developments and concerns*

200. I welcome the ongoing dialogue between the Government and the United Nations on commitments to ending and preventing grave violations against children, including taking steps to organize a joint workshop with the United Nations to develop and adopt a comprehensive action plan. I encourage the Government to continue its engagement with the United Nations, including through the signing of a comprehensive action plan.

201. I note the implementation of the 2019 action plan by SDF, resulting in the disengagement of 33 children from their ranks and the screening out of 219 children. I further note the renewed cooperation of SDF with United Nations focal points and the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict in the north-east towards the implementation of the action plan despite a pause, and SDF commitment to holding

a joint review of the action plan and developing a road map for its implementation. However, I am deeply concerned by the increase in verified cases of child recruitment and use by SDF, and I urge SDF to immediately end all violations and to recommit to the 2019 action plan.

202. I note the constructive engagement between factions of the opposition SNA, including SNA leadership, Ahrar al-Sham and Jaysh al-Islam, and the United Nations, including the organization of workshops on child protection to develop an action plan. I urge the opposition SNA to prioritize the adoption and implementation of an action plan.

203. I am appalled by the increase in the number of violations against children by all parties to the conflict, in particular child recruitment and use, and by the high number of cases of killing and maiming and of attacks on schools and hospitals, and by widespread impunity. I urge all parties to end and prevent grave violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

204. I remain alarmed by the deprivation of liberty of children for their alleged association with parties to conflict. I call upon all parties to facilitate meaningful and systematic United Nations access to children deprived of liberty. I reiterate my call to treat children primarily as victims, and that deprivation of liberty should be a last resort and for the shortest period of time, in line with international juvenile justice standards and the best interests of the child.

205. I remain seriously concerned by the humanitarian situation and violence affecting women and children in Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I encourage the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the local authorities in the north-east to cooperate and to actively support coordination across sectors between the United Nations and other humanitarian actors in camps to enable the delivery of timely humanitarian assistance to children deprived of liberty. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of women and children who are currently in these camps, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh, in line with international law and in respect for the principles of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child, and with the support of the United Nations, upon request, in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq.

## **Yemen**

206. The United Nations verified 1,596 grave violations against 637 children (522 boys, 115 girls), including 26 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 245 grave violations against 212 children that had occurred in previous years (185 boys, 27 girls) were verified in 2022.

207. A total of 105 children (103 boys, 2 girls), some as young as 10, were verified as recruited and used by the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (hereinafter "the Houthis") (77), the Security Belt Forces (12), the Shabwani Elite Forces (10), the Yemen Armed Forces (4), the Amaliqah Brigades (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1). Thirty-three children were used in combat. In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the recruitment and use of 93 boys by the Houthis (63), the Yemen Armed Forces (17), the Security Belt Forces (9), the Amaliqah Brigades (3) and unidentified perpetrators (1) that had occurred in previous years. Of concern, the United Nations received reports of the organization by the Houthis of "summer camps" for children, exposing them to military content and activities.



208. The deprivation of liberty of 6 children (5 boys, 1 girl) for their alleged association with parties to conflict was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (4) and the Houthis (2).

209. The United Nations verified the killing (158) and maiming (386) of 544 children (432 boys, 112 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (357), including in crossfire (30), the Houthis (88), the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen (the Coalition) (43), the Yemen Armed Forces (26), the Security Belt Forces (21) and the Amaliqah Brigades (9). The main causes of child casualties were explosive remnants of war (282), mortar and artillery shelling (103), gunshots and crossfire (77), air strikes and drone attacks (50) and the running over of children by military vehicles (14). In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 the killing (51) and maiming (79) of 130 children (104 boys, 26 girls) by unidentified perpetrators (66), including in crossfire (6), the Houthis (27), the Coalition (21), the Yemen Armed Forces (11) and the Security Belt Forces (5) that had occurred in previous years.

210. Sexual violence against three children (2 boys, 1 girl) was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (3). In addition, the United Nations verified in 2022 sexual violence against three boys by the Yemen Armed Forces (2) and the Houthis (1) that had occurred in previous years.

211. A total of 32 attacks on schools (7) and hospitals (25), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to the Coalition (13), the Houthis (10), the Yemen Armed Forces (3), the Security Belt Forces (2), the Amaliqah Brigades (2), unidentified perpetrators (1), and jointly to the Yemen Armed Forces and the Shabwani Elite Forces (1). In addition, 12 attacks on schools (9) and hospitals (3) by the Houthis (5), the Southern Transitional Council (2), the Yemen Armed Forces (2), the Security Belt Forces (2) and the Amaliqah Brigades (1) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

212. The military use of 73 schools (67) and hospitals (6) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (66), the Yemen Armed Forces (6) and the Shabwani Elite Forces (1).

213. The abduction of 11 children (10 boys, 1 girl) was attributed to the Houthis (10) and the Security Belt Forces (1). The abduction of most of the children for recruitment and use purposes (9) was verified. Eight children escaped or were released, and the status of three is unknown. The United Nations verified in 2022 the abduction of 7 children (6 boys, 1 girl) by the Houthis (3), the Yemen Armed Forces (2), the Security Belt Forces (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) that had occurred in previous years.

214. A total of 901 incidents of denial of humanitarian access, attributed to the Houthis (601), unidentified perpetrators (210), the Yemen Armed Forces (68), the Coalition (11), the Security Belt Forces (6), the Amaliqah Brigades (4) and the Southern Transitional Council (1), were verified. Incidents involved attacks, in-country movement restrictions and interference with humanitarian activities in Amanat al-Asimah, Sa'dah and Hudaydah.

#### *Developments and concerns*

215. I welcome the continued commitment of the Government to implementing the 2014 action plan and the 2018 road map to end and prevent child recruitment and use. I further welcome the establishment of child protection units in all military regions, and the conduct of field visits to disseminate directives banning child recruitment and verify the absence of children from military ranks. I note the significant decrease in the number of verified cases of children recruited and used and killed and maimed by the Yemen Armed Forces, and efforts by the Government to facilitate humanitarian access. I encourage the Government to continue to strengthen existing measures to prevent child casualties during military operations and to prevent violations. I call

upon the Government to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children detained during military operations. I further welcome the commitment from the Security Belt Forces to abide by the existing action plan and the first training of its forces on the six grave violations that took place in March 2023.

216. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition with my Special Representative to sustainably end and prevent grave violations against children, and the progress achieved in the implementation of the programme of time-bound activities endorsed in January 2020. I note the continued and significant decrease in the number of child casualties, and I call upon the Coalition to pursue the implementation of the 2019 memorandum of understanding and the related programme of time-bound activities. I urge the Coalition to expedite justice, accountability and redress to children who are victims and their families. Continuous monitoring and engagement to ensure the sustained implementation of agreed activities and further reductions in the number of affected children, as verified by the United Nations, are expected and will be closely observed.

217. I welcome the progress made by the Houthis in the implementation of the 2022 action plan, and the significant decrease in violations in 2022. In particular, I welcome the appointment of the technical committee and of senior focal points, and the endorsement of standard operating procedures to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children. I urge the Houthis to continue to fully implement the action plan, including by releasing all children, and to end and prevent violations. I call upon the Houthis to continue to implement the 2020 handover protocol and to allow the unimpeded access of the United Nations to all places of detention.

218. I am encouraged by the decreasing number of grave violations, especially of children recruited and used and killed and maimed, in particular during the United Nations-brokered nationwide truce between the Government of Yemen and the Houthis that was in place from April to October 2022. I urge parties to renew and expand the truce and to engage with my Special Envoy for Yemen towards the resumption of an inclusive political process to reach a comprehensive negotiated settlement, and to include child protection concerns in this process.

219. I remain concerned by the prevalence of killing and maiming of children, including by landmines and explosive ordnance. I urge all parties to urgently facilitate explosive ordnance clearance and explosive ordnance risk education.

220. I remain concerned about the continued high number of humanitarian access constraints, and I urge all parties to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

## **B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

### **Burkina Faso**

221. The United Nations verified 1,202 grave violations against 863 children (546 boys, 298 girls, 19 sex unknown), including 85 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 366 grave violations against 294 children (54 boys, 104 girls, 136 sex unknown) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

222. A total of 115 children (111 boys, 4 girls), between the ages of 3 to 17, were recruited and used by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (65), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (28) and unidentified perpetrators (22), mostly in the Sahel Region. Most children (102) were used in combat. In 2022, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 10 boys by the Defence and Security Forces that had occurred in 2021.

223. Some 13 boys were detained in the high security prison of Ouagadougou for their alleged association with armed groups, including 6 who have been in detention for a number of years. Two of them were released in 2022. Seven of the detained boys have reached the age of 18 and been transferred to the prison's adult section.

224. The United Nations verified the killing (423) and maiming (202) of 625 children (423 boys, 185 girls, 17 sex unknown) by ISGS (204), JNIM (178), the Defence and Security Forces (152), unidentified perpetrators (70, including 28 in crossfire between parties), joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (VDP) (18), Dozo traditional hunters (2) and VDP (1), and occurred mostly in the Sahel Region. Child casualties resulted mainly from gunshots (321), air strikes (98), physical assault (86) and improvised explosive devices (59). In 2022, the United Nations verified the killing (1) and maiming (51) of 52 children by JNIM (51) and ISGS (1) in 2021.

225. The rape of 16 girls by JNIM (9), unidentified perpetrators (4), the Defence and Security Forces (2) and ISGS (1), mostly in Centre-Nord and Sahel Regions, was verified. In 2022, the United Nations also verified sexual violence perpetrated against four girls by JNIM in 2021.

226. Responsibility for 163 verified attacks on schools (120) and hospitals (43), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, was attributed to JNIM (109), ISGS (41), unidentified perpetrators (12) and joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces and VDP (1). Incidents involved the abduction and killing of, as well as threats against, protected persons, and the destruction, closure and looting of facilities. In 2022, the United Nations verified four attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (3) attributed to JNIM (2), ISGS (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1), which had occurred in 2021.

227. Five schools and one hospital were militarily used by the Defence and Security Forces (2), JNIM (2) and ISGS (2). One school and one hospital continued to be used as at December 2022 by JNIM and ISGS, respectively.

228. A total of 205 children (72 boys, 131 girls, 2 sex unknown) were abducted by JNIM (143), ISGS (35) and unidentified perpetrators (27), mostly as punishment for not adhering to the norms set by armed groups or as a means to gather intelligence on VDP/Defence and Security Forces positions. Most children (169) were subsequently released. Two girls died following their abduction and rape. In 2022, the United Nations verified the abduction of 295 children by JNIM in 2021.

229. Responsibility for 78 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access was attributed to JNIM (57), ISGS (12), unidentified perpetrators (6) and the Defence and Security Forces (3). Incidents involved the abduction, detention, killing and maiming of humanitarian personnel, the looting and destruction of infrastructure, and the cutting off of humanitarian access. In 2022, the United Nations also verified one incident of the denial of humanitarian access by unidentified perpetrators in 2021.

#### *Developments and concerns*

230. I welcome the signing on 12 September of a handover protocol for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors between the transitional authorities and the United Nations. I call upon the transitional authorities to implement the protocol, to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to release all detained children.

231. I am alarmed by the sharp increase in the number of grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children, abductions, affecting girls in particular, the recruitment and use of children, in particular by JNIM and ISGS, and by the attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge JNIM, ISGS and other parties to release

associated children, cease all violations and end attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected persons.

232. I call upon all parties to engage with the United Nations to end and prevent violations and further urge the authorities, and VDP, to prevent grave violations committed during security operations and to pursue accountability, in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.

### **Cameroon**

233. The United Nations verified 156 violations against 111 children (47 boys, 58 girls, 6 sex unknown), including four girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, eight grave violations affecting eight children (3 boys, 5 girls) that occurred in 2021 were verified in 2022.

234. The recruitment and use of 8 children (4 boys, 4 girls), aged 14 to 15, by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) in the Far North Region was verified. In 2022, the United Nations verified incidents of the recruitment and use of 4 children (1 boy, 3 girls) by JAS (4) that had occurred in previous years.

235. A total of 34 children (30 boys, 4 sex unknown) were detained by national authorities for their alleged association with armed groups (30) and on national security grounds (4). As at December 2022, 30 children remained in detention.

236. The killing (18) and maiming (20) of 38 children (25 boys, 11 girls, 2 sex unknown) by JAS (14), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (11), unidentified perpetrators (10), including in crossfire between the Cameroon Armed Forces (CAF) and unidentified perpetrators (2), and by the Cameroon Armed Forces (3) was verified. Casualties occurred in Far North (29), North-West (7) and South-West (2) and resulted mainly from gunshots (18), improvised explosive devices (9) and knife wounds (5). In 2022, the United Nations verified the killing of two children (1 boy, 1 girl) by JAS that had occurred in previous years.

237. Sexual violence perpetrated against four girls by JAS was verified in the Far North.

238. Responsibility for 28 attacks on schools (15) and hospitals (13), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (20), ISWAP (5) and the Cameroon Armed Forces (3) in South-West (14), North-West (9) and Far North (5). Incidents involved the looting and destruction of facilities, as well as abductions and attacks against protected persons.

239. In the Far North Region, 17 schools were military used by the Cameroon Armed Forces.

240. The abduction of 65 children (18 boys, 43 girls, 4 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (44), JAS (17) and ISWAP (4) in Far North region was verified. In 2022, the United Nations verified the abduction of two children (1 boy, 1 girl) by JAS that had occurred in previous years.

241. A total of 13 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (11) and the Cameroon Armed Forces (2) in the North-West (10) and South-West (3) Regions were verified. Incidents involved robberies, extortion, the destruction of property and assaults on humanitarian personnel, including the killing of personnel.

### *Developments and concerns*

242. I welcome the fact that the Government and the United Nations conducted a joint assessment of children's needs in the transit centre in Meri, Far North region. I call upon the Government to use its findings to ensure that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes treat children primarily as victims,

consider the specific needs and rights of children formerly associated with armed groups and allow child protection actors to have access to all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration centres.

243. I welcome the training of law enforcement officers on child protection in the North-West Region in cooperation with the United Nations. I call upon the Government to extend the training to all defence and security forces and to pursue its efforts to strengthen the protection of children, vacate schools being used for military purposes and prevent the further military use of schools, and to ensure accountability for grave violations against children.

244. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups. I call upon the Government to treat these children primarily as victims, with detention as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody. I urge the Government to adopt a handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

245. I urge JAS and ISWAP to put an end to violations and immediately release associated children.

246. I am deeply concerned about the continued grave violations in the North-West and South-West Regions, particularly attacks on schools and hospitals, including the killing and abduction of protected persons, and the denial of humanitarian access, including the killing of humanitarian personnel. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations.

### **Ethiopia**

247. The United Nations verified 270 grave violations against 187 children (93 boys, 39 girls, 55 sex unknown), between the age of 2 months and 17 years, including 1 boy who was the victim of multiple violations. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors. A much larger number of allegations of recruitment and use was received and is under verification.

248. Five children (4 boys, 1 girl), aged between 13 and 17, were verified as having been recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators (3) and Tigrayan forces (2) in the states or regions of Amhara (3) and Tigray (2).

249. The killing (66) and maiming (107) of 173 children (85 boys, 33 girls, 55 sex unknown) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (132) (including as a result of explosive ordnance (58)), the Eritrean Defence Forces (16), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (10), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Eritrean Defence Forces (7), Tigrayan forces (3), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Amhara Special Force (2), joint operations by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and Afar Special Force (2) and Oromo Liberation Front-Shene (1) in the states or regions of Tigray (162), Amhara (5), Afar (3), Oromiya (2) and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (1).

250. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 5 girls, aged from 12 to 17, by unidentified perpetrators (4) and Oromiya Police (1) in the state of Oromiya (5).

251. A total of 77 attacks on schools by Gumuz People's Democratic Movement (73), unidentified perpetrators (3) and Tigrayan forces (1) in the states or regions of Binshangul Gumuz (73), Tigray (2), Amhara (1) and Afar (1) were verified.

252. Three schools (2) and hospitals (1) were used militarily by Tigrayan forces (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in the states or regions of Tigray (2) and Oromiya (1).

253. Five boys were abducted by Tigrayan forces (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2) in the states or regions of Amhara (2), Afar (2) and Tigray (1).

254. Five incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (3) and Tigrayan forces (2) in the states or regions of Tigray (4) and Oromiya (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

255. I commend the signing of the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities, thereby enabling the resumption of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected areas, and the establishment of the National Rehabilitation Commission. I welcome and encourage the consideration of children's needs and their active participation in peacebuilding and transitional justice processes, and to treat them primarily as victims. I encourage the Government to facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, with the United Nations and with the support of donors, and to prioritize all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

256. I welcome the constructive collaboration between the Government and the United Nations, including through technical and high-level visits of my Special Representative in May and June 2023, during which child protection and prevention measures were discussed, and during which it was agreed to formalize cooperation through an exchange of letters, and I encourage the Government to swiftly implement them.

257. I call upon all parties to comply with applicable international law, adopt concrete measures to end and prevent grave violations, unconditionally release associated children, and to protect schools and hospitals from attacks and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded access to areas where affected children may be present.

258. I call upon the Government to expedite the clearance of areas contaminated by explosive ordnance and provide mine risk education as part of the measures agreed with my Special Representative, and call upon donors to support such operations.

#### **Lake Chad basin**

259. The United Nations verified 862 grave violations against 620 children (268 boys, 350 girls, 2 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in Far North Region (Cameroon) (111), Lac Province (Chad) (100), Diffa Region (the Niger) (127) and the north-east of Nigeria (524). Among those children, 134 were victims of multiple violations. Violations were primarily perpetrated by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (412) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (149). Information pertaining to violations in the Far North Region of Cameroon and in north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections of the present report.

260. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 9 children (3 boys, 6 girls), between the ages of 15 and 17, in Lac Province (3) and Diffa Region (6), all by unidentified perpetrators.

261. The United Nations verified the killing (16) and maiming (6) of 22 children (8 boys, 14 girls) in Lac Province (4) and Diffa Region (18) by unidentified perpetrators (20), including 4 in crossfire between parties, and by the Niger security forces (2). Most child casualties resulted from gunshots (9) and shelling (6).

262. Rape and other forms of sexual violence against three girls were verified and attributed to the Chadian National Army, in Lac Province.

263. Two attacks on hospitals by unidentified perpetrators were verified in Diffa Region.

264. A total of 191 children (88 boys, 103 girls) were abducted in Lac Province (90) and Diffa Region (101) by unidentified perpetrators (190) and Chadian National Army (1). Among those, 1 child was killed and 37 were released or escaped, while the status of 153 children is unknown.

#### *Developments and concerns*

265. I welcome the commitment by the Government of Chad to the protection of children, including efforts to comply with its action plan on child recruitment and use, which was completed in 2014, regular training for its armed forces, and the development of a training guide on child protection. These efforts should be prioritized, including by incorporating such training into the curricula of military schools. I urge the Government of Chad to pursue accountability for violations against children, including sexual violence.

266. I welcome the commitment by the Government of the Niger to the protection of children, including through the national armed forces' engagement with the United Nations on human rights violations and humanitarian access and the revision of training material on child protection for the armed forces. These efforts should be pursued, including by incorporating such training into the curricula of military schools. I further welcome the efforts of the Government, with the support of the United Nations, to establish reintegration programmes benefiting over 200 children, including those formerly associated with armed groups.

267. I call upon the Governments of Chad and the Niger to continue to implement their respective handover protocols for children formerly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors.

268. I am concerned by the scale of grave violations against children, particularly girls, perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP, notably the abduction, killing and maiming of and the recruitment and use of children. I urge these groups to end and prevent all violations, including by engaging with the United Nations to adopt and implement action plans, and to immediately release all children.

### **Mozambique**

#### *Cabo Delgado*

269. The United Nations verified 309 violations against 172 children (82 boys, 90 girls) in Cabo Delgado Province, with 130 children who were victims of multiple violations.

270. The recruitment and use of 133 children (72 boys, 61 girls), some as young as 2 years old, by non-State armed groups (132) and Força Local (1) was verified. Children were used in combat and support roles.

271. Three boys were detained by the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces for alleged association with non-State armed groups. Two were released.

272. The killing (18) and maiming (1) of 19 children (18 boys, 1 girl), by non-State armed groups was verified.

273. Sexual violence against 17 girls by non-State armed groups was verified, including forced marriage (6).

274. Five attacks on schools (2) and hospitals (3) attributed to non-State armed groups were verified.

275. The military use of 12 schools and 1 hospital by the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (12) and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (1) were verified. Four schools continued to be used by the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (3) and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (1).

276. The abduction of 135 children (61 boys, 74 girls) by non-State armed groups was verified mostly for the purposes of recruitment and use (93) and sexual violence (13).

#### *Developments and concerns*

277. I welcome the training of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces on the prevention of grave violations and the creation of a child protection focal point, as well as the engagement of the Government with my Special Representative, including through her visit in April 2023. I call upon the Government to extend the training to all security forces and I encourage the Government to continue to engage with the United Nations on a prevention plan, particularly through an expedited exchange of letters to that effect.

278. I welcome the engagement between the United Nations, the Government and international forces to end the military use of schools and hospitals and call upon the Government to urgently implement the Safe Schools Declaration. I further encourage the Government to expedite the issuance of a handover protocol, and to consider the endorsement of the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles), and the Vancouver Principles.

279. I condemn all grave violations against children. I am concerned by the number of incidents of recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence, particularly of girls, specifically by armed groups, and by the military use of schools and hospitals. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I call upon armed groups to end and prevent all grave violations and to release associated children.

#### **Nigeria**

280. The United Nations verified 524 grave violations against 307 children (135 boys, 172 girls) in north-east Nigeria, including 139 children who were victims of multiple violations. In 2022, the United Nations verified 79 grave violations against 40 children (17 boys, 23 girls) that had occurred in previous years.

281. A total of 136 children (49 boys, 87 girls), between the ages of 8 and 17, were recruited and used by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (118) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (17), mostly following abduction, and by the Nigerian Security Forces (1). Most girls (66) were victims of sexual violence during their association. The Nigerian Security Forces used a boy for domestic chores. In 2022, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 32 children (17 boys, 15 girls) by JAS (27) and ISWAP (5) that had occurred in previous years, in Borno State.

282. Some 40 children (35 boys, 5 girls), between the ages of 8 and 17, were detained by the Nigerian Security Forces for their alleged association with armed groups. All were released following United Nations advocacy.

283. The killing (22) and maiming (31) of 53 children (37 boys, 16 girls) by ISWAP (30), the Nigerian Security Forces (12), unidentified perpetrators (10) and JAS (1) were verified. The casualties were mostly the result of instances of crossfire and shelling.



284. Sexual violence perpetrated against 73 girls by JAS (58) and ISWAP (14) following their abduction, and by the Civilian Joint Task Force (1), was verified. In 2022, the United Nations verified sexual violence against 8 girls by JAS (5), ISWAP (2) and the Nigerian Security Forces (1) that had occurred in Borno, in previous years.

285. Ten attacks on schools (5), hospitals (5) and protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals were attributed to ISWAP. Incidents involved destruction and looting, as well as attacks and threats against, and the abduction of, protected persons.

286. A total of 246 children (96 boys, 150 girls) were abducted by JAS (193) and ISWAP (53). Most of the children (202) escaped, while 44 remain unaccounted for. Most children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence (134). In 2022, the United Nations verified the abduction of 39 children (17 boys, 22 girls) by JAS (34) and ISWAP (5) that had occurred in previous years, in Borno.

287. Six incidents of denial of humanitarian access were attributed to ISWAP (5) and the Nigerian Security Forces (1). Incidents involved threats against and the abduction of humanitarian workers, and the looting and disruption of humanitarian operations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

288. I commend the Civilian Joint Task Force for sustaining the implementation of the 2017 action plan, including through the establishment of 27 child protection units and trainings on child protection, in collaboration with the United Nations.

289. I welcome the adoption of the Child Rights Acts in Yobe State in June and Adamawa State in July, which provide a framework for the protection of conflict-affected children.

290. I commend the Government for the signing, with the United Nations, of a handover protocol for children encountered in military operations, and I urge its swift implementation. I call upon the Government to provide the United Nations with access to all children in detention, and to release all children from detention.

291. I welcome the efforts of the Government, with the support of the United Nations and partners, to reintegrate 4,235 children affected by conflict. I encourage the Government to continue to ensure the effective and gender-sensitive reintegration of all children released, in particular those children escaping from JAS. I appeal to the Government to pursue accountability efforts.

292. I am gravely concerned about the increase in the number of grave violations, particularly abductions, recruitment and use and sexual violence, mostly by JAS and ISWAP. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and release abducted children.

293. I urge all parties to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, including for children in remote areas.

#### **Pakistan**

294. A total of 23 grave violations against 20 children (3 boys, 17 sex unknown) were reported. Children were reportedly killed (3) and maimed (17) by unidentified armed elements. Incidents included casualties caused by explosive remnants of war (9), improvised explosive devices (6) and gunshots (5).

295. Three attacks on schools were also reported, including an attack involving the use of improvised explosive devices against a girls' middle school.

*Developments and concerns*

296. I welcome the endorsement of the Vancouver Principles and the appointment of a national focal person on child protection.

297. I encourage the Government to engage with my Special Representative to develop measures to protect children. Such engagement may lead to the removal of Pakistan as a situation of concern from my next report, should all agreed practical measures be fully implemented.

298. I am concerned about incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan and about attacks against schools.

**Philippines**

299. The United Nations verified 34 grave violations against 27 children (21 boys, 6 girls). In addition, four grave violations against three children (2 boys, 1 girl) that had occurred in previous years were verified in 2022.

300. The recruitment and use of 11 children (10 boys, 1 girl) attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) (9), Abu Sayyaf Group (1) and Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (1) was verified. Children were used in combat (3), for support roles (5) and for unknown purposes (3).

301. The detention of 6 boys by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (5) and the Philippines National Police (1) was verified.

302. The killing (10) and maiming (9) of 19 children (14 boys, 5 girls) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (8), NPA (5), Dawlah Islamiyah-Hassan Group (3), the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2) and Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (1). In addition, in 2022 the United Nations verified the maiming and killing of two boys by unidentified perpetrators in incidents that had occurred in previous years.

303. An incident of sexual violence that affected one girl and was perpetrated by a member of the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units, prior to the reporting period, was verified in 2022.

304. Three attacks on schools, including protected persons in relation to schools, by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2) and Philippines National Police (1) were verified.

305. The abduction of a girl by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Citizen Armed Forces Geographical Units in Quezon, which occurred prior to the reporting period, was verified in 2022.

306. One incident of denial of humanitarian access by NPA (1) was verified.

*Developments and concerns*

307. I welcome the training of military personnel on the Armed Forces of the Philippines Protocol on Handling Children in Situation of Armed Conflict, on human rights and on international humanitarian policies.

308. I welcome the training of personnel from the Bangsamoro Human Rights Commission on the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children.

309. I am concerned by the number of children killed and maimed by explosive ordnance. I call upon the Government to invest in explosive ordnance clearance and risk education. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and reiterate my call upon listed armed groups to engage with the United Nations to adopt action plans.

310. I further call upon the Government to endorse the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (the Paris Principles) and the Safe Schools Declaration. I call upon the Government to fully implement its national policy framework of 2019 on learners and schools as zones of peace.

### **Ukraine**

311. The United Nations verified 2,334 violations against 1,482 children (629 boys, 474 girls, 379 sex unknown), including 91 children who were victims of multiple violations. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, as verification depends on many factors, including access.

312. A total of 92 children were used by Russian armed forces (91) and Ukrainian armed forces<sup>7</sup> (1) as human shields (90), as a hostage and for domestic chores (1) and for intelligence-gathering (1).

313. The United Nations verified the detention of six boys. Four boys were detained by Russian armed forces and subjected to ill-treatment and/or torture. Two boys were deprived of liberty by Ukrainian authorities on national security grounds, with one boy subjected to ill-treatment. As at 31 December, one boy, who turned 18 while in detention, remained in detention, one had escaped three had been released. The status of one boy is unknown.

314. The United Nations verified the killing (477) and maiming (909) of 1,386 children (626 boys, 471 girls, 289 sex unknown) attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups<sup>8</sup> (658: 136 killed, 518 maimed), Ukrainian armed forces (255: 80 killed, 175 maimed) and unidentified perpetrators, mostly caused by air strikes (473: 261 killed, 212 maimed). Most child casualties resulted from the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects (1,206) and explosive ordnance (64).

315. Rape (1) and other forms of sexual violence (2) perpetrated against three girls between the ages of 4 and 17 were verified and attributed to the Russian armed forces in Kyiv region (2) and Chernihiv region (1).

316. Some 751 attacks on schools (461) and hospitals (290), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (480), Ukrainian armed forces (212) and unidentified perpetrators (59). Most attacks involved the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects. Incidents involved damage (577), destruction (151), looting (17) and threats (6). Among those attacks, 20 resulted in child casualties.

317. The United Nations verified the military use of 23 schools and 7 hospitals by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (24), Ukrainian armed forces (4) and unidentified perpetrators (2).

318. The United Nations verified the abduction of 92 children, including 91 children abducted by Russian armed forces, as reported in paragraph 312 above. One child was abducted and taken to Belarus and another child was used as a hostage in exchange for civilians and prisoners of war. All 92 children were released. In addition, the United Nations verified the transfer of 46 children to the Russian Federation from areas of Ukraine that, in part, are or have been under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation, including children forcibly separated from parents, children removed from schools and institutions without the consent of guardians, and a child who was given Russian citizenship.

319. The United Nations verified 10 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to Russian armed forces. Incidents involved the denial of access to cross the front line to deliver humanitarian assistance (8) and attacks on aid distribution points (2).

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<sup>7</sup> Ukrainian armed forces include affiliated Ukrainian militias and combatants.

<sup>8</sup> Affiliated armed groups include pro-Russian militias and combatants.

*Developments and concerns*

320 I welcome the engagement of the Government of Ukraine with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children, following the request in my previous report ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#), para. 313), including through a visit by my Special Representative on 11 and 12 May 2023. I welcome the practical measures that have been established, including explosive ordnance risk education, the appointment of a national focal point on children and armed conflict and the establishment of an interministerial committee on children and armed conflict. I further welcome the engagement of the Government with the United Nations to develop a joint prevention plan.

321. I am concerned by the number of grave violations against children by Ukrainian armed forces presented in my report, which does not represent the full scale of incidents. I am particularly disturbed by the high number of children killed and maimed and by the attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge Ukrainian armed forces to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as set out in paragraph 341 of the present report.

322. I welcome the engagement of the Government of the Russian Federation with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children following the request in my previous report ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#), para. 313), including through a visit by my Special Representative on 18 and 19 May 2023. I welcome the practical measures that have been established and I urge the Russian Federation to quickly adopt all measures discussed with my Special Representative, as set out in paragraph 340 of the present report.

323. I am appalled by the high number of grave violations against children in Ukraine following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, as presented in my report, which does not represent the full scale of incidents, as verification depends on many factors, including access, and many are still under verification. I am particularly shocked by the high number of attacks on schools and hospitals and protected personnel and by the high number of children killed and maimed attributed to the Russian forces and affiliated armed groups. I am also disturbed by the reports of abduction, recruitment and use, sexual violence against children and military use schools and hospitals. I urge Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to immediately implement measures to protect children and to prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and their military use. I urge Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to urgently adopt measures to end and prevent these grave violations, and to pursue accountability.

324. It is imperative that, all efforts by the United Nations to provide humanitarian assistance to children in Ukraine be prioritized by all parties to conflict, in order to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children in these areas.

325. I am concerned by the detention of children, and I urge all parties to ensure that children are detained as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, and to cease all forms of ill-treatment.

326. I am troubled by reports, some of which were verified by the United Nations, of children transferred to the Russian Federation from areas of Ukraine that, in part, are or have been under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation. I urge the Russian Federation to ensure that no changes are made to the personal status of Ukrainian children, including their nationality. I further urge all parties to ensure that the best interests of all children are upheld, including by facilitating family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and/or separated children who find themselves across borders or lines of control without their families or guardians. I urge parties to the conflict to give child protection actors access to these children to facilitate family reunification and I request my Special Representative to assess with United Nations entities and partners ways to facilitate such processes.

## IV. Recommendations

327. I remain concerned by the scale and severity of grave violations against children. I urgently call upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law and to immediately end and prevent grave violations.

328. I welcome the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and other commitments to protect children. I reiterate my call upon Member States to continue to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I request my Special Representative and the country task forces and equivalent arrangements to engage with all parties to end and prevent grave violations, including through engagement with regional organizations, and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict in coordination with United Nations system entities.

329. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions in line with the 2017 policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations and ensure child protection data and capacity are preserved and transferred during mission transitions and reconfigurations. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in the nexus between early warning, conflict analysis, mediation, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

330. I call upon Member States to become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I urge Member States and parties to conflict to consider every human being below the age of 18 years as a child in line with article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

331. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation that criminalizes violations of relevant rules of international law, including grave violations pertaining to the protection of children in armed conflict, and encourage Member States to adopt national accountability measures and to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms. I call for the inclusion of accountability provisions in action plans signed between the United Nations and parties listed in the annexes to the present report.

332. I am deeply concerned by the numbers of children deprived of liberty, many arbitrarily, and by their ill-treatment. I reiterate that detention should be used only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized and that children should be treated exclusively within child justice systems, that children should never be detained or prosecuted solely for their or their parents' actual or alleged association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims, to prioritize their best interest, and to give child protection actors access to them. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement handover protocols for children encountered or detained during military operations to civilian child protection actors and to provide them with reintegration support.

333. I call upon Member States, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, to take measures for the release, protection, repatriation and reintegration of children with

alleged links to Da'esh who are held in camps and places of detention in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with international law and Security Council resolutions. I am concerned about the impact of counter-terrorism measures on children, and I call upon Member States to ensure their consistency with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international instruments.

334. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, as well as access by children to services, assistance and protection, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that civilians and civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools and their personnel, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

335. I urge all parties to undertake clearance of explosive ordnance and provide risk education regarding explosive ordnance and assistance to victims. I urge Member States to become parties to and to implement all conventions on landmines, explosive remnants of war and cluster munitions, if they have not yet done so, and I call upon donors to provide financial and technical assistance.

336. I call upon parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas. I encourage Member States to endorse and adhere to the commitments set out in the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas, including the commitments pertaining to avoiding civilian harm.

337. I call upon the donor community to provide long-term financial support for sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive, survivor-centred, and inclusive programmes, including reintegration for victims of grave violations, and to address the specific needs of children with disabilities. I encourage donors to provide funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children and for strengthening child protection capacities on the ground.

338. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage with the United Nations to improve analysis, develop strategies to prevent grave violations, and foster partnerships.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report**

339. In Burkina Faso, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has been listed under section A of annex II for the killing and maiming of children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mouvement du 23 mars has been listed under section A of annex I for killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals and abduction. Mai-Mai Zaïre has been listed under section A of annex I for the killing and maiming of children. Twigwaneho has been listed under section A of annex I for recruitment and use of children.

340. In Ukraine, Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups have been listed under section B of annex II in consideration of their engagement with my Special Representative for attacks on schools and hospitals and for killing of children, in particular through the use of explosive weapons with a wide-impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery, multiple-launch rocket systems, missiles and air strikes in populated areas. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to urgently finalize and implement their commitments to protect children, including by avoiding the military use of schools and hospitals, putting in place accountability and reparations measures, exchanging information with the

United Nations on all children identified in conflict-affected areas and increasing the provision of access to all children in conflict zones, as well as securing humanitarian corridors as relevant and requested.

341. Furthermore, owing to the high number of children killed and maimed and of attacks on schools and hospitals by Ukrainian armed forces, I urge Ukrainian armed forces to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to immediately implement measures to protect children and to prevent attacks on schools and hospitals and end their military use, as well as prevent the use of children for intelligence-gathering. I will be particularly attentive to this situation in the preparation of my next report.

342. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In Burkina Faso, because of an increase of attacks on schools and hospitals, Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin has been listed under section A of annex II for this violation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces have been listed under section A of annex I for rape and other forms of sexual violence. The Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) has been listed under section A of annex I for the abduction of children. In Myanmar, the Myanmar armed forces (see the change in terminology in para. 347 below) have been listed under section A of annex I for attacks on schools and hospitals and abduction, following an increase in these violations.

343. Other modifications to the list have resulted from changes in the landscape of armed conflict in the respective situations or from changes in measures taken by parties to protect children. In Yemen, the Security Belt Forces have been listed in section B of annex I in recognition of their continued participation in activities organized under the 2018 road map adopted to expedite the 2014 action plan signed with the Government of Yemen.

344. In Iraq, the Popular Mobilization Forces have been delisted for the violation of recruitment and use of children owing to a decrease in this grave violation attributed to them, and the signature of an action plan to prevent the recruitment and use of children. The delisting is conditional upon the finalization of all pending action plan activities and the continued absence of recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces. A continued United Nations monitoring and engagement period of 12 months will ensure the sustainability of all existing measures, as verified by the United Nations, and continued engagement with my Special Representative and the United Nations. Any failure in this regard would result in a relisting for the same violation in my next report.

345. In Myanmar, the Myanmar armed forces (see the change in terminology in para. 347 below) remain listed under section B of annex I for the recruitment and use of children. I remain concerned by the levels of recruitment and use in 2022, notwithstanding the signature of a joint action plan in 2012 with the United Nations. I urge the Myanmar armed forces to reverse this negative trend, to strengthen its engagement with the United Nations and to implement the provisions of its joint action plan. Any failure in this regard would result in being listed in section A of annex I in my next report for the recruitment and use of children.

346. In Somalia, the Somali Federal Defence Forces and the Somali Police Force remain listed under section B of annex I. I remain concerned by the levels of recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and rape and other forms sexual violence in 2022, notwithstanding the signature of action plans in 2012 with the United Nations. I urge the Somali Federal Defence Forces and the Somali Police Force to reverse this negative trend, to strengthen their engagement with the United Nations and to implement the provisions of their joint action plans. I urge the Government to strengthen and expedite the implementation of its commitments to combating

conflict-related sexual violence. Any failure in this regard would result in being listed in section A of annex I.

347. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the names of parties more accurately. In Afghanistan, Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has been listed as Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin, and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province has been listed as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan to align with other United Nations reporting. In Mali, Ansar Eddine, as part of Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM), has been listed as Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine to reflect the fact that JNIM regroups various factions aligned with Al-Qaida. In Myanmar, the Tatmadaw Kyi, including integrated border guard forces, has been listed as the Myanmar armed forces, which is understood to include the integrated border guard forces, to align with other United Nations reporting. In Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin, Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, has been listed separately as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad and as Islamic State West Africa Province to reflect more adequately the configuration of the armed groups. In South Sudan, the South Sudan People's Defence Forces, including the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces, has been listed as the South Sudan People's Defence Forces following the integration of the Taban Deng-allied South Sudan People's Defence Forces into the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and their ceasing to independently engage in armed conflict. In Yemen, the Security Belt Forces has been listed under State actors following the formation of the Presidential Leadership Council.

348. In my previous report ([A/76/871-S/2022/493](#), para. 250), I welcomed the engagement of the Government of India with my Special Representative and noted that that engagement may lead to the removal of India as a situation of concern. I note the technical mission of the Office of my Special Representative in July 2022 to identify areas of cooperation for child protection, and the workshop on strengthening child protection, held in Jammu and Kashmir in November 2022 by the Government, with the participation of the United Nations. I call upon India to implement the remaining measures identified in consultation with my Special Representative and the United Nations, including the training of armed and security forces on child protection, the prohibition of the use of lethal and non-lethal force on children, including by ending the use of pellet guns, ensuring that children are detained as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and to prevent all forms of ill-treatment in detention, and the full implementation of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act. In view of the measures taken by the Government to better protect children, India has been removed from the report in 2023.

349. In view of the gravity and number of violations reported and, where possible, verified in Haiti between September 2022 and March 2023 (recruitment and use, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access), this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.

350. In view of the gravity and number of violations perpetrated by armed groups that were reported and, where possible, verified in the Niger between January and December 2022 in the context of the enhanced monitoring in the Central Sahel region that I requested in paragraph 301 of my previous report (recruitment and use, killing and maiming, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access), this situation will be added as a situation of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.



## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan<sup>a,b,d</sup>
3. Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani Network<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Local militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
2. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

##### **Parties in Colombia**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups<sup>a</sup>

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a</sup>
2. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
3. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
5. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
6. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>

\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

7. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale<sup>a,c,e</sup>
8. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
10. Mai-Mai Zaïre<sup>b</sup>
11. Mouvement du 23 mars<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>
12. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b,c</sup>
13. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
14. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e,f</sup>
15. Twigwaneho<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

#### *Non-State actors*

Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

#### *Non-State actors*

Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine<sup>a,c</sup>

### **Parties in Myanmar**

#### *State actors*

Myanmar armed forces<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Somalia**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>
2. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in the Sudan**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
4. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction<sup>a,f</sup>
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction<sup>a,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>

2. Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
3. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Yemen**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
2. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>

### **B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

#### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

##### *Non-State actors*

Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique as part of the former Séléka coalition<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

#### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

##### *State actors*

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Mali**

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>
2. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

##### *State actors*

Myanmar armed forces<sup>a,f</sup>

##### *Non-State actors*

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

##### *State actors*

1. Somali Federal Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

2. Somali Police Force<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

### **Parties in South Sudan**

#### *State actors*

South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,e,f</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

#### *State actors*

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

1. Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>
2. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>b</sup>

### **Parties in Yemen**

#### *State actors*

Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

#### *Non-State actors*

Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>a,b,d,f</sup>

## Annex II

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations\***

#### **A. Listed parties that have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children**

##### **Parties in Burkina Faso**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara<sup>b</sup>
2. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Lake Chad basin**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>e</sup>

##### **Parties in Nigeria**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Philippines**

###### *Non-State actors*

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

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\* Parties listed in section A have not put in place adequate measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period; parties listed in section B have put in place measures to improve the protection of children during the reporting period.

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

**B. Listed parties that have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children**

**Parties in Ukraine**

*State actors*

Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups<sup>b,d</sup>

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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

## Children and armed conflict

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, prepared following consultations and covering the period from January to December 2023, is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution [2427 \(2018\)](#). The report includes trends regarding the impact of armed conflict on children and information on violations committed, as requested by the Council in its resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#) and subsequent resolutions.<sup>1</sup> Where possible, violations are attributed to parties to conflict and the annexes to the present report include a list of parties engaging in violations against children, namely the recruitment and use of children, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, attacks on schools, hospitals and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals,<sup>2</sup> and the abduction of children.

2. The information contained in the present report was vetted for accuracy by the United Nations. Where information is not verified, it is qualified as such. Where incidents were committed earlier but verified only in 2023, that information is qualified as relating to an incident that was verified at a later date. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, but provides United Nations-verified trends in grave violations against children, given that access for monitors remains a challenge to affected areas and for victims to specialized service provision. The report highlights engagement with parties responsible for violations that has resulted in behavioural change. Attacks or threats of attacks against

<sup>1</sup> See also the relevant reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in specific country situations, in particular in Afghanistan ([S/2023/893](#)), South Sudan ([S/2023/99](#)) and the Syrian Arab Republic ([S/2023/805](#)) and the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Human Rights Council on children and armed conflict ([A/HRC/55/57](#)).

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the phrase “protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals”, used in Security Council resolutions [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#) and [2427 \(2018\)](#), as well as in the statements by the President of the Security Council of 17 June 2013 ([S/PRST/2013/8](#)) and 31 October 2017 ([S/PRST/2017/21](#)), refers to teachers, doctors, other educational personnel, students and patients.



community and civic leaders, on human rights defenders and on monitors of violations against children are a cause for concern and a strain on the monitoring capacity.

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution [1612 \(2005\)](#), my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict adopted a pragmatic approach to promote broad and effective protection for children. Reference to a situation does not seek to make any legal determination as to whether situations which are referred to in the present report constitute armed conflicts within the context of the Geneva Conventions and the Additional Protocols thereto, nor does it prejudge the legal status of the non-State parties involved in these situations. Accordingly, the report documents situations in which apparent violations of international norms and standards are of such gravity as to warrant international concern, given their impact on children. My Special Representative brings these situations to the attention of Governments, which bear the primary responsibility for protecting children, in order to encourage them to take remedial measures.

## **II. Situation of children and armed conflict**

### **A. Overview of trends and patterns**

4. In 2023, violence against children in armed conflict reached extreme levels, with a shocking 21 per cent increase in grave violations. Children bore the brunt of multiplying and escalating crises that were marked by a complete disregard for child rights, notably the inherent right to life. The number of instances of killing and maiming increased by a staggering 35 per cent. Children were killed and maimed in unprecedented numbers in devastating crises in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably in the Gaza Strip, in Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine, among many other situations.

5. The United Nations verified 32,990 grave violations, of which 30,705 were committed in 2023 and 2,285 were committed earlier but verified in 2023. Violations affected 22,557 children (15,847 boys, 6,252 girls, 458 sex unknown) in 25 situations and one regional monitoring arrangement covering the Lake Chad basin region.

6. The highest numbers of violations were the killing (5,301) and maiming (6,348) of 11,649 children, followed by the recruitment and use of 8,655 children, 5,205 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access and the abduction of 4,356 children. Children were detained for actual or alleged association with armed groups (2,491), including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, or for national security reasons.

7. The United Nations made progress in engaging with parties to protect children in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, the Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Ukraine and Yemen. More than 10,600 children formerly associated with armed forces or groups received protection or reintegration support during 2023.

8. The changing nature, complexity, expansion and intensification of armed conflict, the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including infrastructure, and the advent of new armed groups, alongside acute humanitarian emergencies and blatant disregard for international humanitarian law and severe violations of international human rights law, have led to alarming increases in grave violations. The conflict in



Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory presents an unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children, with hostilities leading to an increase in grave violations of 155 per cent. In addition, new situations of concern have arisen in Haiti and the Niger, where the number of grave violations against children is alarming. Cross-border conflicts and intercommunal violence have persistently affected children, especially those in the central Sahel and Lake Chad basin regions. The Sudan witnessed a staggering 480 per cent increase in grave violations against children and the situation in Myanmar deteriorated with a 123 per cent increase in such violations. Grave violations also increased in Colombia, Lebanon and Nigeria. Conversely, Iraq, Mozambique, the Philippines, South Sudan, Ukraine and Yemen have recorded decreases in grave violations.

9. The highest numbers of grave violations were verified in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, Somalia, Nigeria and the Sudan. The monitoring and verification of grave violations remained extremely challenging, including owing to access constraints, a high level of insecurity, and threats and direct attacks on United Nations personnel, monitors and humanitarian actors, leading to the underreporting of grave violations. Verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated against children (1,470) increased by 25 per cent, which is particularly concerning, as such violence continued to be vastly underreported owing to stigmatization, the fear of reprisals, harmful social norms, the absence of, or lack of access to, services, impunity and safety concerns, as also reported in my report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2024/292). Furthermore, the number of children who were victims of multiple grave violations increased, as illustrated by the high percentage of girls being abducted for recruitment and use and sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery.

10. While non-State armed groups were responsible for almost 50 per cent of grave violations, government forces were the main perpetrator of the killing and maiming of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access.

11. In 2023, boys were more frequently subjected to recruitment and use, killing and maiming, and abduction. Girls experienced a disproportionately higher incidence of conflict-related sexual violence. The number of verified cases of grave violations saw a particularly high surge in the recruitment and use of boys. Factors including gender, age, ethnicity, race and disability were determining factors in adversely shaping the vulnerability of children to these violations.

## **B. Challenges and the way forward**

12. The denial of humanitarian access often coincides with an escalation in other grave violations, including the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence, among other violations. Safe, rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access is a prerequisite for effective humanitarian action. Verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access continued to rise by over 32 per cent to alarming levels in 2023.<sup>3</sup> The denial of humanitarian access took various forms, including the restriction of humanitarian activities and movements, interference with humanitarian operations and aid recipients, disinformation and arbitrary detention, the perpetration of violence against and the killing of humanitarian personnel, and looting. The highest number of denials of humanitarian access were verified in Afghanistan, the Central African

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<sup>3</sup> Information related to the denial of humanitarian access to children is presented pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and follows guidelines of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The information presented herein does not reflect the full humanitarian access situation in the countries concerned.

Republic, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Mali, Myanmar, Ukraine and Yemen. The situation is expected to deteriorate in several contexts given the adoption of restrictive laws, decrees and regulations that increase control over humanitarian organizations and personnel, notably in Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Sudan.

13. Attacks on schools and hospitals (1,650) remain concerning, particularly in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Ukraine, Myanmar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan. Such attacks deprive children of their right to education and health care, have a detrimental impact on children's psychological well-being, disrupt the fundamental premise of these institutions as zones of learning and safety, and expose them to heightened risks of other grave violations, such as an increased number of girls being subject to abduction and sexual violence. The use of schools for military purposes erodes their integrity and civilian character, and can render them targets of attacks and further violence.

14. The incorporation of child protection measures and capabilities within the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, in accordance with the policy on child protection policy in United Nations peace operations (2017) and Security Council resolution 2594 (2021), is crucial. The departure of United Nations peace operations often takes place in contexts characterized by complex political dynamics and protracted humanitarian, development and peace and security challenges. Sustained political involvement and the development of comprehensive child protection strategies for the period after mission drawdown are paramount to the success of transition phases and in ensuring that gains in child protection can be sustained, alongside host government protection strategies. The establishment of a follow-up mechanism equipped with dedicated personnel so as to ensure that child protection knowledge, data and capacity are preserved and transferred, and the allocation of resources, are critical.

### **III. Information on grave violations**

#### **A. Situations on the agenda of the Security Council**

##### **Afghanistan**

15. The United Nations verified 1,865 grave violations against 834 children (736 boys, 98 girls), including 5 children who were victims of multiple violations.

16. The recruitment and use in combat (150) and support roles (192) of 342 boys by the Taliban were verified. Most of the children (333) were released by the Taliban in the northern and north-eastern regions.

17. A total of 31 children (29 boys, 2 girls) were detained by the Taliban for alleged association with opposing groups, 19 of whom were released, and 1 child died in custody.

18. The United Nations verified the killing (166) and maiming (316) of 482 children (389 boys, 93 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (427), the Taliban (29), Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan (ISIL-KP) (20), and cross-border shelling from Pakistan (6). Casualties resulted mainly from explosive ordnance (398) and targeted killings (42).

19. Sexual violence against 12 children (6 boys, 6 girls) attributed to the Taliban (10) and unidentified perpetrators (2) was verified.

20. The United Nations verified 75 attacks on schools (60) and hospitals (15), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, attributed to the Taliban (61) and unidentified perpetrators (14).

21. The military use of 32 schools by the Taliban was verified; 22 schools that had been used by the Taliban since August 2021 were vacated in 2023.
22. The abduction for sexual violence purposes of 3 children (1 boy, 2 girls) by the Taliban was verified. All children were released.
23. Some 951 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Taliban (946) and unidentified perpetrators (5) were verified and mostly involved interference in humanitarian activities and response (829).

*Development and concerns*

24. I note the engagement between the Taliban and the United Nations, which resulted in the release of 333 boys from the Taliban's ranks. I urge the Taliban to end the recruitment and use of children and to release all children swiftly and unconditionally, and to ensure effective reintegration services. I reiterate my call upon the Taliban to define a child as every human being below the age of 18 years, develop standardized age assessment guidelines, establish child protection units at recruitment centres and respect the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. I further urge the Taliban to engage with the United Nations and to adopt concrete measures to prohibit and prevent grave violations against children.
25. I appeal to all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I am concerned by the number of children killed and maimed, including by explosive ordnance, and by attacks on, and the military use of, schools and hospitals. I call upon the international community to support reintegration programmes, and explosive ordnance clearance, victim assistance and risk education.
26. I am concerned by the increase in denials of humanitarian access and call upon the Taliban and all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children.
27. I urge the Taliban to lift the suspension of girls' secondary education and urge the immediate and unconditional reopening of schools beyond the sixth grade for all girls. I further urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence, and ensure accountability.

**Central African Republic**

28. The United Nations verified 414 grave violations against 230 children (123 boys, 106 girls, 1 sex unknown), including 104 children who were victims of multiple violations. The United Nations verified 570 grave violations that occurred in previous years.
29. A total of 103 children (79 boys, 24 girls) were recruited and used by Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (49); Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (CPC) (26) (Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) (20), anti-balaka (2), Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) (2), Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) (1), and unidentified CPC group (1)); in support roles by government and pro-government forces (23) (other security personnel (9), jointly by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (8), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (6)); the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)-Achaye (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2).
30. The Government detained one boy for alleged association with armed groups.
31. The killing (17) and maiming (27) of 44 children (34 boys, 10 girls) by CPC (16) (UPC (8), 3R (5), anti-balaka (1), anti-balaka/3R (1), unidentified CPC (1));

unidentified perpetrators (18); government and pro-government forces (7) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/internal security forces (2), other security personnel (1), internal security forces (1), unidentified pro-government proxies (1)); Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)/Parti pour le rassemblement de la nation centrafricaine (PRNC)/faction (1); PRNC/faction (1) and Révolutionnaires tchadiens sudistes (RTS) (1) were verified.

32. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 76 girls perpetrated by CPC (38) (UPC (25), 3R (10), unidentified CPC (2), anti-balaka (1)); government and pro-government forces (16) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (12), internal security forces (2), other security personnel (1), demobilized anti-balaka elements used as proxies by Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1)); Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (14); unidentified perpetrators (5); Siriri/UPC (2); and LRA-Achaye (1). Cases involved rape (76), including during association with armed groups (13), forced marriage (10) and gang rape (6). One element of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic was arrested.

33. Five attacks on schools involving the destruction of buildings and equipment were attributed to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2); CPC (2) (UPC (1), CPC/3R (1)); and unidentified perpetrators (1). Further, schools (12) and hospitals (1) were used by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (7), other security personnel (3), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1) and CPC/UPC (2); 7 of the locations were vacated by the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (3), other security personnel (1), the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1) and CPC/UPC (2).

34. The United Nations verified the abduction of 126 children (63 boys, 62 girls, 1 sex unknown) by Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (52); CPC (47) (UPC (23), 3R (13), anti-balaka (5), unidentified CPC (3), anti-balaka/3R (2), FPRC (1)); government and pro-government forces (14) (Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (8), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (5), other security personnel (1)); unidentified perpetrators (7); LRA-Achaye (3); Siriri/UPC (2); and RTS (1). Most of the children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use and/or sexual violence (101). Most of the children (125) escaped or were released.

35. A total of 60 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to CPC (25) (UPC (12), anti-balaka (5), unidentified CPC (5), 3R (2), anti-balaka/MPC (1)); unidentified perpetrators (21); government and pro-government forces (6) (other security personnel (3), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (2), Armed Forces of the Central African Republic/other security personnel (1)); Azande Ani Kpi Gbe (4); Siriri (2); PRNC/faction (1); and jointly by FPRC and PRNC/faction (1).

#### *Developments and concerns*

36. I welcome the appointment of focal points for child protection in the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and the Ministry of Defence and the establishment of the National Child Protection Council. I encourage the creation of a dedicated working group to address grave violations and the participation of the defence and security authorities in the National Child Protection Council.

37. I commend the development by the Government, in cooperation with the United Nations, of a national strategy on preventing grave violations against children and a draft protocol for the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian actors and urge the Government to prioritize the adoption of these measures.

38. I welcome the Government's efforts, with United Nations support, to reintegrate 42 children and encourage the Government to continue gender-sensitive reintegration and establish programmes for children who are victims of grave violations. I commend the establishment of a vocational centre for conflict-affected children in Ouaka Prefecture and encourage donors to fund reintegration and vocational programmes.

39. I commend the Government for prosecuting perpetrators of sexual violence and call upon the Government to hold all perpetrators of grave violations accountable and to ensure, with United Nations support, that adequate child-friendly programmes, safe reporting and response mechanisms are accessible to survivors. I urge all parties to end and prevent sexual violence against girls, including forced marriage.

40. I remain concerned by the number of grave violations attributed to government and pro-government forces, notably the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence and abduction. I urge the Government and pro-government forces to end and prevent grave violations against children, to cease the military use of schools and to vacate all schools. I call upon the Government to appoint child protection focal points in deployed units of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and to issue command directives to all government and pro-government forces, including other security personnel.

41. I remain concerned by the scale of violations attributed to armed groups, notably abduction, recruitment and use and sexual violence. I urge FPRC, UPC and MPC to implement their respective action plans and to immediately release children. I urge all armed groups to immediately cease violations, unconditionally release associated children and refrain from attacking schools and hospitals. I call upon the Armed Forces and armed groups to facilitate and allow safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors.

## **Colombia**

42. The United Nations verified 432 grave violations against 329 children (219 boys, 110 girls), including 6 Venezuelan children, and 52 children were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified two grave violations that occurred in 2022.

43. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 262 children (176 boys, 86 girls). One child was recruited on two separate occasions, by different armed groups. Perpetrators were Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups (186), Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) (41), Clan del Golfo (also known as Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia) (22), unidentified perpetrators (12) and the Colombian armed forces (2). The majority of those children remain associated (136), 112 were released or escaped, and 14 were killed. Some 38 children were used in combat roles. According to the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, 213 children formerly associated with armed groups entered its protection programme.

44. A total of 63 children (47 boys, 16 girls) were killed (29) and maimed (34) by unidentified perpetrators (31), FARC-EP dissident groups (18), Clan del Golfo (6), the Colombian armed forces (5) and ELN (3). Casualties resulted from explosive ordnance (19), targeted killings (17), combat (9), torture (7), unidentified reasons (7), crossfire (3) and military operations (1).

45. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 26 children (4 boys, 22 girls) by FARC-EP dissident groups (8), unidentified perpetrators (7), Clan del Golfo (5), ELN (4) and the Colombian armed forces (2).

46. A total of 27 attacks on schools (24), hospitals (3) and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals were verified and attributed to FARC-EP dissident groups (15), unidentified perpetrators (9), ELN (2) and Clan del Golfo (1). In addition, 18 schools were militarily used by FARC-EP dissident groups (9), unidentified perpetrators (4), ELN (4) and Clan del Golfo (1). All schools have since been vacated.

47. A total of 32 children (23 boys, 9 girls) were abducted by FARC-EP dissident groups (12), ELN (10), Clan del Golfo (5), unidentified perpetrators (4) and the Colombian armed forces (1), mostly for the purposes of recruitment, retaliation or intimidation. A total of 19 children escaped or were released, 2 were killed, and the status of 11 is unknown.

48. Some 22 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to ELN (13), FARC-EP dissident groups (6) and unidentified perpetrators (3).

*Developments and concerns*

49. I commend the Government for the launch of the national action plan for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and urge its swift implementation across the territories. I also welcome the resumption of the work of the intersectoral commission for preventing the recruitment and exploitation of, and sexual violence against, children and adolescents by illegal armed groups and organized criminal groups in April 2023.

50. I welcome the decision by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace to open Case 11, which focuses on sexual violence and gender-based crimes committed in the context of the conflict. However, I remain concerned about ongoing cases of sexual violence, particularly against girls associated with armed groups. I urge all parties to take immediate action to end and prevent sexual violence.

51. I encourage the implementation of an intersectoral government strategy to prevent and respond to grave violations against children at the local level, with an ethnic, gender and community focus and with adequate human and financial resources. I reiterate that children who are victims of recruitment should be referred to civilian authorities under established protocols and be given access to reintegration services, without discrimination on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, gender or legal status. I reiterate my call upon the armed forces to stop the organization of civilian-military activities involving children.

52. I am gravely concerned by the continued increase in grave violations, particularly the recruitment and use of children by FARC-EP dissident groups and ELN, as well as attacks on schools and the widespread presence of explosive ordnance. It is particularly concerning that these violations have a disproportionate impact on Indigenous children and children of African descent, and on girls.

53. I urge armed groups to immediately end violations, unconditionally release children and, with the United Nations, adopt concrete time-bound commitments to end and prevent grave violations.

54. I reiterate my urgent call to negotiating parties in ongoing peace talks to include child protection priorities in the agenda of peace dialogues and explicitly prohibit all six grave violations against children, including sexual violence, in ceasefire protocols.

55. I call upon parties to conflict to formally recognize and comply with the age of 18 as the minimum age of recruitment and use by armed groups and armed forces, in line with Colombian legislation and global protection standards.

**Democratic Republic of the Congo**

56. The United Nations verified 3,764 grave violations against 2,838 children (1,973 boys, 865 girls). In addition, 389 violations that occurred in previous years were verified. A total of 1,027 children were victims of multiple violations.

57. A total of 1,861 children (1,535 boys, 326 girls) were recruited and used by Raia Mutomboki (388), Mai-Mai Mazembe (254), Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise (AFRC) (214), Nyatura (194), Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) (123), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (112), Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) (69), Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) (61), Union des patriotes pour la défense du Congo (UPDC) (56), Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (38), Twigwaneho (31), Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) (30), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-Rénové) (30), Mai-Mai Zaïre (29), Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) (25), and other armed groups (207), including Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1). Children were used in combat (585) and support roles (1,175), including as guards (214), porters (137), spies (78) and fetish keepers (52), and in unspecified roles (101).

58. The United Nations verified the detention of 67 children (64 boys, 3 girls) for alleged association with armed groups by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (56), the Congolese National Police (8) and the National Intelligence Agency (3). All children were released, except a boy killed by the Congolese National Police while escaping.

59. The killing (419) and maiming (235) of 654 children (365 boys, 289 girls) were attributed to CODECO (198), ADF (126), M23 (125), Mai-Mai Zaïre (56), Mai-Mai Kyandenga (17), Nyatura (15), Mai-Mai Mazembe (9), Raia Mutomboki (9), Twigwaneho (8) and other armed groups (61), and to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (26) and the Congolese National Police (4). Casualties resulted from targeted attacks against civilians (508), explosive ordnance (85), torture (36) and crossfire (20), and some occurred during recruitment (5).

60. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 281 children (2 boys, 279 girls) by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (37), M23 (32), Nyatura (32), Raia Mutomboki (30), CODECO (30), Mai-Mai Mazembe (18), AFRC (18), UPDC (15), APCLS (10), unidentified perpetrators (9), and other armed groups (39), including ADF (8), FDLR-FOCA (4), NDC-Rénové (3), Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (1) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1), and by the Congolese National Police (7), the National Intelligence Agency (3) and the General Directorate for Immigration (1). Incidents involved rape (155), gang rape (50), forced marriage (37), sexual slavery (37) and attempted rape (2). Some 28 perpetrators from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (21), armed groups (3), the Congolese National Police (2) and the National Intelligence Agency (2) were arrested.

61. A total of 88 attacks on schools (44) and hospitals (44), including against protected persons (6), by CODECO (34), M23 (24), ADF (4), unidentified perpetrators (4) and other armed groups (19), and by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2) and the Burundi National Defence Force (1) were verified. Further, 41 schools were used for military purposes by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (14), M23 (13), Nyatura (6), AFRC (4), Mai-Mai Mazembe (1), Raia Mutomboki (1), APCLS (1) and Mai-Mai Kyandenga (1).

62. A total of 870 children (618 boys, 252 girls) were abducted by ADF (185), Raia Mutomboki (111), Nyatura (94), M23 (77), CODECO (71), Mai-Mai Mazembe (62), UPDC (50), APCLS (40), AFRC (39), unidentified perpetrators (36), Mai-Mai Zaïre

(30), and other armed groups (73), including FDLR-FOCA (8) and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale (1), and by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2). Most children (666) were abducted for the purpose of recruitment and use.

63. Some 10 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, including the perpetration of violence against (4), abduction (2) and killing (1) of humanitarian personnel, as well as looting (3), by Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke (3), CODECO (2), Mai-Mai Yakutumba (2), M23 (1), Mai-Mai Kamama (1) and Mai-Mai Mamadou (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

64. I welcome the commitment of the Government to implementing the 2012 action plan. I urge the Government to prioritize the prevention of sexual violence, with a focus on addressing sexual violence perpetrated by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome the establishment of the National Reparations Fund for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Other Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind. I further welcome the prosecution and conviction of perpetrators of grave violations, including for sexual violence, and encourage the continuation of accountability efforts.

65. I commend the cooperation between the Government and the United Nations on screening, age assessment and separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police during recruitment processes. I welcome the continued absence of verified cases of recruitment and use by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police. I further encourage regional forces deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to include child protection in predeployment trainings.

66. I welcome the signature of a unilateral declaration by Raia Mutomboki Kiriku on ending and preventing grave violations against children, and the release of 535 children by armed groups in 2023, following United Nations advocacy.

67. I urge all parties to immediately vacate all schools and to end and prevent the military use of schools and hospitals.

68. I encourage the Government to further operationalize the disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization programme and reiterate the need to prioritize children. I call upon donors, especially international financial institutions, to support this programme.

69. I remain deeply alarmed by the devastatingly high number of grave violations against children, particularly by armed groups. I condemn the further increase in grave violations, especially killing and maiming, abduction and recruitment and use of children, and call upon armed groups to immediately and unconditionally release all children. I urge all parties to take measures to better protect children.

#### **Haiti**

70. The United Nations verified 383 grave violations against 307 children (160 boys, 117 girls, 30 sex unknown), including 32 children who were victims of multiple violations.

71. The recruitment and use of 23 children (17 boys, 6 girls), by Brooklyn (5), Grand Ravine (4), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (4), Team Ascenseur (2), Bas Grand Grif de Savien (1), 400 Mawozo (1), Force Résistance Chandelle (1) and Belekou (1) armed gangs, and by unidentified armed gangs (4), was verified. Children were used in attacks against the Haitian National Police or were tortured and burned



alive by Baz Gran Grif de Savien and Force Résistance Chandelle armed gangs. Girls were used for sexual purposes.

72. One boy was detained by the Haitian National Police over alleged association with an armed gang. The United Nations is advocating his release.

73. The killing (128) and maiming (78) of 206 children (126 boys, 60 girls, 20 sex unknown) by Grand Ravine (35), unidentified armed gangs (26), Belekou (18), 400 Mawozo (12), Boston (11), Canaan (9), Les Argentins de Haut Bel-Air (8), G9 Family and Allies (7), G-Pèp coalition (6) and other armed gangs (70), and by unidentified perpetrators (4) in crossfire between armed gangs and the Haitian National Police were verified. Casualties resulted mainly from stray bullets (125) and targeted killings (62), including children who were victims of gang rapes or burned alive as part of reprisals.

74. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 41 girls by unidentified armed gangs (11) and by Baz Gran Grif de Savien (6), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (5), Canaan (4), Belekou (3), Grand Ravine (2), G9 Family and Allies (2), Krazé Baryé (2), Ti Bois (2), Bel-Air (1), 400 Mawozo (1), Kokorat Sans Ras (1), G Pèp coalition (1) armed gangs. Cases involved rape, gang rape and sexual slavery.

75. The United Nations verified 37 attacks on schools (12) and hospitals (25), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (14), which were attributed to unidentified armed gangs (24) and to Krazé Baryé (3), Canaan (3), Warf Jérémie (3), Grand Ravine (1), Terre Noire (1), Brooklyn (1) and Charbon (1) armed gangs. In addition, the military use of 4 schools by Warf Jérémie (1), Canaan (1), Charbon (1) and Terre Noire (1) armed gangs was verified.

76. The abduction of 71 children (30 boys, 31 girls, 10 sex unknown) by unidentified armed gangs (22), Les Argentins de Haut Bel-Air (14), Baz Gran Grif de Savien (9), Kokorat Sans Ras (5), Krazé Baryé (4), Canaan (3), Belekou (3), Village de Dieu “5 Segond gang” (3), Grand Ravine (2), Palmis (2), Bel-Air (1), Delmas 6 Gang (1), 400 Mawozo (1) and Krache Dife (1) armed gangs were verified. Most abductions were for ransom (65) and sexual violence (4).

77. A total of five incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by unidentified armed gangs (3) and by Canaan (1) and Grand Ravine (1) armed gangs were verified, including direct threats to humanitarian organizations.

#### *Developments and concerns*

78. I welcome the signature of a handover protocol in January 2024 between the Government and the United Nations for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed gangs to civilian child protection actors.

79. I call for the continuation of an inter-Haitian dialogue towards a lasting political solution and underline the importance of including child protection provisions.

80. I remain deeply concerned by indiscriminate armed gang violence and grave violations against children, in particular the killing and maiming and abduction of children, and the perpetration of sexual violence against children. I call for accelerating the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission to assist the Haitian National Police in re-establishing security in Haiti, as authorized by the Security Council in its resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), and for appropriate training in child protection for its personnel.

81. I am concerned by restrictions on humanitarian access and call upon the Government, the Haitian National Police and armed gangs to support and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

## **Iraq**

82. The United Nations verified 61 grave violations against 57 children (46 boys, 11 girls), including 3 girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 16 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

83. As of 31 December, 749 children (742 boys, 7 girls) remained in detention on national security-related charges, including for their actual or alleged association with armed groups, primarily Da'esh.

84. A total of 52 children (44 boys, 8 girls) were killed (18) and maimed (34) by unidentified perpetrators (46), Turkish military air strikes against People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (HPG/PKK) targets (4) and Da'esh (2). Most incidents occurred in areas previously under the control of Da'esh. Child casualties resulted from explosive ordnance (43), air strikes (4), ground engagement (3) and crossfire (2).

85. Sexual violence perpetrated against three girls by Da'esh was verified. The violations began in 2014, when the girls were abducted, and continued until their rescue in 2023.

86. One attack on a school by unidentified perpetrators was verified. Some 21 schools that had previously been used militarily were vacated by the Iraqi security forces, while the military use of 16 schools, which had been reported previously, by the Iraqi Federal Police (12) and the Popular Mobilization Forces (4) continued.

87. The abduction of five children (2 boys, 3 girls) by Da'esh (4) and the People's Defence Forces of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (1) was verified. All the children were released.

### *Developments and concerns*

88. I commend the Government for the completion of the activities of the action plan, including the establishment of a Human Rights Directorate and complaints desk in the Popular Mobilization Forces, the appointment of focal points, the re-issuance of command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use of children, the provision of training on child protection and strengthened age assessment procedures. I note the decision of the Minister of Labour in March 2024 to establish the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Rights Violations and Preventing Future Violations and encourage the swift operationalization thereof.

89. I welcome the Government's engagement with my Special Representative, including through her visit in January 2024, and encourage the Government to further institutionalize child protection by developing preventive frameworks, including by adopting the draft child protection law, taking into account its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international human rights law, ensuring legal documentation for all children in Iraq and strengthening long-term community-based reintegration, with the support of the United Nations.

90. I further welcome the absence of verified cases of recruitment and use and denial of humanitarian access.

91. I am concerned that explosive ordnance remains the leading cause of child casualties. I call upon the Government to continue clearing contaminated areas, prioritizing areas of return and child-friendly spaces, and to provide education regarding the risks of explosive ordnance, as well as assistance to victims.

92. I note the release of 71 children who had been detained on national security-related charges, but I remain concerned by the continued detention of children on such charges, including for their actual or alleged association with Da'esh. I reiterate

that children should be treated primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards. Children should be detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period. I call upon the Government to release the children to child protection actors and to ensure access for formerly detained children to services, assistance and protection.

93. I commend the Government for the repatriation of 2,255 Iraqi children (1,142 boys, 1,113 girls) from the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call upon all countries concerned to facilitate and expedite the voluntary repatriation of children, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh.

#### **Israel and the State of Palestine<sup>4</sup>**

94. On 7 October 2023, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip launched a large-scale armed attack on Israel which included numerous acts of terror. In addition, some 250 people, including women and children, were abducted and taken into the Gaza Strip, with some subsequently released, including during a seven-day humanitarian pause that started on 24 November. The violence that has been perpetrated since 7 October in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory – particularly in and around the Gaza Strip – has shaken the region and devastated the lives of millions of Palestinians and Israelis. The scale of death and destruction is shocking and unprecedented.

95. The United Nations verified 8,009 grave violations against 4,360 children (3,139 boys, 1,221 girls; Israeli children (113), Palestinian children (4,247)) in Israel (120); the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4,868); and in the Gaza Strip (3,021).

96. Verified grave violations were attributed to Israeli armed and security forces (5,698), Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (116), unidentified perpetrators (58), Israeli settlers (51), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (21), individual Palestinian perpetrators (13) and Palestinian Authority Security Forces (1). In addition, the process of attribution of verified violations (2,051) is ongoing.

97. Owing to severe access challenges, in particular in the Gaza Strip, the information presented herein does not represent the full scale of violations against children in this situation. 2023 saw a significant increase in violations, and the last quarter of the year witnessed widespread violence by all parties to the conflict; over 23,000 grave violations against children (3,900 Israeli children, 19,887 Palestinian children) by all parties to the conflict were reported and are pending verification.

98. The United Nations verified 136 violations against 113 Israeli children (66 boys, 47 girls) in Israel (120), the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (15), and the Gaza Strip (1) by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other armed groups (116), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (1), individual Palestinian perpetrators (12), and unidentified perpetrators (7). Six children were victims of multiple violations.

99. The United Nations verified the use of two Israeli boys by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (1) and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades (1) in Israel (1) and in the Gaza Strip (1) to accompany Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in house-to-house searches and to film a video.

100. The United Nations verified that 43 Israeli children (29 boys, 14 girls) had been killed in Israel (37) during acts of terror on 7 October (live ammunition (27), crossfire

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<sup>4</sup> For the purposes of the present report, the present section provides information on grave violations in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

(2), burned (1) and by rockets (7)), and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (6), in shooting (4) and vehicle-ramming (2) attacks.

101. Israeli children were verified as having been maimed (27) (19 boys, 8 girls) in Israel (18) and in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (9). Israeli children were maimed (13) during attacks on 7 October (live ammunition (7), shrapnel (5) and burns (1)). In addition, in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in northern Israel, children were maimed (14) by rocket fire (4), in shooting or stabbing attacks (6), and incidents of stone-throwing (4). Some 3,900 Israeli children were reported maimed and the reports are pending verification.

102. Perpetrators include Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (54), individual Palestinian perpetrators (12), and unidentified perpetrators (4) including during crossfire between Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Israeli armed and security forces (4).

103. Sexual violence against Israeli civilians, including children, in the context of the 7 October attacks in southern Israel, was reported.

104. The United Nations verified 17 attacks on schools (2) and hospitals (15) in Israel, including on health facilities (4), ambulances (4) and protected personnel (7), by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (14) and unidentified perpetrators (3). Israeli schools were closed for weeks following the 7 October attacks. In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of a school by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in Israel. There are numerous other reports of the use of human shields by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip.

105. A total of 47 Israeli children (20 boys, 27 girls) were abducted by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups in southern Israel, 36 of whom were held hostage and subjected to ill-treatment in the Gaza Strip by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, the Palestinian Mujahidin Movement Mujahidin Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups. Two boys were still being held as at December 2023. Children held hostage in the Gaza Strip continue to be denied humanitarian access and assistance. The remaining 11 children were abducted by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups during the 7 October attacks in southern Israel and escaped or were released (8) or were killed (3).

106. The United Nations verified 7,873 violations against 4,247 Palestinian children (3,073 boys, 1,174 girls), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (4,853), and the Gaza Strip (3,020). Violations were perpetrated by Israeli armed and security forces (5,698), Israeli settlers (51), unidentified perpetrators (51), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (20), individual Palestinian perpetrators (1) and Palestinian Authority Security Forces (1). In addition, the process of attribution regarding the verified killing of Palestinian children (2,051) that occurred between 7 October and 31 December in the Gaza Strip is ongoing. Five children were victims of multiple violations.

107. In the occupied West Bank, the United Nations verified the use of Palestinian boys (5) by Israeli armed and security forces to shield forces during law enforcement operations. Three children reported that Israeli armed and security forces had attempted to recruit them as informants. During 2023 in the Gaza Strip, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades organized "summer camps", including for children, exposing them to military content and activities.

108. The United Nations verified the detention of 906 Palestinian children (897 boys, 9 girls) for alleged security offences by Israeli armed and security forces in the occupied West Bank (435), East Jerusalem (458) and the Gaza Strip (13). Israeli authorities reported that 49 Palestinian children were held under administrative detention as at 31 December. The United Nations received the testimonies of 84 children who reported ill-treatment by Israeli armed and security forces while in detention. Further, the United Nations received reports of the detention of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip, compounded by multiple forms of sexual violence.

109. The United Nations verified the killing of 2,267 Palestinian children (1,259 boys, 1,008 girls) in the Gaza Strip (2,141) and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (126), by Israeli armed and security forces (206), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades or other Palestinian armed groups (2), Israeli settlers (1), Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) (1) and unidentified perpetrators (6) (improvised explosive devices (4) and crossfire between PASF and armed Palestinians (1)). Of the total, 9 children (7 boys, 2 girls) were killed between 1 January and 6 October 2023, by Israeli armed and security forces (5), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups (2), and unidentified perpetrators (2). In addition, the process of attribution regarding the verified killing of Palestinian children (2,051) that occurred between 7 October and 31 December in the Gaza Strip is ongoing. Most incidents were caused by the use of explosive weapons in populated areas by Israeli armed and security forces. Furthermore, in the Gaza Strip, some 9,100 children were reported killed and verification is ongoing. In the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, most Palestinian children were verified as having been killed by Israeli armed and security forces (120), by live ammunition (102) and air strikes (18), during Israeli armed and security forces' law enforcement operations, many in circumstances raising concerns of unwarranted or excessive use of force, including militarized operations and operations leading to armed exchanges with Palestinians, and in relation to attacks or alleged attacks on Israeli civilians or forces (9). Some 19,887 Palestinian children were reported killed or maimed and the reports are pending verification.

110. A total of 1,975 Palestinian children (1,809 boys, 166 girls) were verified as maimed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (1,825), and in the Gaza Strip (150). The main perpetrators were Israeli armed and security forces (1,892), Israeli settlers (36), Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades or other Palestinian armed groups (18), individual Palestinian perpetrators (1) and unidentified perpetrators (28), including by explosive ordnance (13). The main causes of maiming in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were teargas inhalation (1,187: 1,079 boys, 108 girls), live ammunition (433) and rubber-coated metal bullets (70), in the context of law enforcement operations (979). Further, reports of some 10,787 maimed children in the Gaza Strip are pending verification.

111. The United Nations verified 371 attacks on schools (45) and hospitals (326), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (104), attributed to Israeli armed and security forces (340), Israeli settlers (14) and unidentified perpetrators (17), in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (188), and in the Gaza Strip (183). Incidents involved attacks and threats of attack on health facilities (118), medical personnel (102) and ambulances (106), and attacks on schools (43) and education personnel (2). In addition, the United Nations verified incidents of the military use (5) of ambulances by Israeli armed and security forces (4) and a health centre by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades (1). Separately, 561 other interferences with education (461) and health (100) by Israeli armed and security forces (443), Israeli settlers (24) and unidentified perpetrators (94) were verified. Schools in the Gaza Strip have remained closed since 7 October 2023, affecting 625,000 children.

112. The denial of humanitarian access by Israeli armed and security forces (3,250) was verified in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem (2,698) and in the Gaza Strip (546). A total of 3,227 permit applications (1,895 for boys, 1,332 for girls) to Israeli authorities for children to exit the Gaza Strip through the Erez crossing point, or from the occupied West Bank, to gain access to specialized medical treatment were denied or not approved in time to reach scheduled hospital appointments, while 17,693 applications were approved. On 7 October 2023, the Erez crossing point was closed. Following the attack on 7 October, Israel declared and imposed a siege of the Gaza Strip on 9 October. The United Nations verified 23 denials of humanitarian access by Israeli authorities related to denied coordination of humanitarian aid missions and prevention of access to medical care. In the context of Israeli armed and security forces military operations in the Gaza Strip, humanitarian personnel were killed, including 144 United Nations personnel, and nearly all critical infrastructure, facilities and services have been attacked, including shelter sites, United Nations installations, schools, hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, grain mills and bakeries. Access restrictions, water and fuel shortages and electricity and telecommunications blackouts also impeded access to humanitarian services. Children are at risk of famine, severe malnutrition and preventable death.

*Developments and concerns*

113. I am appalled by the dramatic increase and unprecedented scale and intensity of grave violations against children in the Gaza Strip, Israel and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, despite my repeated calls for parties to implement measures to end grave violations. I reiterate my urgent call upon Israel, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups to take meaningful measures to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law, urgently and immediately agree to a humanitarian ceasefire, and facilitate the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages and for them to be treated humanely. In the interim, they must be allowed to receive visits from the International Committee of the Red Cross. I reiterate that international humanitarian law requires the parties to treat children affected by armed conflict as persons who are entitled to special respect and protection. I repeat my call for an end to all violations of international humanitarian law.

114. I am shocked at the killing and maiming and abduction of children by Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups. Nothing can justify the brutal acts of terror that were committed and the deliberate killing, maiming, torture and abduction of civilians and other protected persons. I am appalled by the reports of sexual violence during the attacks; these must be investigated and prosecuted. I call upon all Palestinian armed groups to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and refrain from attacks that target civilians, including children, and from indiscriminate attacks, including the launching of rockets and mortars from densely populated areas in the Gaza Strip towards Israeli civilian population centres. I call upon Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and other Palestinian armed groups to release immediately and unconditionally all hostages, including children, and facilitate access for humanitarian actors. I am deeply concerned by reports that children held hostage were subjected to threats, violence and ill-treatment. I call upon Palestinian armed groups to protect schools and hospitals, including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals.

115. I am shocked by the unprecedented number of children killed and maimed by Israeli armed and security forces in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. The magnitude of the Israeli military campaign against Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and the scope of death and destruction in the

Gaza Strip have been unprecedented. I reiterate my calls upon Israel to abide by international humanitarian law and human rights law and ensure that civilians, including children, and civilian infrastructure are not targeted, and that incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects are not caused in violation of the principle of proportionality in international humanitarian law, and to ensure that all feasible precautions are taken to avoid, and in any event to minimize, such incidental loss, injury or damage in the conduct of military operations. I am deeply concerned regarding the excessive use of force during law enforcement operations and reiterate that security forces must exercise maximum restraint and use intentional lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life and put in place preventive and protective measures to minimize damage and injury, including damage and injury that affect children. I further urge Israel to pursue accountability for violations against children. I exhort Israel to take immediate steps to protect schools and hospitals, including ambulances and protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, and refrain from attacking them or using them for military purposes. Further, I am deeply concerned by the alarming increase in the number of children arrested and detained by Israel and by the reports by children of physical violence directed against them during detention. I reiterate my call upon Israel to uphold international juvenile justice standards, including the use of detention only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time, to immediately end the administrative detention of children, to prevent any violence and ill-treatment in detention and to prevent attempted use of children as informants.

116. I urge all parties to conflict to immediately end and prevent grave violations against children and to urgently engage with my Special Representative and the United Nations working group on children and armed conflict on the ground, on the basis of the letters previously addressed by Israel, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to my Special Representative in 2022 and 2023, and to adopt immediately clear, time-bound commitments to end and prevent grave violations against children, as proposed by the United Nations, and to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

117. I am deeply alarmed about the deteriorating humanitarian conditions, and by attacks against humanitarian workers, including the killing of United Nations personnel. I call upon Israel to grant full, rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid and personnel into and within the Gaza Strip. The United Nations and its partners cannot effectively deliver humanitarian aid while the Gaza Strip is under heavy, widespread and unrelenting military operations, including air strikes. I call upon all parties to conflict to respect the humanitarian notification system so as to maximize the safety of aid operations.

### **Lebanon**

118. The United Nations verified 104 grave violations against 95 children (87 boys, 8 girls).

119. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 74 boys by unidentified armed groups (25), Jund Ansar Allah (13), Nusrah Front (11), Fatah (9), Al-Shabab al-Muslim (7), Jund al-Sham (6), Hizbullah (2) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (1).

120. Seven children were arrested and prosecuted under military jurisdiction on national security-related charges. Two children who were detained in 2022 and 2023, respectively, were released during the reporting period.

121. Some 21 children (13 boys, 8 girls) were killed (10) and maimed (11) by unidentified perpetrators (15) and the Israeli armed and security forces (6), including during shelling and drone strikes (6) and by explosive remnants of war (5).

122. Nine attacks on schools by unidentified perpetrators (9) were verified. Attacks occurred during armed clashes in a Palestine refugee camp (6) and during shelling across the Blue Line (3). The military use of eight United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) schools by Fatah and Jund al-Sham in a Palestine refugee camp was verified. Four schools have since been vacated but remain inaccessible to UNRWA.

*Developments and concerns*

123. I am concerned about the rise in verified grave violations, notably the recruitment and use of children and the killing and maiming of children. I urge the Government to engage with the United Nations to strengthen child protection systems.

124. I reiterate my call upon the Government to release children detained on national security grounds to civilian child protection actors and to treat them primarily as victims and in line with international juvenile justice standards.

125. I am disturbed by continued armed clashes in Palestine refugee camps and their impact on children. I urge Fatah and Jund al-Sham to immediately vacate schools.

**Libya**

126. The United Nations verified 58 grave violations against 16 children (14 boys, 1 girl, 1 sex unknown). In addition, 24 grave violations that occurred in the previous year were verified.

127. A total of 159 children were detained under the jurisdiction of the Judicial Police in Tripoli. Some 61 children of multiple nationalities were arrested by the Judicial Police and detained with their mothers, including 34 children who continue to be detained in Judaydah prison for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh. A further 241 children were detained in migration detention centres across Libya.

128. The United Nations verified the killing (2) and maiming (9) of 11 children (8 boys, 2 girls, 1 sex unknown) by explosive ordnance (9) and crossfire (2) between Tareq Bin Ziyad Brigade affiliated with Libyan National Army (LNA) and armed groups (1) and armed clashes between anti-terrorism forces and Shabab al-Shurafa (1).

129. Two verified attacks on hospitals were attributed to unidentified perpetrators.

130. The United Nations verified the abduction of five boys by LNA. The children remain in captivity.

131. The United Nations verified 40 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to the administrative department of the Government of National Unity (7), the Libyan Coast Guard (6), the Internal Security Agency (5), the Department for Combating Illegal Migration (4), the Internal Security Agency and administrative department of the Government of National Unity (3), LNA (2), the Intelligence Service (2), the Department for Combating Illegal Migration and administrative department of the Government of National Unity (2), the administrative department of the Government of National Unity and the Libyan Coast Guard (8), and 55 Brigade of the Ministry of Interior (1).

*Developments and concerns*

132. I welcome the commitment made by the Government of National Unity to increase the minimum age of recruitment into security forces to 18 years.

133. I am concerned about the increase in abductions of children, including by security institutions, and the prevalence of killing and maiming of children. I urge all



parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law to ensure the protection of children.

134. I urge the Libyan authorities to engage with the United Nations to develop and adopt measures to end and prevent all violations against children, and to ensure that child protection provisions are included in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts.

135. I urge the Libyan authorities to immediately end child detention, including for children detained for their mothers' alleged association with Da'esh, pursue alternatives to detention, provide children with safe family-based care and facilitate access by the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies to detention centres. I encourage the Libyan authorities to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of children allegedly associated with Da'esh and call upon all countries concerned to facilitate their voluntary repatriation and reintegration, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child.

## **Mali**

136. The United Nations verified 1,141 grave violations against 1,024 children (879 boys, 143 girls, 2 sex unknown), including 31 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 91 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

137. Some 691 children (660 boys, 31 girls) were recruited and used by unidentified perpetrators (205); Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) (169) (Haut Conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad (HCUA) (61), Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) (57), Mouvement arabe de l'Azawad (MAA) (43), unidentified CMA (8)); Platform (162) (Ganda Lassal Izo (83), Ganda Izo (44), Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad (MSA) (15), MAA-Platform (6), Groupe d'autodéfense des Touaregs Imghad et leurs alliés (GATIA) (4), MAA-GATIA (4) Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad des Daoussak (MSA-D) (3) and Ganda Koy (3)); in support roles by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (79) (Malian armed forces (72), gendarmerie (5), police (2)); Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (34); Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (33) and unidentified MAA (9).

138. The Malian Defence and Security Forces captured or arrested 14 boys during military operations for alleged association with armed groups. Nine children were handed over to child protection structures in accordance with the Protocol on the Release and Handover of Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups of 2013. Five children were detained by national authorities for longer periods, in contravention of the Protocol.

139. The United Nations verified the killing (107) and maiming (153) of 260 children (176 boys, 82 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (149); JNIM (59) (Front de Libération du Macina (FLM) (53) and unidentified JNIM (6)); Malian armed forces (28); ISGS (13); CMA (4) (HCUA (3), unidentified CMA (1)); Platform (3) (MSA (2), MSA-D (1)); Dan Nan Ambassagou (2); dozo traditional hunters (1) and foreign security personnel (1).

140. The rape of 15 girls by unidentified perpetrators (7); Malian armed forces (4); CMA (2) (MAA (1), MNLA (1)); MSA-D (1) and ISGS (1) was verified.

141. Some 17 attacks on schools (11) and hospitals (6) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (7); JNIM (7) (unidentified JNIM (5), FLM (2)); ISGS (1); Malian armed forces and foreign security personnel (1); and during crossfire between foreign security personnel and dozo traditional hunters (1).

142. A total of 91 children (67 boys, 24 girls) were abducted by unidentified perpetrators (48); ISGS (42) and GATIA (1).

143. Some 67 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (47); JNIM (12) (unidentified JNIM (7), Ansar Eddine (4) and FLM (1)); Malian armed forces (5); ISGS (2); and dozo traditional hunters (1).

*Developments and concerns*

144. I welcome the transitional Government's efforts, in cooperation with the United Nations, to implement the Safe Schools Declaration. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize and adopt the bill on the protection of education from attacks.

145. I am concerned by the levels of recruitment and use, killing and maiming of children and sexual violence perpetrated by the Malian Defence and Security forces, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children. I urge the transitional Government to notify the United Nations of children associated with the government forces and to release them. I call upon the transitional Government to finalize the revision of the Child Protection Law and Code, criminalizing the recruitment and use of children, including those between the ages of 15 and 17, and to hold perpetrators accountable. I reiterate my call upon the transitional Government to adopt and implement a national prevention plan regarding all grave violations against children.

146. I welcome the cooperation of CMA and Platform with the United Nations, which enabled visits to military bases and the screening of combatants to verify the presence of children in Kidal and Gao regions. I am concerned by the lack of progress in the implementation of their action plans and by their continued recruitment and use of children. I call upon CMA and Platform to respect their commitments, release all children from their ranks and to prevent further recruitment and use and other grave violations.

147. I remain extremely concerned at the elevated number of grave violations against children. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations, unconditionally release associated children, to take measures to protect children during operations, protect schools and hospitals and allow the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian actors.

**Myanmar**

148. The United Nations verified 2,799 grave violations against 2,093 children (1,694 boys, 385 girls, 14 sex unknown), including 134 children who were affected by multiple violations. In addition, 17 violations against 13 children that occurred in previous years were verified.

149. The United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 1,171 children (1,123 boys, 42 girls, 6 sex unknown) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (1,102), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (38), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) (26), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) (2), Zomi Revolutionary Organization/Zomi Revolutionary Army (ZRO/ZRA) (2); and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) (1). Children (1,071) were used by the Myanmar armed forces in support roles (1,001), as human shields (68), guides (1) and porters (1) in combat settings; 100 children were used by the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (38), KIA (26), the Myanmar armed forces (7) and affiliated militias (24), ZRO/ZRA (2), TNLA (2) and DKBA (1) in combat settings. A total of 10 children (9 boys, 1 girl) were released, including by KIA (9), following advocacy by the United Nations.

150. The United Nations verified the detention of 61 children (51 boys, 10 girls) by the Myanmar armed forces for alleged association with armed groups. One girl was

released while others were sent to a training school managed by the Department of Social Welfare.

151. The killing (238) and maiming (623) of 861 children (538 boys, 318 girls, 5 sex unknown) was attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (645) (Myanmar armed forces (620), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (10), Pyu Saw Htee (6), border guard forces (5), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and border guard forces (2), militia group (1) and Myanmar Police Force (1)); unidentified perpetrators (201), including resulting from explosive ordnance (121) and crossfire (44); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (9); Arakan Army (4); and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) (2). Child casualties were caused by heavy weapons and/or artillery shelling (406) and air strikes (163) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias.

152. The United Nations verified the rape of 3 children (1 boy, 2 girls) by the Myanmar armed forces (1) and affiliated militia (1), and by the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1).

153. The United Nations verified 154 attacks on schools (117) and hospitals (37), including against protected personnel (6), attributed to the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (104) (Myanmar armed forces (99), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (2), joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Myanmar Police Force (2) and militia group (1)); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (27); unidentified perpetrators (20); KNLA (1); an allied troop of KNLA and the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1); and TNLA (1). The United Nations verified the military use of schools (82) and hospitals (10) by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias (86), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (5) and KIA/People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (1). A total of 27 schools and 4 hospitals were vacated.

154. The abduction of 192 children (119 boys, 64 girls, 9 sex unknown) by the Myanmar armed forces and related forces and affiliated militias (145) (Myanmar armed forces (139), Myanmar Police Force (4), joint force of the Myanmar armed forces and Myanmar Police Force (1) and joint force of Myanmar armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee (1)); the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (31); KIA (15); and Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)/Shan State Army (SSA) (1) was verified. Most children were abducted for the purposes of recruitment and use (141).

155. The United Nations verified 418 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by the Myanmar armed forces (387), including Pyu Saw Htee (1), the People's Defence Forces/local defence groups (13), Arakan Army (6), SSPP/SSA (4), KNLA (3), Pa-O National Organization/Pa-O National Army (1), Chin National Front (1), unidentified perpetrators (1), the Three Brotherhood Alliance (comprising Arakan Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army and TNLA) (1) and KIA (1). Humanitarian access significantly worsened as a result of administrative restrictions, continued arrests, insecurity and armed conflict, interference in programming, violence against humanitarian actors, movement restrictions, road blockages and communication and network shutdowns.

*Developments and concerns*

156. I am deeply alarmed by the surge in grave violations against children, especially the scale of recruitment and use, and the killing and maiming of children, as well as the rise in attacks on schools and on hospitals by all parties to the conflict, in particular by the Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias. I am gravely concerned by the pattern of indiscriminate and targeted attacks by the Myanmar armed forces, including the use of explosive ordnance affecting children.

157. I urge the Myanmar armed forces and other parties to comply with international humanitarian law and international human rights law, end and prevent the recruitment of children, and end attacks on schools and hospitals and protected persons and the military use of schools and hospitals.

158. I reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces to re-engage with the United Nations for the full implementation of the 2012 joint action plan on the recruitment and use of children, and to adopt a joint action plan to end and prevent killing and maiming, sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and abductions.

159. I am concerned by the increase in the recruitment and use of children, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the abduction of children perpetrated by the People's Defence Forces and local defence groups, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children.

160. I welcome the meetings of the Arakan Army, Restoration Council of Shan State/ Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), DKBA and KNLA with the United Nations on child protection, notably the development of action plans. I welcome the release of children by KIA and I call upon all parties to release all children from their ranks.

161. I am alarmed by severe restrictions on humanitarian access and reiterate my call upon the Myanmar armed forces and all other parties to facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access.

162. I am deeply concerned by the high number of children in detention and by reports of torture and urge the Myanmar armed forces to immediately release children, implement the July 2019 Child Rights Law and act in line with international juvenile justice standards.

**Somalia**

163. The United Nations verified 2,283 grave violations against 1,802 children (1,349 boys, 453 girls), including 401 children who were victims of multiple violations. Violations were mainly attributed to Al-Shabaab (1,402) and government security forces (102). In addition, 26 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

164. A total of 658 children (596 boys, 62 girls) were recruited and used by Al-Shabaab (559), "community defence forces" (24), regional forces (23) (Puntland forces (9), Puntland police (5), Jubbaland forces (3), Puntland Security Commando Force (2), Galmudug police (1), Galmudug forces (1), Jubbaland police (1), Hirshabelle police (1)), clan militias (18), government security forces (18) (Somali National Army (15), National Intelligence and Security Agency (2), Somali Police Force (1)), clan militia engaged in Sool Region (15), and unidentified perpetrators (1).

165. A total of 278 children (275 boys, 3 girls) were detained for their alleged association with armed groups by the Somali Police Force (123), Somali National Army (55), National Intelligence and Security Agency (48), Somali Police Force jointly with the National Intelligence and Security Agency (22), Somali Police Force

jointly with the Somali Military Police (13), regional forces (10) (Hirshabelle police (7), Galmudug police (2), Puntland Maritime Police Force (1)), and the National Intelligence and Security Agency and the Somali Military Police (7). 136 children were released.

166. The killing (191) and maiming (438) of 629 children (461 boys, 168 girls) by unidentified perpetrators (377), Al-Shabaab (103), government security forces (51) (Somali National Army (33), Somali Police Force (15), National Intelligence and Security Agency (3)), clan militias (47), regional forces (32) (Puntland police (13), South-West forces (5), Hirshabelle police (5), Puntland forces (4), South-West Police (3), Jubbaland police (1), Puntland Maritime Police Force (1)), “community defence forces” (13), Da’esh (5), and clan militia fighting in Sool region (1) was verified. Most child casualties were caused by explosive ordnance (438).

167. Rape and other forms of sexual violence were perpetrated against 197 girls by unidentified perpetrators (125), Al-Shabaab (29), government security forces (28) (Somali National Army (23), Somali Police Force (5)), clan militias (6), regional forces (6) (Hirshabelle police (4), Puntland forces (1), Jubbaland police (1)), “community defence forces” (2) and the Ethiopian Liyu Police (1).

168. A total of 54 attacks on schools (36) and hospitals (18) were attributed to Al-Shabaab (25), unidentified perpetrators (20), “Somaliland” forces (5), clan militias (2), Hirshabelle police (1) and the Somali National Army (1). In addition, the United Nations verified the military use of seven schools by clan militia fighting in Sool Region.

169. A total of 719 children (641 boys, 78 girls) were abducted by Al-Shabaab (677), unidentified perpetrators (20), clan militias (17), Da’esh (4) and the Somali National Army (1). Children were abducted for recruitment and use (321), over alleged association with opposing parties to conflict (90), for the purposes of sexual violence and forced marriage (49) or indoctrination (39), as a punishment or for non-compliance with Al-Shabaab rules (18), for the purposes of extortion (10) and killing (1). Some children were released (114) or escaped (31).

170. A total of 26 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access by Al-Shabaab (9), clan militias (5), the Somali National Army (3), unidentified perpetrators (3), “Somaliland” forces (2), clan militia fighting in Sool Region (1), South-West Police (1), South-West forces (1), and Jubbaland forces (1) were verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

171. I welcome the continued efforts of the Federal Government to implement the 2019 road map to expedite the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, including at the federal member state level, and call upon the Government to expedite the full implementation of these commitments. I reiterate my call upon the Government to ensure that the “community defence forces” end and prevent grave violations against children.

172. I commend the Federal Government for the endorsement of the age assessment guidelines and its standardized checklist and call for their implementation. I further welcome the continued implementation of the 2014 standard operating procedures for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups. I am deeply concerned, however, by the significant increase in the number of children detained for alleged association with armed groups, the prosecution of minors through military courts, and the imposition of the death penalty on children in Puntland. I reiterate my call upon the Federal Government and federal member states to treat children primarily as victims and to promptly hand over children to child protection actors, in line with the 2014 standard operating procedures. I recommend that the Federal

Government conduct joint screening exercises with the Ministry of Defence Child Protection Unit and the Somali National Army with the presence of the United Nations and allow access for the United Nations to barracks and military training centres.

173. I commend the endorsement of the juvenile justice and the child rights bills by the Federal Cabinet and I urge their adoption by the Federal Parliament, including with the provision maintaining that a child is a person below the age of 18 years. I underline that the Provisional Federal Constitution and all legislation pertaining to children should be in line with the human rights commitments of Somalia and meet international and regional standards.

174. I am deeply alarmed by the continued high number of grave violations against children in Somalia, including those attributed to Al-Shabaab. I am concerned about the high number of incidents linked to explosive ordnance and incidents of sexual violence and by the increase in attacks on schools and hospitals. I am concerned by access and security constraints. I call upon all parties to end and prevent violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

175. I call upon the Federal Government to strengthen accountability measures, including for perpetrators of sexual violence, improve access to justice for children and ensure that the offences of rape and indecency bill is in line with international standards.

176. I encourage inclusion of child protection considerations and the ensuring of adequate protection and uninterrupted service delivery to children and their communities during the ongoing drawdown of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and the handover of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces.

### **South Sudan**

177. The United Nations verified 236 grave violations against 221 children (179 boys, 39 girls, 3 sex unknown), including 13 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 75 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

178. A total of 152 children (136 boys, 16 girls) were recruited and used by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (65), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) (56), forces loyal to General James Nando (19), the Necessary Unified Forces (5), the South Sudan National Wildlife Services (3), the National Civil Defence Service (2), the South Sudan National Police Service (1) and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (1).

179. The killing (26) and maiming (21) of 47 children (31 boys, 16 girls) were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (42), including as a result of explosive ordnance (41) and crossfire between the South Sudan People's Defence Forces and unidentified perpetrators (1), the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (3), SPLM/A-IO (1) and the National Salvation Front (NAS) (1).

180. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 4 girls by SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (2), SPLM/A-IO (1) and forces loyal to General James Nando (1).

181. The military use of 7 schools and 2 hospitals by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (3), the South Sudan National Police Service (2), SPLM/A-IO (2) and the Necessary Unified Forces (2) was verified. Four schools (3) and hospitals (1) were vacated by SPLM/A-IO (2) and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (2).

182. The abduction of 32 children (22 boys, 7 girls, 3 sex unknown) by SPLM/A-IO (13), NAS (11) and SPLM/A-IO Kit-Gwang (8) was verified; 10 of the children were abducted for recruitment and use. All children were released.

183. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces was verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

184. I note the decrease in grave violations, but remain concerned by grave violations committed against children by all parties to the conflict, including the recruitment and use of children, notably by Government security forces. I reiterate my call for all parties to end and prevent grave violations, ensure accountability and uphold their responsibilities under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

185. I welcome the commitment of the Government to the 2020 Comprehensive Action Plan to End and Prevent All Grave Violations against Children and reiterate my call for the Government to prioritize its implementation and to budget accordingly, including for the training of the Necessary Unified Forces. I underline the importance of the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, including its provisions relating to children.

186. I encourage the continued cooperation of parties to the conflict with the United Nations, including continued access to barracks for age screening, as well as with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, which resulted in the release of 49 boys in 2023. I reiterate the need for reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed forces and groups and call upon the Government to fund these efforts.

187. I urge the Government to prioritize explosive ordnance risk education programmes, mine clearance and victim assistance and urge donors to support such efforts.

188. I also urge the Government to strengthen accountability, and note the sentencing of two perpetrators of grave violations against children.

#### **Sudan**

189. The United Nations verified 1,721 grave violations against 1,526 children (778 boys, 540 girls, 208 sex unknown), including 61 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 141 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

190. A total of 209 children (174 boys, 35 girls) were verified as recruited and used by the Rapid Support Forces (87), Third Front-Tamazuj (80), the Gathering of the Sudan Liberation Forces (30), the Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) (6), the Sudanese Police Force (4), the Joint Security-Keeping Force for Darfur (1) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Yassir Arman faction (SPLM-NYA) (1). Children were used in combat (112) and support (91) roles and in unknown capacities (6).

191. The killing (480) and maiming (764) of 1,244 children (650 boys, 386 girls, 208 sex unknown), some as young as 1, were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (952), including during crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces (813), the Sudanese Armed Forces (142), the Rapid Support Forces (136), the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction (SPLM-N al-Hilu) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (7), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid

Support Forces (3), SPLM-N al-Hilu (2), the Rapid Support Forces and Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA/AW) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1). Child casualties resulted mainly from crossfire (813), shelling (146), aerial bombardment (129) and shooting (83).

192. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 114 girls by the Rapid Support Forces (57), unidentified perpetrators (39), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (15), SLA/AW (2) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1).

193. A total of 85 attacks on schools (8) and hospitals (77) were verified, including attacks on protected personnel (17). Violations were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (34), including to crossfire between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces (21), and to attacks carried out by the Rapid Support Forces (37), the Sudanese Armed Forces (11), the Sudanese Police Force (1), the Joint Security-Keeping Force (1) and SLA/MM (1). In addition, the military use of 38 schools (27) and hospitals (11) by the Rapid Support Forces (24), the Sudanese Armed Forces (11), SLA/AW (1), the Central Reserve Police (1) and unidentified perpetrators (1) was verified.

194. The abduction of 20 children (10 boys, 10 girls) by the Rapid Support Forces (10), unidentified perpetrators (8), Arab militia affiliated with the Rapid Support Forces (1) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (1) was verified.

195. A total of 49 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were attributed to unidentified perpetrators (39), the Rapid Support Forces (5), the Sudanese Armed Forces Military Intelligence (2), SLA/AW (2) and SLA/MM (1). Some 1,000 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access were reported and are pending verification.

#### *Developments and concerns*

196. I am appalled by the dramatic increase in grave violations, especially recruitment and use, killing and maiming, sexual violence and attacks on schools and hospitals, and the deteriorating humanitarian access situation. I urge all parties, particularly the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces, to end and prevent grave violations and to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

197. I am gravely concerned about escalating intercommunal violence, including ethnically motivated attacks and the mass displacement of children, and call upon all parties to immediately commit to a durable cessation of hostilities.

198. I urge all parties to immediately take preventive and mitigating actions to avoid and minimize harm and better protect children, including to refrain from the use of explosive devices.

199. I urge all parties to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, especially schools and hospitals, water and sanitation systems, and to facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access to ensure life-saving assistance and to vacate all schools and hospitals currently used for military purposes.

200. I note the efforts made by parties to the conflict with the support of the United Nations that led to the release of 122 children. I call upon all parties to adopt and implement procedures on the screening and age assessment of recruits and to immediately release all children from their ranks.



## Syrian Arab Republic

201. The United Nations verified 1,574 grave violations against 1,549 children (1,385 boys, 118 girls, 46 sex unknown), including 4 girls who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 12 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

202. A total of 1,073 children (1,059 boys, 14 girls) were verified as recruited and used by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (477), the opposition Syrian National Army (opposition SNA) (282) (unidentified factions (206), Jabhah al-Shamiyah (36), Ahrar al-Sham (19), Faylaq al-Sham (13), Hamzah Division (8)), the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (231) (Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ) (203), Internal Security Forces under the umbrella of the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria (27) (Internal Security Forces), other components of SDF (1)); Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (73) (pro-government forces (51), Syrian government forces (20), pro-government air forces (2)) and Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (10). Most children (1,062) were used in combat roles.

203. The United Nations verified the detention of 10 boys by SDF for alleged association with parties to conflict. At the end of 2023, over 800 children, including foreign children, reportedly remained detained for alleged association with armed groups, mainly Da'esh, and approximately 29,000 children with suspected family ties to Da'esh continued to be deprived of liberty in Hawl and Rawj camps in north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic.

204. The United Nations verified the killing (201) and maiming (274) of 475 children (326 boys, 103 girls, 46 sex unknown), by Syrian government forces and pro-government forces (325) (pro-government forces (184), pro-government air forces (139), Syrian government forces (1), pro-government militias (1)), unidentified perpetrators (139), SDF (8) (YPG/YPJ (4), other SDF components (3), Internal Security Forces (1)), opposition SNA (2) and the Turkish Armed Forces (1). Casualties resulted from ground shelling (203), air strikes (142), explosive ordnance (123) and shooting (7).

205. The forced marriage of one girl to an opposition SNA commander was verified.

206. The United Nations verified 20 attacks on schools (19) and hospitals (1) from shelling (18) and air strikes (2) by pro-government forces (15) and pro-government air forces (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and YPG/YPJ (1). The military use of 34 schools (33) and hospitals (1) was attributed to YPG/YPJ (31), Syrian government forces (1), opposition SNA (1) and Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (1).

207. The abduction of 4 girls by the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (3) and pro-government militias (1) was verified. All girls were released.

208. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access by SDF was verified.

### *Developments and concerns*

209. I am concerned by the high number of grave violations against children in the Syrian Arab Republic, particularly recruitment and use and killing and maiming. I urge all parties to end and prevent grave violations and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I call upon all parties to unconditionally and immediately release all children and to better protect children and civilian infrastructure during hostilities and from the risks of explosive ordnance, especially in populated areas.

210. All parties must end and prevent attacks against schools and hospitals and their military use. I urge all relevant parties to vacate schools and hospitals.

211. I call upon the Government to ensure accountability for perpetrators of grave violations, in accordance with its obligations under international law and in line with international standards. I call upon all parties to hold their members to account for perpetrating grave violations.

212. I encourage the Government to continue engagement with the United Nations on finalizing a comprehensive action plan.

213. I welcome the engagement of the opposition SNA, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions, with my Special Representative, leading to the signature on 3 June 2024 of an action plan between the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions and the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children. I urge the opposition SNA to expedite its implementation, notably the screening of all legions and factions and to immediately release children from their ranks, the issuance and dissemination of command orders prohibiting the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children, and the establishment of complaint mechanisms to report grave violations.

214. I am concerned by the increase in recruitment and use of children by SDF and I encourage SDF to fully implement its 2019 action plan. I note the constructive dialogue between SDF, the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria, and the United Nations in adopting a road map to prioritize the implementation of the action plan, including the reappointment of senior-level focal points, the establishment of an implementation committee and a military order reiterating the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children.

215. I remain alarmed by the persistently high number of children deprived of liberty for their actual or alleged association with parties to conflict, including Da'esh, or on national security grounds. Children should be treated primarily as victims and deprivation of liberty should only be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time. I remain seriously concerned by the appalling humanitarian situation and violence affecting women and children in Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east. I urge all parties and relevant authorities detaining and/or depriving children of liberty to provide the United Nations and humanitarian actors with systematic and meaningful access to children deprived of liberty, including in Hawl and Rawj camps, military and civilian prisons, administrative detention and in reintegration centres, and to facilitate access to essential services and family reunification for these children.

216. I reiterate my call upon all concerned countries of origin and relevant authorities inside the Syrian Arab Republic to facilitate the safe and voluntary repatriation of women and children from Hawl and Rawj camps and in places of detention in the north-east, including those with suspected family ties to Da'esh, in line with international law and in respect for the principles of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child, in line with the Global Framework on United Nations Support to Member States on Individuals Returned from the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq and, upon request, with United Nations support.

### **Yemen**

217. The United Nations verified 809 grave violations against 666 children (546 boys, 120 girls), including 14 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 185 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

218. A total of 173 boys were verified as recruited and used by the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (111) (Yemen Armed Forces (33), the Security Belt Forces (25), 5th brigade (10), the Southern Transitional Council (10), the National Shield Forces (8), Shabwahi Defence Forces (6), Amaliqah Brigades (5), Tareq Saleh's National Resistance Forces (commonly referred to as the Guardians of the Republic) (4), Shabwani Elite Forces (3), Southern Resistance Forces (2), Border Guard Brigade (2), Thunderbolt Forces (2) and Support and Backup Brigades (1)), the Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah) (hereinafter "the Houthis") (59) and unidentified perpetrators (3). Most children were used in support roles (81) and combat roles (43).

219. The deprivation of liberty of 16 boys for their alleged association with parties to conflict was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces (10) and the Houthis (6). Six boys were released by the Yemen Armed Forces and five boys were released by the Houthis to civilian authorities within the framework of the 2020 handover protocol.

220. The United Nations verified the killing (105) and maiming (374) of 479 children (376 boys, 103 girls), attributed to unidentified perpetrators (350), including in crossfire (31), the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (74) (Yemen Armed Forces (32), Security Belt Forces (17), Amaliqah Brigades (10), Southern Transitional Council (5), Yemeni police (4), Southern Resistance Forces (2), Islah (2), 5th brigade (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1)) and the Houthis (55). The main causes of casualties were explosive ordnance (236), gunshots and crossfire (87), the running over of children by military vehicles (67), shelling (61) and drone attacks (14).

221. Sexual violence against 24 children (8 boys, 16 girls) was verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (20) (Yemen Armed Forces (9), Yemeni police (4), 5th brigade (2), Special Forces Brigade (1), Security Belt Forces (1), Amaliqah Brigades (1), Shabwahi Defence Forces (1) and Hadrami Elite Forces (1)) and the Houthis (4).

222. A total of 37 attacks on schools (20) and hospitals (17), including on protected persons (15) in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (15) (Yemen Armed Forces (7), Security Belt Forces (2), Southern Transitional Council (2), Yemeni police (2), Amaliqah Brigades (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1)), the Houthis (12) and unidentified perpetrators (10).

223. The military use of 34 schools (32) and hospitals (2) was verified and attributed to the Houthis (25), the Yemen Armed Forces and affiliated armed forces and groups (8) (Yemen Armed Forces (4), Joint Forces (also known as National Resistance Forces) (1), Thunderbolt Forces (1), Shabwahi Defence Forces (1), Islah (1)) and unidentified perpetrators (1). In addition, the military use of 11 schools (10) and hospitals (1) that occurred in previous years was verified in 2023.

224. The abduction of 4 children (3 boys, 1 girl) was attributed to the Houthis (3) and unidentified perpetrators (1).

225. A total of 92 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access, attributed to unidentified perpetrators (92), were verified. Incidents involved interference in the implementation of humanitarian activities (31), restrictions on the movement of personnel or goods (27), violence against humanitarian personnel, assets and facilities (27) and restrictions on access to services and assistance (7).

*Developments and concerns*

226. I welcome the continued engagement of the Government in the implementation of the 2014 action plan and 2018 road map and the hosting of my Special Representative in October 2023. I welcome the facilitation of visits to military installations to verify and promote the directives to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the appointment and training of 80 military focal points and the separation of children from fighting forces. I welcome the participation of the Security Belt Forces and the Amaliqah Brigades in activities under the action plan and road map, and I call for the full commitment of groups affiliated with the Presidential Leadership Council to the action plan and road map. I request the Government to adopt a handover protocol on the release of children detained during military operations and to implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

227. I welcome the continued engagement of the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen with my Special Representative, including during her visit to Riyadh in October 2023, and I welcome the completion of the 2019 memorandum of understanding and the related programme of time-bound activities.

228. I welcome the progress made by the Houthis in the implementation of the 2022 action plan and the continued engagement with the United Nations, including during the visit of my Special Representative in October 2023. I note the endorsement of standard operating procedures and training on age assessment and the visit of the United Nations to military recruitment centres and a “summer school”. I remain concerned by reports of the organization by the Houthis of “summer camps” for children, exposing them to military content. I call upon the Houthis to continue to implement the 2020 handover protocol and to allow the unimpeded access of the United Nations to all places of detention.

229. I am encouraged by the decreasing number of grave violations, but remain concerned by the continued recruitment and use of children, and I urge parties to support the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire and engage in preparations for the resumption of an inclusive political process under United Nations auspices, including child protection provisions. I encourage all parties to facilitate the socioeconomic reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, with the support of the United Nations and donors.

230. I remain deeply concerned by the prevalence of killing and maiming of children by explosive ordnance. I urge all parties to coordinate with the United Nations to mobilize resources and implement explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, the mapping of contaminated areas and explosive ordnance clearance.

231. I remain concerned about the denial of humanitarian access and urge all parties to protect humanitarian relief personnel and objects used for humanitarian relief operations.

**B. Situations not on the agenda of the Security Council or other situations**

**Burkina Faso**

232. The United Nations verified 1,219 grave violations against 941 children (566 boys, 305 girls, 70 sex unknown). In addition, 52 violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

233. A total of 169 boys were recruited and used by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (128), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (35) and unidentified perpetrators (6). Most boys were used in combat (139), 122 of whom were killed.

234. A total 25 boys were detained for alleged association with armed groups, including 6 who have been in detention for several years. Six children were released in 2023.

235. The United Nations verified the killing (485) and maiming (193) of 678 children (420 boys, 188 girls, 70 sex unknown) by the Defence and Security Forces (251), JNIM (196), unidentified perpetrators (114), including in crossfire (76) between parties to conflict, ISGS (96), *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (15) and joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (6), mostly in the Sahel region. Casualties resulted mainly from shootings (300), ground engagement and air strikes (152).

236. The rape of eight girls was attributed to *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (3), ISGS (2), unidentified perpetrators (2) and JNIM (1) was verified. A *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* element was arrested.

237. Responsibility for 56 verified attacks on schools (33) and hospitals (23), including on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (21), was attributed to JNIM (38), ISGS (8), unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Defence and Security Forces (3).

238. Five schools were militarily used by the Defence and Security Forces (4) and ISGS (1). In addition, one school and one hospital continued to be used by JNIM and ISGS.

239. Some 259 children (118 boys, 135 girls, 6 sex unknown) were abducted by JNIM (134), ISGS (92), unidentified perpetrators (26) and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (7), mostly as punishment for not adhering to the norms set by armed groups or to gather intelligence on positions of the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*.

240. Responsibility for 49 verified incidents of the denial of humanitarian access was attributed to JNIM (28), ISGS (10), unidentified perpetrators (8) and the Defence and Security Forces (3).

#### *Developments and concerns*

241. I welcome the establishment by the transitional authorities of a joint technical working group to implement the 2022 handover protocol for the transfer of children allegedly associated with armed groups, and of a coordination mechanism with the United Nations on human rights. I call upon the transitional authorities, to treat children associated with armed groups primarily as victims and to release all detained children.

242. I welcome the fact that the transitional authorities organized training for the Defence and Security Forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* on child protection. I am concerned by the levels of killing and maiming of children by the Defence and Security Forces, and I urge them to engage with the United Nations to take concrete prevention measures to protect children. I further urge the authorities to pursue accountability.

243. I am extremely concerned by the persistent high number of grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children, abductions, affecting girls in particular, the recruitment and use of children, in particular by JNIM and ISGS, and by attacks on schools and hospitals, as well as severe restrictions on humanitarian operations. I urge JNIM, ISGS and other parties to release associated children, cease all violations and end attacks on schools and hospitals and on protected persons.

## **Cameroon**

244. The United Nations verified 239 violations against 173 children (75 boys, 94 girls, 4 sex unknown), including 3 girls who were victims of multiple violations, in North-West (130), Far North (80) and South-West (29) Regions.

245. The recruitment and use of 3 boys by unidentified perpetrators was verified.

246. A total of 29 children were detained by national authorities for their alleged association with armed groups and on national security grounds. As of December 2023, 14 children remained in detention.

247. The killing (29) and maiming (21) of 50 children (29 boys, 19 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (25), including in crossfire between the Cameroon Armed Forces and unidentified perpetrators (1), by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (24), and by the Cameroon Armed Forces (1) was verified.

248. Sexual violence perpetrated against 17 girls by the Cameroon Armed Forces (10), unidentified perpetrators (6) and JAS (1) was verified.

249. Responsibility for 50 attacks on schools (40) and hospitals (10), including against protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals (39), was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (45), the Cameroon Armed Forces (4) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (1). Incidents involved threats, abductions, attacks against and the killing of protected persons, as well as the looting and destruction of facilities.

250. In the Far North Region, 10 schools continued to be used for military purposes by the Cameroon Armed Forces and 9 other schools previously used by the Cameroon Armed Forces were vacated following United Nations advocacy.

251. The abduction of 106 children (43 boys, 61 girls, 2 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (83) and JAS (23) was verified. A total of 18 children were released.

252. Some 13 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators were verified.

### *Developments and concerns*

253. I welcome the training of law enforcement officers on child protection in cooperation with the United Nations. I call upon the Government to extend the training to all defence and security forces, to pursue its efforts to strengthen the protection of children and to ensure accountability for grave violations against children, including sexual violence. I further welcome the development by the Government of a road map for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration. I call upon the Government to vacate schools being used for military purposes and prevent the further military use of schools.

254. I welcome the development by the Government, with United Nations support, of a handover protocol for children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors and urge its swift adoption. I am concerned about the detention of children for their alleged association with armed groups. I call upon the Government to treat these children primarily as victims, with detention only as a measure of last resort, and to release all children in its custody.

255. I am deeply concerned about the continued grave violations, mostly by armed groups, particularly attacks on schools and hospitals, including the killing and

abduction of protected persons, and the denial of humanitarian access. I urge all parties to immediately cease all violations.

256. I urge armed groups in the Far North Region, notably JAS, to put an end to violations and immediately release associated children.

### **Ethiopia**

257. The United Nations verified 253 grave violations against 198 children (112 boys, 52 girls, 34 sex unknown), including 1 child who was a victim of multiple violations. Most violations were verified in Tigray (140), Amhara (38) and Oromia (34). In addition, 12 violations that occurred in previous years were verified. The information does not represent the full scale of violations against children, and over 880 allegations of grave violations are under verification.

258. The United Nations verified the detention for alleged association with armed groups of one boy by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces. The boy was subsequently killed by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces.

259. The killing (36) and maiming (133) of 169 children (103 boys, 32 girls, 34 sex unknown) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (157), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (4), Fano (4), Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2), the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) and Somali special forces (1). Most children (150) were killed and maimed as a result of explosive ordnance.

260. Sexual violence was perpetrated against 17 girls by unidentified perpetrators (13), the Eritrean Defence Forces (2) and Oromo Liberation Army/Front-Shene (2).

261. Some 12 attacks on schools by unidentified perpetrators (12) were verified, affecting 4 teachers. Six schools were militarily used by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (5) and Tigrayan forces (1).

262. The abduction of 12 children (9 boys, 3 girls) by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (8), Oromia Special Forces (3) and the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) was verified.

263. The United Nations verified 43 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to unidentified perpetrators (34), the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (5), regional police forces (2), the Eritrean Defence Forces (1) and the Amhara Special Forces (1).

### *Developments and concerns*

264. I commend efforts towards the effective implementation of the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities signed by the Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front. I remain concerned about the impact on children of ongoing armed conflict in several regions and call upon all parties to prioritize dialogue and peace.

265. I welcome the collaboration between the Government and the United Nations. I encourage the Government to swiftly implement the recommendations contained in the letters exchanged with my Special Representative. I acknowledge progress in enhancing child protection measures during the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and the development of a transitional justice policy that includes child protection concerns. I encourage donors to fund the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and encourage the prioritizing of immediate assistance to children. I urgently call upon the Government to facilitate access for the United Nations and partners to encampments so as to enable the identification, transfer and reintegration of children.

266. I call upon the Government to expedite and facilitate the clearance of explosive ordnance and mine risk education to children, and call upon donors to support such operations.

267. I urge all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access to children and to safeguard humanitarian personnel from attacks.

268. I am concerned by the increase in sexual violence and urge all parties to end and prevent this violation. I call upon the Government to hold perpetrators accountable, and provide assistance services for survivors.

269. I call upon all parties to adopt concrete measures to end and prevent grave violations, and to protect schools and hospitals from military use and attack. I call upon the Government to endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

### **Lake Chad basin**

270. The United Nations verified 2,258 grave violations against 1,193 children (505 boys, 677 girls, 11 sex unknown) in the Lake Chad basin region, namely in Far North Region (Cameroon) (80), Lac Province (Chad) (60), Diffa Region (the Niger) (123), and the north-east of Nigeria (1,995), including 741 children who were victims of multiple violations. Information pertaining to violations in the Far North Region of Cameroon, in Diffa Region of the Niger and in north-east Nigeria is included under the respective country sections of the present report. Grave violations were perpetrated by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (1,475), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (519), unidentified perpetrators (239), Nigerian Security Forces (21), the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (3) and the Niger security forces (1). Grave violations involved recruitment and use (720), killing and maiming (118), sexual violence (370), attacks on schools and hospitals (11), abduction (1,038) and the denial of humanitarian access (1). In addition, the United Nations verified 171 grave violations that occurred in previous years.

271. In Lac Province, the United Nations verified 60 grave violations against 59 children by unidentified perpetrators. These included the recruitment and use (10), killing and maiming (4) and abduction (45) of children and one attack on a school.

### *Developments and concerns*

272. I welcome the continued efforts by the Government of Chad to comply with its action plan on child recruitment and use, which was completed in 2014, and the 2014 handover protocol. I reiterate my call upon the Government to extend existing training to all security and defence forces, and to incorporate this training into the curricula of military schools. I urge the Government to pursue accountability for violations against children and to ensure that all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and social reintegration programmes consider the specific rights and needs of children formerly associated with armed groups.

273. I am alarmed by the scale of grave violations against children, particularly girls, perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP, notably the cases of abduction, recruitment and use and sexual violence against children. I urge these groups to end and prevent all violations, and to immediately release all children.

### **Mozambique**

#### *Cabo Delgado*

274. The United Nations verified 153 grave violations against 108 children (47 boys, 61 girls), including 44 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, the United Nations verified 344 grave violations that occurred in previous years.



275. The recruitment and use of 40 children (18 boys, 22 girls) by armed groups was verified.

276. The killing (5) and maiming (3) of 8 children (7 boys, 1 girl) by armed groups (3), the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (3) and unidentified perpetrators (2) were verified.

277. Sexual violence against 12 girls was attributed to the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (5), armed groups (4) and the Rapid Intervention Unit of the police (3).

278. One attack on a hospital by unidentified perpetrators was verified. Schools that were militarily used in previous years continued to be used in 2023 by the Rapid Intervention Unit (1), the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (1) and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (1). The Rapid Intervention Unit has since vacated the school it had occupied.

279. The abduction of 92 children (52 girls, 40 boys) by armed groups, mostly for the purposes of recruitment and use (40) and sexual violence (4), was verified.

#### *Developments and concerns*

280. I welcome the continued engagement of the Government and international forces with the United Nations to end the military use of schools. I reiterate my call upon the Government to fully implement the Safe Schools Declaration.

281. I welcome the continued training of the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces on child protection and call upon the Government to extend the training to all security forces, including the Rapid Intervention Unit and community-based militias, notably Força Local and Namparama, and to clarify their status and establish accountability measures.

282. I welcome the Government's roll-out of reintegration programmes for children in Cabo Delgado, including community sensitization to end cultural stigma against girls who were victims of sexual violence, and I encourage the expansion of these efforts, with United Nations support.

283. I call upon the Government to prioritize the finalization and adoption of the handover protocol, to adopt age assessment mechanisms for community-based militias and to continue engaging with the United Nations on a prevention plan.

284. I am concerned about the increase in grave violations against children by armed groups, especially recruitment and use, abduction and sexual violence, and urge them to release associated children.

#### **Niger**

285. The United Nations verified 170 grave violations against 163 children (93 boys, 70 girls), including 1 girl who was the victim of multiple violations. In addition, four grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

286. The recruitment and use of 31 children (25 boys, 6 girls) by unidentified perpetrators was verified.

287. The killing (1) and maiming (8) of 9 boys owing to explosive ordnance (8) and attributed to Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (1) was verified.

288. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 8 girls by unidentified perpetrators (7) and the Niger security forces (1).

289. Six attacks on schools (5) and hospitals (1) by unidentified perpetrators were verified.

290. The United Nations verified the abduction of 116 children (59 boys, 57 girls) by unidentified perpetrators. Of these, seven girls were released.

*Developments and concerns*

291. I commend the continued implementation of the 2017 handover protocol, including through the referral of 34 children to reintegration services, with United Nations support. I encourage the authorities, in cooperation with the United Nations, to evaluate the implementation of the protocol and develop a road map for the full implementation thereof.

292. I appeal to all parties to end and prevent grave violations against children and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I am particularly concerned by the number of children abducted and recruited and used. I urge armed groups to immediately release associated children.

293. I call upon the Niger security forces to re-activate and strengthen the capacity of child protection focal points, and for the authorities of the Niger to re-establish a civilian entity dedicated to child protection. I further encourage the authorities to strengthen community-based reintegration programmes and encourage donors to support such efforts.

**Nigeria**

294. The United Nations verified 1,995 grave violations against 943 children (367 boys, 571 girls, 5 sex unknown), including 740 children who were victims of multiple violations. In addition, 164 grave violations that occurred in previous years were verified.

295. A total of 685 children (254 boys, 431 girls) were recruited and used by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) (510), Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (170), all following their abduction, and by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) (3) and the Nigerian Security Forces (2). Some 295 children (including 7 boys) were victims of sexual violence during their association. Five boys were used by CJTF (3) and the Nigerian Security Forces (2) for domestic chores.

296. Some 141 children (86 boys, 55 girls) were detained by the Nigerian Security Forces for their or their parents' alleged association with armed groups. All were released.

297. The United Nations verified the killing (39) and maiming (43) of 82 children (20 boys, 57 girls, 5 sex unknown) by unidentified perpetrators (28), ISWAP (23), the Nigerian Security Forces (19) and JAS (12).

298. The United Nations verified sexual violence against 366 children (7 boys, 359 girls), by JAS (286) and ISWAP (80) following their abduction.

299. Two attacks on schools (1) and hospitals (1) were attributed to ISWAP (2).

300. The United Nations verified the military use of one school by the Nigerian Security Forces.

301. Some 859 children (310 boys, 549 girls) were abducted by JAS (616) and ISWAP (243). Most of the children (680) escaped, while 179 remain unaccounted for.

302. One incident of the denial of humanitarian access was attributed to JAS.

*Developments and concerns*

303. I welcome the fact that CJTF, in collaboration with the United Nations, established seven additional child protection units in the framework of the 2017 action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children and provided child protection training to commanders. I am concerned about recruitment and use attributed to CJTF and welcome the fact that disciplinary measures have been taken against the perpetrators.

304. I welcome the fact that the Government adopted an implementation plan for the 2022 handover protocol for children encountered in military operations. I urge the Government to provide access for the United Nations to all children in detention, to treat these children primarily as victims, facilitate reintegration programmes and to release all children from detention.

305. I call upon the Government to expedite explosive ordnance clearance and mine risk education, and I call upon donors to support such operations.

306. I am gravely concerned about the increase in grave violations perpetrated by JAS and ISWAP. I urge all parties to end and prevent violations and to release all children.

**Pakistan**

307. A total of 78 grave violations against 73 children (13 boys, 7 girls, 53 sex unknown) were reported. Children (73) were reportedly killed (40) and maimed (33) by unidentified armed elements (72) and in one case, the casualty was claimed by Islamic State (1). Casualties were caused by explosive ordnance (66) and gunshots (7).

308. Five attacks on schools, including against protected persons in relation to schools, were reported.

*Developments and concerns*

309. I welcome the engagement of the Government with my Special Representative and the United Nations to develop concrete measures to protect children. Such engagement may lead to the removal of Pakistan as a situation of concern from my next report, should all agreed practical measures be fully implemented. I call upon the Government to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

310. I am concerned about the rise in reported grave violations, in particular the killing and maiming of children and attacks against schools, and about incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan.

**Philippines**

311. The United Nations verified 25 grave violations against 17 children (13 boys, 4 girls), including 3 children who were victims of multiple violations.

312. The recruitment and use of 12 children (8 boys, 4 girls) attributed to the New People's Army (NPA) (7), Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (3), Abu Sayyaf Group (1) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (2) was verified, with 1 child recruited and used by two perpetrators.

313. The killing (3) and maiming (3) of 6 children (5 boys, 1 girl) was attributed to unidentified perpetrators (3), Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (2) and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (1).

314. Sexual violence against one girl by NPA was verified.

315. Attacks and threats of attacks on schools (4) were verified and attributed to Dawlah Islamiyah-Maute Group (2), including attacks that affected education personnel (2) and attacks linked to “red tagging”<sup>5</sup> by the Government’s National Intelligence Coordinating Agency jointly with the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (2).

316. The abduction of 2 girls by NPA, was verified.

*Developments and concerns*

317. I welcome the finalization of protocols on handling children in situations of armed conflict by relevant Government departments. I call upon the Government to ensure the immediate handover of detained children, and I encourage the establishment of reintegration programmes.

318. I welcome the coordination between the United Nations and the Inter-Agency Committee on Children in Situations of Armed Conflict on the referral of detention cases to social services, on mitigating threats of attacks against schools and on capacity-building for government and non-government partners so as to enhance response and prevention.

319. I call upon the Government to revive consultations with the United Nations to ensure the integration of child rights and child protection in peace negotiations and agreements.

320. I also call upon the Government to sustain its collaboration with the United Nations on the strategic plan with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in order to protect children affected by armed conflict, align its priorities with the provisions of the law on children in situations of armed conflict and advocate the prevention of the “red tagging” of schools, teachers and children.

**Ukraine**

321. The United Nations verified 938 grave violations against 543 children (309 boys, 204 girls, 30 sex unknown). In addition, 160 violations that occurred in 2022 were verified.

322. Two boys were verified by the United Nations as having been used by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (1) for intelligence-gathering and by the Ukrainian armed forces (1) to aid a local centre of recruitment and social support.

323. The United Nations verified the detention of two boys by Ukrainian authorities, who remained in detention at the time of writing, and verified the detention of two boys by Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups, who were subjected to ill-treatment and torture and were released in 2022.

324. The United Nations verified the killing (80) and maiming (339) of 419 children (232 boys, 157 girls, 30 sex unknown) attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (287: 59 killed, 228 maimed), unidentified perpetrators (92: 12 killed, 80 maimed), including 23 caused by shrapnel when the Ukrainian armed forces intercepted missiles or loitering munitions launched by Russian armed forces, and the Ukrainian armed forces (40: 9 killed, 31 maimed). Most casualties resulted from the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects (363) and explosive ordnance (54).

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<sup>5</sup> Allegations by the authorities that individuals, groups and organizations are directly affiliated with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) or New People’s Army (NPA) and are therefore considered part of the insurgency.

325. A total of 335 attacks on schools (243) and hospitals (92), including attacks on protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, were verified and attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (249), the Ukrainian armed forces (70) and unidentified perpetrators (16), including 3 by shrapnel when the Ukrainian armed forces intercepted missiles or loitering munitions launched by Russian armed forces. Most incidents involved damage (259) and destruction (75), notably by the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, and looting (1). Two attacks resulted in child casualties.

326. The United Nations verified the military use of two schools and one hospital by the Ukrainian armed forces.

327. The United Nations verified the abduction, which began in 2022 and continued into 2023, of 122 children (75 boys, 47 girls) attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation. Of the total, at least 12 children were reunited with their parents/legal guardians. In addition, the United Nations verified the transfer or deportation of 33 children within the temporarily controlled or occupied territories of Ukraine, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, or to the Russian Federation.

328. The United Nations verified 60 incidents of the denial of humanitarian access attributed to Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups (44), unidentified perpetrators (15) and the Ukrainian armed forces (1). Incidents involved attacks affecting humanitarian sites and/or operations (29), the denial of access to cross the frontline to deliver humanitarian assistance (16) and attacks on energy infrastructure (15).

#### *Development and concerns*

329. I note a significant decrease in the number of grave violations against children. I call upon all parties to the conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. I further call upon parties to the conflict to ensure timely and effective investigations into allegations of violations against children and to ensure that alleged perpetrators, including members of the security forces and persons in command positions, are duly prosecuted.

330. I welcome the significant decrease in the verified number of children killed and maimed and attacks on schools and hospitals attributed to the Ukrainian armed forces. I welcome the signing on 18 August 2023 and the close cooperation between the Government of Ukraine and the United Nations in the swift implementation of a joint prevention plan to prevent grave violations against children, including through the appointment of focal points and reviewing the Safe Schools Declaration action plan. I encourage the Ukrainian armed forces to train children and armed conflict focal points in the Ministry of Defence, and to prevent the military use of schools.

331. I also note a decrease in the overall number of verified grave violations against children perpetrated by the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups, but I remain deeply concerned by the continued killing and maiming of children due to explosive weapons in populated areas and attacks on schools and hospitals. I encourage the continued engagement of the Government of the Russian Federation with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children and I note the practical prevention measures reported by the Russian Federation. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to speedily agree to enhance these measures through the development of a joint action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children.

332. I remain particularly concerned by the denial of humanitarian access attributed to the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups. I call upon the Russian Federation to grant the United Nations and its partners access to deliver humanitarian assistance and to conduct monitoring of grave violations through the cross-lines to the territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation.

333. I am concerned by the detention of children, and I urge all parties to ensure that children are detained only as a last resort and for the shortest period of time. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to cease all forms of ill-treatment.

334. I am concerned by the levels of the verified cases of abduction of children and by continued reports of transfers of children by the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation, and I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups and Russian authorities located in territories of Ukraine temporarily controlled or occupied by the Russian Federation to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to exchange information with the United Nations on all affected children. I am gravely concerned by the introduction in the Russian Federation of a simplified procedure to apply for Russian citizenship for orphaned children and children without parental care. I urge the Russian Federation to ensure that no changes are made to the personal status of Ukrainian children, including their nationality. I urge all parties to uphold the principle of the best interests of the child, facilitate family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and/or separated children who find themselves across borders or lines of control without their families and/or guardians, including by giving child protection actors access to facilitate reunification. I strongly urge the Russian Federation to cooperate with the United Nations for the return of Ukrainian children and reunification of such children with their families and/or guardians. I also encourage Ukraine to continue its active cooperation with the United Nations on this important issue.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

335. I am deeply concerned by the magnitude and severity of grave violations against children and their gendered impact, in particular the killing and maiming of children. I urgently call upon all parties to adhere strictly to their obligations under international humanitarian law, notably the principles of distinction, proportionality and precautions in attack, and under international human rights law. I urge all parties to cease attacks on civilians and civilian objects and to take immediate, decisive action to end and prevent these grave violations.

336. I call upon parties to conflict to refrain from using explosive weapons in populated areas. I encourage Member States to endorse the Political Declaration on Strengthening the Protection of Civilians from the Humanitarian Consequences Arising from the Use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas.

337. I urge all parties to undertake explosive ordnance clearance, risk education and victim assistance. I urge Member States, if they have not yet done so, to become parties to and to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions; the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects and the Protocols thereto; and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and I call upon donors to provide financial and technical assistance.

338. I commend the continued engagement by parties to conflict with the United Nations to develop and implement action plans and other commitments to end and prevent grave violations. I reiterate my call upon Member States to support this engagement, including by facilitating United Nations engagement with non-State actors. I request my Special Representative and the country task forces and equivalent arrangements to engage with all parties to end and prevent grave violations and to strengthen the monitoring and reporting on children and armed conflict.

339. I call upon the Security Council to ensure that child protection provisions and capacity are included in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Governments and the United Nations should ensure that during mission transitions, including the start-up, reconfiguration, drawdown or withdrawal phases, child protection frameworks are upheld, and that data and capacity are preserved and transferred. I underline the importance of mainstreaming child protection concerns in the nexus between early warning, conflict analysis, mediation, transitional justice and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

340. I call upon Member States to become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, if they have not yet done so. I urge Member States and parties to conflict to consider every human being below the age of 18 years as a child.

341. I call upon Member States to endorse and implement the Paris Principles, the Safe Schools Declaration and the Vancouver Principles.

342. I call for the adoption and implementation of legislation that criminalizes violations of international law, including grave violations against children, and encourage Member States to adopt accountability measures and to cooperate with international accountability mechanisms.

343. I am deeply alarmed by the increase in the denial of humanitarian access and the continued high numbers of attacks on schools and hospitals. I call upon all parties to allow and facilitate safe, timely and unimpeded humanitarian access, and access by children to assistance and protection, irrespective of their age, gender, diversity characteristics, nationality, or legal status, and to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and assets. I underline that civilians and civilian objects, including hospitals, schools, their personnel and transport, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law. I urge parties to refrain from the military use of schools and hospitals.

344. I am deeply concerned by the increase in the number of children deprived of liberty. I reiterate that detention should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, that alternatives to detention should be prioritized and that children should be treated exclusively within child justice systems, and that children should never be detained or prosecuted solely for their or their parents' actual or alleged association with armed groups. I urge Member States to treat children actually or allegedly associated with armed forces or groups, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations, primarily as victims, to prioritize their best interests, and to give child protection actors access to them. I encourage Member States to adopt and implement handover protocols for children encountered or detained during military operations to civilian child protection actors.

345. I reiterate my call upon Member States, in line with the principle of non-refoulement, family unity and the best interests of the child, to release children with alleged links to Da'esh who are held in places of detention in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with international law and Security Council resolutions. I call

upon Member States to ensure the consistency of counter-terrorism measures with international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

346. I call upon the donor community to scale up long-term financial support for effective, sustainable, timely, gender- and age-sensitive and survivor-centred long-term programmes, following an intersectional approach, including reintegration for victims of grave violations, and to address the needs of children with disabilities.

347. I encourage donors to provide funding for monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, in particular for child protection capacities on the ground. I underline the importance of data collection on sexual violence, on children with disabilities and on trafficking in children.

348. I encourage Member States and regional and subregional organizations to engage with the United Nations to prevent grave violations and foster partnerships.

## **V. Lists contained in the annexes to the present report and measures by listed parties aimed at improving the protection of children**

349. The modifications to the presentation of this section and to the lists contained in the annexes to the present report resulted from the recognition of the measures by listed parties aimed at improving the protection of children, the recognition of the primary responsibility of States to protect their populations and of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and the recognition of the need for non-State armed groups to abide by international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as from the need to foster accountability and justice for grave violations against children.

350. The modifications render redundant the separation of annexes I and II into sections A and B based on whether listed parties have put in place measures during the reporting period aimed at improving the protection of children.

### **A. New listed parties contained in the annexes to the present report**

#### *State actors*

351. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Israeli armed and security forces have been listed for the killing and maiming of children, and for attacks on schools and hospitals. While noting a decrease in violations against children during the first nine months of 2023, owing to direct engagement with my Special Representative regarding the prompt approval for children to receive medical attention outside the Gaza Strip, the last quarter of 2023 exposed an extreme rise in violations, particularly against children in the Gaza Strip, in particular the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including in highly populated areas, which resulted in a large number of child casualties and increased attacks on schools and hospitals. I urge Israel to immediately sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals. Further, although the denial of humanitarian access to children is a non-listable violation, I urge the Israeli armed and security forces to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and to ensure safe, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian aid and humanitarian workers throughout the Gaza Strip. I request Israel to expedite working with my Special Representative so as to put in place measures to better protect children.

352. In the Sudan, the Sudanese Armed Forces have been listed for the killing and maiming of children and for attacks on schools and hospitals. Children were killed



and maimed at unprecedented levels in the devastating crisis in the Sudan, including through the use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects, including in highly populated areas. My Special Representative has advocated with the Sudanese Armed Forces to immediately take preventive and mitigating actions to protect children, schools and hospitals. I urge the Sudanese Armed Forces to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and to urgently sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

*Non-State armed groups*

353. In Burkina Faso, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara has been listed for the abduction of children. I call upon the armed group Islamic State in the Greater Sahara to adopt concrete measures to protect children in line with international standards.

354. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed group Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise has been listed for the recruitment and use of children.

355. In Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades have been listed for the killing and maiming and abduction of children, following the brutal acts of terror on Israel of 7 October 2023. I urge the armed groups Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades, to urgently end and prevent grave violations against children.

356. In the Sudan, the armed group Rapid Support Forces has been listed for the recruitment and use and killing and maiming of children and for rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, as well as for attacks on schools and hospitals, and the armed group Third Front-Tamazuj has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. I urge the armed groups Rapid Support Forces and Third Front-Tamazuj to urgently develop action plans with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

357. The following parties were previously listed and have had additional violations added to their listing. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed group Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain has been listed for the abduction of children, and the armed group Mouvement du 23 mars has been listed for the recruitment and use of children. I urge Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain and Mouvement du 23 mars to urgently develop action plans with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children. In Mali, the following party was previously listed and has had additional violations added to their listing: the armed group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine, has been listed for the killing and maiming of children. I call upon the armed group Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine, to adopt concrete measures to protect children in line with international standards.

*Modifications to terminology and to names of parties*

358. Modifications to terminology and to names of parties resulting from changes on the ground are aimed at reflecting the names of parties more accurately. In the Central African Republic, the armed groups Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique and Union pour la paix en Centrafrique have been listed separately to reflect the fact that the former Séléka coalition no longer exists. In Myanmar, the Myanmar regime's armed forces have been listed as Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias, to reflect more adequately the configuration of the armed actors. In Somalia, the

Somali Federal Defence Forces have been listed as Somali National Army to align with other United Nations reporting.

**B. Measures, including by listed parties, aimed at improving the protection of children**

359. I welcome the State actors and non-State armed groups that have engaged with the United Nations, in line with Security Council resolutions [1539 \(2004\)](#) and [1612 \(2005\)](#), to develop and sign action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children. In the lists contained in the annexes, listed parties that have signed action plans with the United Nations are acknowledged as such, and I urge the continued and prompt implementation of these action plans.

360. I call upon all listed parties that have not yet done so to urgently engage with the United Nations to develop and sign action plans to end and prevent grave violations against children.

*State actors*

361. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the context of its 2012 action plan, I welcome the establishment by the Government of the National Reparations Fund for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Other Crimes against the Peace and Security of Mankind, the prosecution of perpetrators of grave violations, including for sexual violence, and the continued screening and separation of children from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese National Police during recruitment processes.

362. In Israel, I welcome the offer by the Government of Israel on 28 May 2024 to engage with my Special Representative to develop an action plan with the United Nations.

363. In Somalia, in the context of its 2012 action plan and the 2019 road map for implementation, I welcome the endorsement by the Federal Government of age assessment guidelines and its standardized checklist. I commend the endorsement of the juvenile justice and the child rights bills by the Federal Cabinet and I urge their adoption by the Federal Parliament, including with the provision maintaining that a child is a person below the age of 18 years.

364. In South Sudan, in the context of its 2020 action plan, I welcome the continued cooperation of the Government with the United Nations, including continued access to barracks for age screening, as well as with the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, which resulted in the release of 49 boys.

365. In Ukraine, I welcome the continued engagement of the Government of the Russian Federation with my Special Representative to end and prevent grave violations against children, and I note the practical prevention measures reported by the Russian Federation. I urge the Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups to develop and sign an action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children immediately.

366. In Yemen, I welcome the continued engagement of the Government in the implementation of the 2014 action plan and 2018 road map and the hosting of my Special Representative in October 2023. I welcome the facilitation of visits to military installations to verify and promote the directives to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, the appointment and training of 80 military focal points, and the separation of children from fighting forces. I welcome the participation of the Security Belt Forces and the Amaliqah Brigades in activities under the action plan and road map.

*Non-State armed groups*

367. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I welcome the signature of an unilateral declaration by the armed group Raia Mutomboki Kiriku to end and prevent grave violations against children following United Nations advocacy.

368. In Mali, in the context of their 2017 and 2021 action plans respectively, I welcome the cooperation of the armed groups Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad and Platform with the United Nations, enabling visits to military bases and the screening of combatants to verify the presence of children in Gao and Kidal Regions.

369. In the Syrian Arab Republic, I welcome the signature on 3 June 2024 of an action plan between the opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam, and its aligned legions and factions, and the United Nations to end and prevent grave violations against children.

370. I also welcome the adoption of a road map for the implementation of the 2019 action plan between the armed group Syrian Democratic Forces, the self-administration in northern and eastern Syria, and the United Nations, including the reappointment of senior-level focal points, the establishment of an implementation committee and a military order reiterating the prohibition of the recruitment and use of children.

371. In Yemen, in the context of its 2022 action plan, I welcome the continued engagement by the Houthis armed group with the United Nations, leading to the endorsement of standard operating procedures and training on age assessment and the visit of the United Nations to military recruitment centres and a "summer school."

## Annex I

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict on the agenda of the Security Council**

#### **A. State actors**

##### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>c,f</sup>

##### **Parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

Israeli armed and security forces<sup>b,d</sup>

##### **Parties in Myanmar**

Myanmar armed forces, including related forces and affiliated militias<sup>a,b,c,d,e,f</sup>

##### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Somali National Army<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>
2. Somali Police Force<sup>a,b,c,f</sup>

##### **Parties in South Sudan**

South Sudan People's Defence Forces<sup>a,b,c,e,f</sup>

##### **Parties in the Sudan**

Sudanese Armed Forces<sup>b,d</sup>

##### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

Government forces, including the National Defence Forces and pro-government militias<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>

##### **Parties in Yemen**

Security Belt Forces<sup>a</sup>

#### **B. Non-State armed groups**

##### **Parties in Afghanistan**

1. Hizb-i Islami Gulbuddin<sup>a,b</sup>
2. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan<sup>a,b,d</sup>
3. Taliban forces and affiliated groups, including the Haqqani Network<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

### **Parties in the Central African Republic**

1. Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>
2. Local militias known as the anti-balaka<sup>a,b,c</sup>
3. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
4. Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>
5. Union pour la paix en Centrafrique<sup>a,b,c,d,f</sup>

### **Parties in Colombia**

1. Ejército de Liberación Nacional<sup>a</sup>
2. Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) dissident groups<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

1. Alliance des forces de résistance congolaise<sup>a</sup>
2. Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain<sup>a,e</sup>
3. Allied Democratic Forces<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
4. Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO)<sup>b,c,d,e</sup>
5. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
6. Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri<sup>a,c,d,e</sup>
7. Lord's Resistance Army<sup>a,b,c,e</sup>
8. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale<sup>a,c,e</sup>
9. Mai-Mai Mazembe<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>
10. Mai-Mai Simba<sup>a,c</sup>
11. Mai-Mai Zaïre<sup>b</sup>
12. Mouvement du 23 mars<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
13. Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové<sup>a,b,c</sup>
14. Nyatura<sup>a,c,e</sup>
15. Raia Mutomboki<sup>a,c,e,f</sup>
16. Twigwaneho<sup>a</sup>

### **Parties in Iraq**

Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

### **Parties in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

1. Palestinian Islamic Jihad's Al-Quds Brigades<sup>b,e</sup>
2. Hamas' Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades and affiliated factions<sup>b,e</sup>

### **Parties in Mali**

1. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin, including Ansar Eddine<sup>a,b,c</sup>

2. Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad, part of the Coordination des mouvements de l'Azawad<sup>a,c,f</sup>
3. Platform, including affiliated groups<sup>a,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Myanmar**

1. Democratic Karen Benevolent Army<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Kachin Independence Army<sup>a</sup>
3. Karen National Liberation Army<sup>a</sup>
4. Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army Peace Council<sup>a</sup>
5. Karenni Army<sup>a</sup>
6. Shan State Army<sup>a</sup>
7. United Wa State Army<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in Somalia**

1. Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a<sup>a</sup>
2. Al-Shabaab<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

#### **Parties in South Sudan**

Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition – pro-Machar<sup>a,b,e,f</sup>

#### **Parties in the Sudan**

1. Justice and Equality Movement<sup>a,f</sup>
2. Rapid Support Forces<sup>a,b,c,d</sup>
3. Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid<sup>a</sup>
4. Sudan Liberation Army-Minni Minawi<sup>a,f</sup>
5. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Abdelaziz al-Hilu faction<sup>a,f</sup>
6. Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North Malik Agar faction<sup>a,f</sup>
7. Third Front-Tamazuj<sup>a</sup>

#### **Parties in the Syrian Arab Republic**

1. Da'esh<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham<sup>a,b</sup>
3. Kurdish People's Protection Units and Women's Protection Units (YPG/YPJ)<sup>a,f</sup>
4. The opposition Syrian National Army, including Ahrar al-Sham and Army of Islam<sup>a,b,f</sup>

#### **Parties in Yemen**

1. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula<sup>a</sup>
2. Houthis (who call themselves Ansar Allah)<sup>a,b,d,f</sup>
3. Pro-government militias, including the Salafists and popular committees<sup>a</sup>

## Annex II

### **Pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1379 (2001), 1882 (2009), 1998 (2011) and 2225 (2015), parties that commit grave violations affecting children in situations of armed conflict not on the agenda of the Security Council, or in other situations**

#### **A. State actors**

##### **Parties in Ukraine**

Russian armed forces and affiliated armed groups<sup>b,d</sup>

#### **B. Non-State armed groups**

##### **Parties in Burkina Faso**

1. Islamic State in the Greater Sahara<sup>b,e</sup>
2. Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin<sup>a,b,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Lake Chad basin**

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>e</sup>

##### **Parties in Nigeria**

1. Islamic State West Africa Province<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>
2. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad<sup>a,b,c,d,e</sup>

##### **Parties in the Philippines**

1. Abu Sayyaf Group<sup>a</sup>
2. Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters<sup>a</sup>
3. New People's Army<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Party that recruits and uses children.

<sup>b</sup> Party that kills and maims children.

<sup>c</sup> Party that commits rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

<sup>d</sup> Party that engages in attacks on schools and/or hospitals.

<sup>e</sup> Party that abducts children.

<sup>f</sup> Party that has concluded an action plan, joint commitment or similar measure with the United Nations in line with Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).