

Security Council urges countries to factor child protection into conflict prevention efforts

Countries have been urged to mainstream child protection into the policies they introduce aimed at preventing conflict, in line with a Security Council resolution adopted on Monday.

The Council [met to debate](#) the latest UN [annual report](#) on Children and Armed Conflict which revealed that once again, the number of boys and girls affected by fighting has increased, with more than 21,000 violations documented during the past year.

Virginia Gamba, the UN expert [on the issue](#), said these abuses should remind countries that they need to work together to reverse the trend.

“We cannot further jeopardize our most precious resource through inaction, but must increase our efforts to develop preventive tools, utilize reintegration strategically to break cycles of violence and address the cross-border nature of violations through increased cooperation,” she said.

We cannot further jeopardize our most precious resource through inaction – *Virginia Gamba, UN Special Representative*

Besides being maimed or killed, children caught in combat also suffer when schools or hospitals are attacked. Some are even forced into fighting, or fall victim to rape and other forms of gender-based violence.

The head of the UN children’s agency, [UNICEF](#), reported that one in four boys and girls globally has been impacted by conflict or disaster.

Henrietta Fore asked the 15 ambassadors to think about what will become of these children, both in the short and long term.



UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), addresses the Security Council meeting on children and armed conflict. July 9, 2018

"In his lifetime, a seven-year old Syrian child has never known a peaceful Syria. An Afghan teenager has never known a peaceful Afghanistan. And consider what the children of South Sudan have endured – and continue to endure – as they mark their country's seventh year of independence today," [she said](#).

"How can we prepare children to shape peaceful futures if they don't know what peace even looks like?"

Yenny Londoño, a former child combatant from Colombia, explained how human rights abuses are at the root of child recruitment. She said boys and girls forced to take up arms are denied access to education, health care, housing and security, among other rights.

Now a law student and expecting a baby, Ms. Londoño emphasized the need to treat former child soldiers as victims, not criminals.

"I ask Governments not to see us as a problem but rather to give us the opportunity to show you our ability to be changemakers", she said, speaking in Spanish. "That's what we want to be: changemakers for society."