



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

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SECURITY COUNCIL – OPEN VTC ON CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

STATEMENT ATTRIBUTABLE TO H.E. AMBASSADOR CHRISTIAN WENAWESER

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Mr. President,

Only a few weeks ago we celebrated the 5th anniversary of the Safe Schools Declaration – a political commitment to protect students, teachers and education facilities from the worst effects of armed conflict. The current global situation illustrates that the Declaration is as relevant today as it was five years ago: The United Nations verified almost 500 attacks on schools in 2019, many of which were unprovoked. Schools continue to be used for military purposes, eroding their sanctity as safe spaces and exposing schools, teachers and students to attack. Such attacks violate the right to education and often constitute war crimes or crimes against humanity. Depriving children of access to education also has a devastating impact on sustainable development, in particular SDG 4, and inflicts irreparable long-term damage on children, families, communities and societies. It is therefore vital to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for girls and boys at all times. And it is important to put childrens' voices first, to listen to them as advocates and agents of change, and to empower them when they experience violations of their rights. The Third Optional Protocol to CRC gives children this voice – a reflection of the true spirit of the Convention and in the best interest of the child.

Liechtenstein has been among the few States to ratify the Protocol – we hope that many others will join.

Mr. President,

For many children in situations of armed conflict, the COVID-19 pandemic has further deteriorated their already challenging and devastating realities. It has exacerbated the risk of exploitation and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including human trafficking and modern slavery. Quarantine, curfews and other restrictions on movement are weakening protection mechanisms and heightening risks of domestic and sexual violence for women and girls as well as men and boys in crisis affected communities. Socio-economic effects increase the vulnerability of children to recruitment and use by armed forces or armed groups, child labor and sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary-General's call for a global immediate ceasefire is an opportune moment to put armed conflict on lockdown, and to focus together on the fight against COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable.

Mr. President,

Liechtenstein remains deeply concerned at the high occurrence of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children. Such violence is often underreported owing to fear of stigmatization and cultural taboos, in particular when perpetrated against boys, as also documented by the All Survivors Project. A culture of silence continues to impede accountability and justice, and contributes to further cycles of violence and persistent harmful gender stereotypes.

We reiterate our strong support for the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to shed more light on marginalized victims and survivors of

conflict-related sexual violence, in line with Security Council Resolution 2467. It is key to uphold the security, privacy and confidentiality of survivors and witnesses as well as ethical considerations in documenting and verifying information of child survivors of sexual violence. In light of the pandemic it is furthermore important to prioritize the development and remote roll-out of gender specific training tools to conduct the safe and ethical documentation of cases of conflict-related sexual violence against girls and boys. With global guidelines for MRM reporting remaining unaltered, it is vital that monitoring staff are urgently trained to explore options for remote verification of incidents of violence. While we acknowledge the challenges the SRSG's mandate is facing in current times, we reiterate that the protection of its independence and integrity is crucial to its effectiveness and credibility, which also includes the objective, consistent and transparent practice of listing parties that have committed grave violations against children and those that have and have not put in place measures during the reporting period to improve the protection of children.

I thank you.