



The Permanent Mission of the Republic of  
Kenya to the United Nations – New York  
Security Council - 2021-2022

UN SECURITY COUNCIL HIGH-LEVEL OPEN DEBATE ON CHILDREN AND ARMED  
CONFLICT

TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2022 (10AM)

STATEMENT BY AMB. MARTIN KIMANI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

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Thank you Mr President,

I commend you for convening this important debate. I thank the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba, and UNICEF Executive Director, Ms. Catherine Russel, and Mr. Patrick Kumi for their briefings.

Kenya welcomes this opportunity to consider the Secretary-General's annual report and further efforts needed to protect children from armed conflict.

Today, we wish to draw your attention to the 4 recommendations.

**First:** An immediate measure the Security Council should take is to incorporate child protection provisions and capability into all mandates of UN peacekeeping operations and special political missions.

The elements to be included are: early warning; protection of civilians; transitional justice and disarmament; countering radicalisation and recruitment; disengagement; demobilisation and reintegration.

**Second:** The harm to children by terrorist groups should receive the urgent attention of the Security Council.

Kenya condemns the grave violations committed against children during armed conflict. We note with concern the extraordinarily high incidence of these crimes by terrorist groups such as Al Shabaab, Daesh and the Houthi.

These groups are undertaking mass abductions as part of their recruitment. Children are kidnapped from their homes and schools, trafficked or forcibly married to terrorists, and are subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence.

The process of radicalisation is itself a grave harm to children. It turns them into adopting hateful and violent actions that are a direct harm to them, their families and the public at large.

The psychological dimensions of radicalisation need further attention from clinical psychology experts, and considered from a child safety and wellbeing perspective.

It should be noted by the Security Council, and states, that the ability of Al Shabaab, Daesh and the Houthi to control territory, and the populations within it, are key to their harming of children.

As such, the Council should agree that military and police pressure on these groups, to the extent that they struggle to control territory, is integral to the protection of children.

It is also important to recall the periodic attacks on educational institutions by groups such as Al Shabaab. Their rejection of education, as well as their assaults on schools, are proof that such groups should not be considered normal political actors and considered legitimate targets of dialogue and negotiation.

A key takeaway for the Council is that attempts to negotiate with terrorist groups should only be supported if the groups disavow their ideological aims that justify attacks on children and civilians at large.

With these observations in mind, Kenya calls for a more robust and consistent counter terrorism regime to protect children.

Al-Shabaab must be treated as such and be placed under the most comprehensive counter-terrorism sanctions regime to protect children from their violations.

We note the concern in the Secretary-General's report on the impact of counter terrorism measures on children. But, given our prior observations, which are recognised in the Secretary General's report, we propose that competent, human-rights sensitive, and effective counter terrorism is a key tool in the protection of children.

**Third:** Children are frequent victims of explosive ordinance deployed by terrorist groups.

States affected in conflict situations should be supported with the necessary capacity to suppress the use of explosive ordinance by terrorist and armed groups.

We encourage continued collaborative partnerships between the UN Triangular Partnership Programme and the International Peace Support Training Centre in Nairobi to avail the urgent training and assistance needed to deal with this threat.

UN and regional peacekeeping missions should also be strengthened with the relevant capabilities to enhance proactive force deployment to preempt and defuse IEDs.

**Fourth:** Children born to active terrorists or who have recruited by terrorist and militant groups need assistance when they surrender or are captured.

Too many children with family links to terrorist groups are languishing in refugee camps, especially in Syria.

The UN and the International Community need to take the lead in their rehabilitation, counselling, disengagement and reintegration to communities outside camps.

Reintegration must ensure that the specific needs of children are addressed, including access to health care, psychosocial support, and education programmes.

In Kenya's experience, effective reintegration of children radicalised by terrorist groups should include identification, risk assessment and vetting, disengagement and reintegration, probation, aftercare, and surveillance.

Kenya is ready to work with Member States and the Secretary General to deploy an initiative for training and capacity building for disengagement and reintegration in countries in armed conflict.

We also call for action by UNICEF, the Peacebuilding Commission and other relevant UN entities in assisting Member States to ensure that the protection, rights, well-being and empowerment of children affected by armed conflict are fully incorporated in their initiatives.

**Finally**, I reaffirm Kenya's committed to continue working closely with members of the Security Council on this important subject.

**I thank you.**