



Security Council

Distr.: General
29 September 2023

Original: English

Conclusions on children and armed conflict in Nigeria

1. During its formal meeting on 4 October 2022, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict of the Security Council examined the third report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)), covering the period between January 2020 to December 2021, which was introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. A representative of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations also addressed the Working Group (see annex).

2. The members of the Working Group expressed deep concern at the six grave violations that continued to be committed against children affected by the armed conflict in Nigeria. The Working Group condemned the continued instances of violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram-affiliated groups and splinter groups, in particular the high number of children abducted during the reporting period. The members of the Working Group commended both the Government of Nigeria and the Civilian Joint Task Force for their constructive role in the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children signed in 2017, and emphasized the importance of reintegration and prevention of re-recruitment. They welcomed the recent signing of the handover protocol with the United Nations in September 2022. The members of the Working Group congratulated Nigeria for hosting the fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration in October 2021, and stressed the importance of protecting schools from attacks in contravention of international law and ensuring all children could access an education. They encouraged the Government of Nigeria to continue its efforts to promote accountability by investigating, prosecuting and sanctioning anyone found to be responsible for violations and abuses against children and to ensure that all victims had access to justice, and emphasized the need to address impunity. The members of the Working Group acknowledged the efforts of the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting in Nigeria, as well as the challenges that it faced in verifying the six grave violations.

3. The members of the Working Group welcomed the report of the Secretary-General, and in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions [1612 \(2005\)](#), [1882 \(2009\)](#), [1998 \(2011\)](#), [2068 \(2012\)](#), [2143 \(2014\)](#), [2225 \(2015\)](#), [2427 \(2018\)](#) and [2601 \(2021\)](#), the Working Group agreed to the direct action as set out below.

Public statement by the Chair of the Working Group

4. The Working Group agreed to address the following message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to all parties to the conflict in Nigeria:



(a) Strongly condemning all violations and abuses that continue to be committed against children by all parties to the conflict in Nigeria, noting that Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups were responsible for the vast majority of the incidents verified in the report, and noting with concern the disproportionate negative impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on children; urging all parties to the conflict to immediately end and prevent all abuses and violations against children, including those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, abduction, and the denial of humanitarian access and urging all parties to comply with their obligations under international law;

(b) Noting with concern that access restrictions to conflict-affected areas during the reporting period presented challenges to the verification of the six grave violations against children and that the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria ([S/2022/596](#)) therefore does not reflect the full impact of armed conflict on children in Nigeria;

(c) Calling upon all parties to further implement the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in Nigeria;

(d) Stressing the importance of accountability for all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict and stressing that all perpetrators must be brought to justice and held accountable without undue delay, including through timely and systematic investigations, and, as appropriate, prosecution and conviction; to ensure that all victims have access to justice and to the medical, protection and support services that they need;

(e) Stressing that the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration, and that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of girls and boys, as well as children with disabilities and displaced children, should be duly considered, when planning and carrying out actions concerning children in situations of armed conflict;

(f) Strongly condemning the continued recruitment and use of children, and strongly urging armed groups to immediately and without preconditions release all children associated with them, to hand them over to relevant civilian child protection actors in coordination with the respective Nigerian authorities and urging all parties to end and prevent the further recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including the re-recruitment of children who have been released, consistent with their obligations under international law, including, as applicable, the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(g) Expressing deep concern about the deprivation of liberty of children for their or their parents' association or alleged association with Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, emphasizing that children who have been recruited by armed groups and are accused of having committed crimes during armed conflicts should be treated primarily as victims and reaffirming the importance that all actors respect the rights of children in Nigeria, including, as applicable, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(h) Expressing grave concern at the killing and maiming of children, including as a result of crossfire and air strikes, explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices and suicide attacks, while noting an overall decrease in the number of children killed and maimed compared with the previous reporting period, and calling upon all parties to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular the principles of distinction, proportionality and

humanity, as well as the obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid and in any event minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects;

(i) Expressing grave concern about the high number of incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated against children, including displaced children, urging all parties to the armed conflict to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against children by their members and stressing the importance of accountability for those who commit sexual violence against children; underscoring that girls continued to be deliberately targeted through rape and other forms of sexual violence, including sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and forced marriage; noting with concern the difficulty of tracking, documenting and verifying such violations and abuses owing to a lack of safe reporting mechanisms, survivors' fear of stigma and retaliatory attacks and a lack of access to some conflict-affected areas by the country task force, resulting in underreporting; stressing the importance of providing non-discriminatory and comprehensive specialized services, including mental health and psychosocial support, health, including sexual and reproductive health services, legal and livelihood support and services to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence;

(j) Strongly condemning the ongoing attacks on schools and hospitals in north-east Nigeria, which continued to severely affect children's access to education and health care, the overwhelming majority of which were attributed to Islamic State West Africa Province and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad; calling upon all parties to comply with applicable international law and to respect the civilian character of schools and hospitals, including their personnel, and to end and prevent attacks or threats of attacks against those institutions, as such, in violation of applicable international law, as guided by the Safe Schools Declaration, which was endorsed by the Government of Nigeria in May 2015, and in line with Security Council resolution [2601 \(2021\)](#), and noting the negative effect that attacks on schools can have on the enjoyment of the right to education;

(k) Expressing particular concern that many children in armed conflict, in particular girls, lack access to education owing to, among other things, attacks against schools; and expressing further concern regarding the extension of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups operations beyond north-eastern Nigeria towards the north-west of the country, in particular the spread of violence targeting schools and reportedly involving kidnappings for ransom of students;

(l) Strongly condemning the high number of incidents of abduction of children by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, including for the purpose of recruitment and use, forced marriage and other forms of sexual violence; urging relevant parties, in particular Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, to immediately cease the abduction of children and all violations and abuses committed against abducted children, noting the gendered impacts of abduction, including the forced marriage of girls to its fighters, and to immediately release without preconditions all abducted children to relevant civilian child protection actors;

(m) Expressing grave concern at incidents of denial of humanitarian access, including attacks on, abduction and killing of and threats thereof, to humanitarian personnel, and calling upon all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate, in accordance with international law, including international humanitarian law, safe, timely, and unhindered humanitarian access, consistent with the United Nations guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, as well as the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, to respect the exclusively humanitarian nature and impartiality of humanitarian aid and to respect the work of

all United Nations agencies and their humanitarian partners, without adverse distinction;

To the Government of Nigeria

(n) Stressing the primary role of the Government of Nigeria in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict in Nigeria, consistent with its obligations under international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict;

(o) Welcoming the signing between the Government of Nigeria and the United Nations of a handover protocol to facilitate the release and handover of children actually or allegedly associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors and encouraging it to expedite the implementation of the protocol, and to grant access to the United Nations and child protection actors to detention facilities, while noting that the country task force was unable to determine the overall number of children still in detention for their actual or alleged association with armed groups;

(p) Welcoming the efforts of the Government of Nigeria, with the support of the United Nations and partners, leading to the reintegration of 6,503 children formerly associated with armed groups, and emphasizing the importance of sustainable, effective and gender-sensitive reintegration of all children released through family- and community-based reintegration programmes, as well as the provision of educational, health, mental health and psychosocial support programmes to all children affected by conflict;

(q) Welcoming the signing into law by the Borno State government of the Child Rights Act, and stressing the importance of pursuing efforts towards accountability by investigating and, as appropriate, prosecuting and sanctioning anyone found to be responsible for violations and abuses against children;

To Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, including Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province

(r) Condemning in the strongest possible terms the continuing violations and abuses committed against children by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, notably Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, and strongly urging them to immediately end and prevent all violations and abuses against children in Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin and to immediately release without preconditions all children and end and prevent the further recruitment and use of children, including the re-recruitment of children who have been released;

(s) Strongly condemning the targeting of schools and their personnel by Islamic State West Africa Province and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, including the burning of educational facilities and destruction of related infrastructure;

(t) Urging Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, in particular Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad and Islamic State West Africa Province, to cease the abduction of children, including abductions specifically targeting girls;

(u) Recalling that the Security Council, by its resolution [2368 \(2017\)](#), reaffirmed the asset freeze, travel ban and arms embargo affecting all individuals and entities, among them Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, set out in paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution [2083 \(2012\)](#);

(v) Expressing the readiness of the Working Group to communicate to the Security Council and to the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant

(Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities pertinent information with a view to assisting them in the imposition of the sanctions on perpetrators;

To the Civilian Joint Task Force

(w) Commending the Civilian Joint Task Force for the constructive role that it has played, in cooperation with the Government of Nigeria, in the adoption and implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, noting that the Civilian Joint Task Force was delisted from the annexes to the 2021 report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict ([A/75/873-S/2021/437](#)); urging the Civilian Joint Task Force, with the continued support of the United Nations, to complete its remaining obligations under the action plan, namely, the training of its units on children's rights and the establishment of accountability mechanisms and to sustain gains made through implementation of the action plan.

5. The Working Group agreed to address a message, through a public statement by the Chair of the Working Group, to community and religious leaders:

(a) Emphasizing the important role of community and religious leaders in strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict, and recognizing their important role advocating for an ending to violations and abuses against children;

(b) Urging them to publicly condemn and continue to advocate ending and preventing violations and abuses against children, in particular those involving the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, abductions, attacks and threats of attacks against schools and hospitals, and to engage with the Government of Nigeria, the United Nations and other relevant stakeholders to support the reintegration of children affected by armed conflict in their communities, including by raising awareness to avoid the stigmatization of such children.

Recommendations to the Security Council

6. The Working Group agreed to recommend the following to the Security Council:

(a) To continue to consider the situation of children affected by armed conflict in the Lake Chad basin region when the situation is addressed by the Council.

7. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Government of Nigeria, referring to the public statement by the Working Group:

(a) Stressing the primary role of the Government in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict in Nigeria;

(b) Commending the Government for the constructive role that it has played in support of the Civilian Joint Task Force and in the implementation of the action plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Civilian Joint Task Force;

(c) Calling on the Government to continue to pursue its efforts towards accountability, including through comprehensive, independent, timely and systematic investigation and, as appropriate, prosecution, conviction and punishment of anyone found to be responsible for any of the six grave violations against children, and to ensure that all survivors have access to justice, as well as to the medical and support services that they need;

(d) Encouraging the Government to continue the good practice of coordinating with relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations, before the release of detained children, and noting in this regard the release of 272 children from detention by the Nigerian security forces in 2020 and 2021;

(e) Expressing concern about the deprivation of liberty of children for their actual or alleged association with Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups; encouraging the Government to continue to provide unhindered access to the United Nations to detention facilities and encouraging access of civilian child protection actors to children deprived of liberty for association with armed groups; and emphasizing that children should be treated primarily as victims;

(f) Encouraging the Government to continue to ensure the effective and gender-sensitive reintegration of all released children, with the support of the United Nations and partners, including the provision of educational, health, mental health and psychosocial support programmes to all children affected by conflict, encouraging the Government to focus on sustainable reintegration opportunities for children affected by armed conflict, in particular those formerly associated with Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups and the victims of abductions, forced marriage and sexual violence, including by raising awareness and working with communities to avoid stigmatization of such children and facilitating their return, while taking into account the specific needs of girls and boys;

(g) Encouraging the Government to pay particular attention to the risks of re-recruitment of children, in particular in the light of the large number of individuals, including children, escaping from Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad;

(h) Calling upon the Government of Nigeria to ensure accountability, as well as access to non-discriminatory, gender-sensitive and comprehensive specialized services, including psychosocial, health, mental health and psychosocial support, legal and livelihood support services, to survivors of sexual violence;

(i) Recalling the endorsement of the Government of Nigeria of the Safe Schools Declaration and its commitment to pursue efforts to protect schools from military use, stressing the importance of access to education and health care for children in Nigeria and calling upon the Government to continue to ensure that schools and related personnel are protected;

(j) Inviting the Government to keep the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict informed of its efforts to implement the recommendations of the Working Group and the Secretary-General, as appropriate.

8. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter to the Secretary-General:

(a) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure the continued effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict in Nigeria;

(b) Requesting the Secretary-General to ensure that the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting continues its ongoing work and advocacy for the release and reintegration of children in Nigeria and to continue engagement with the Civilian Joint Task Force to fully implement its action plan;

(c) Noting the negative impact of conflict on children in regions of countries bordering north-east Nigeria, and inviting the Secretary-General in that regard to report on relevant developments, as appropriate, through his regular reporting to provide a more comprehensive picture of the situation of children affected by the conflict.

9. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter from the Chair of the Working Group addressed to the President of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission:

(a) Welcoming the continued commitments made by the African Union and the Multinational Joint Task Force to peace and security in Nigeria and neighbouring countries affected by the actions of Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups and to the protection of children affected by armed conflict;

(b) Encouraging Multinational Joint Task Force-contributing countries to continue to cooperate with the United Nations regarding child protection issues;

(c) Strongly encouraging the Peace and Security Council to include in the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force specific provisions for the protection of children, encouraging the Task Force to issue a Force Commander's directive on the protection of children encountered during military operations, including their handover to civilian child protection authorities for appropriate assistance and protection, and emphasizing that children who have been recruited contrary to applicable international law by armed groups should be treated primarily as victims and that, in actions concerning children, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration;

(d) Encouraging the Multinational Joint Task Force to deploy child protection officers or designate child protection focal points within the Task Force to contribute to training, capacity-building and advocacy regarding violations and abuses committed against children.

10. The Working Group agreed to recommend that the President of the Security Council transmit a letter addressed to the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolutions [1267 \(1999\)](#), [1989 \(2011\)](#) and [2253 \(2015\)](#) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities:

(a) Recalling paragraph 7 (b) of resolution [1882 \(2009\)](#), by which the Security Council requested enhanced communication between the Working Group and relevant Council sanctions committees, including through the exchange of pertinent information on violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict;

(b) Encouraging the continued sharing of relevant information by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict with the Committee and the Working Group;

(c) Encouraging the Committee to continue to consider the designation for sanctions of individuals and entities, in accordance with the rules and guidelines of the Committee.

Direct action by the Working Group

11. The Working Group agreed to send letters from the Chair of the Working Group addressed to the World Bank and other donors:

(a) Stressing the critical needs of children in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, and calling upon donors to cooperate with and support the Government of Nigeria in developing and implementing national policies, programmes and initiatives to enhance the protection of children;

(b) Requesting in this regard donors to provide flexible, predictable and adequate funding and support to the Government of Nigeria and relevant humanitarian and development partners to strengthen child protection efforts, including:

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- (i) The development and implementation of sustainable multisectoral reintegration programmes for children formerly associated with armed groups;
 - (ii) The bolstering of systems providing access to appropriate education and vocational training, as well as health care and nutrition for all children affected by armed conflict;
 - (iii) The establishment of birth and late birth registration as a means to prevent the recruitment and use of children, in violation of applicable international law in Nigeria;
 - (iv) The development and implementation of sustainable long-term strategies to end and prevent all violations and abuses against children in armed conflict in Nigeria, as well as programming and research on preventing the recruitment and radicalization of children and youth;
 - (v) The development and implementation of sustainable long-term strategies to end and prevent sexual and gender-based violence against children in armed conflict in Nigeria, including by addressing safe reporting mechanisms, stigma and retaliatory attacks, discrimination by service providers and community members and the specific health, including sexual and reproductive health, and mental health and psychosocial needs of children who have been victims of sexual violence during their captivity by Boko Haram, the majority of which are girls, and of children born as a result of rape and their mothers;
 - (vi) The provision of technical assistance to build and strengthen the protection and response capacity of child protection personnel at the governmental and non-governmental levels;
- (c) Inviting donors to keep the Working Group informed of their funding and assistance efforts, as appropriate.

Statement made by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict*

Let me begin by expressing my profound appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, for inviting me to this exchange in order to present my government's response. I should also like to thank the SRSB-CAAC and her Office for following the good practice of sharing with affected countries relevant excerpts for comments before the publication of the Secretary-General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict. This is a practice that Nigeria deeply appreciates, given its potential for ensuring a fair and balanced report.

The Nigerian Government does not involve in the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in any form whatsoever. The Nigerian Government does not abduct children and does not engage in other forms of violations against children, either in the context of conflict or in any other context. It is inconceivable that the Nigerian Government would be considered a grave violator of the rights of children. This report, therefore, does a disservice to the tireless efforts of the Government of Nigeria in promoting and protecting the rights of children, not so much in what it says against the Nigerian Government as it is in the image it creates about the Nigerian Government. For the undiscerning mind, this report creates a false and negative reality about the Nigerian Government.

Mr. Chair,

I would like to reiterate Nigeria's principled stance for the promotion and the protection of the rights of children no matter the circumstance. For Nigeria, these rights are sacrosanct and non-negotiable. This is the reason Nigeria continues to strive to place the interests of children first and to create a world that is truly fit for children.

As a signatory to the "Convention on the Rights of the Child" and the "Optional Protocol on Children's Involvement in Armed Conflicts," Nigeria does not engage in the recruitment of children into its armed forces. On the contrary, Nigeria continues to ensure that children who are or have been unlawfully recruited or used by armed groups are not victimized anew by the law. That is why Nigeria treats children in armed conflicts, no matter their role, as victims who need to be rescued, rehabilitated and reintegrated into the society, rather than as being in conflict with the Nigerian law. Nigeria will, therefore, continue to uphold its commitment to the relevant international conventions and protocols that protect and promote the fundamental and inalienable rights of children.

As it relates to the specifics of the draft report before us, let me observe that its stated objective is to provide "information related to the grave violations against children in the context of the armed conflict in North-east Nigeria," specifically in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, during the period from January 2020 to December 2021. In my Government's view, strict adherence to the stated objective as well as to conceptual clarity, scope, and delimitation remains the hallmark of good reporting and are necessary for providing a fair, balanced, unbiased and factual report that is neither sensational nor inadvertently detrimental to its cause or to the image of the affected State.

* The present annex is being issued without formal editing.

With regards to the claim that the United Nations verified 444 grave violations against 356 children (165 boys, 190 girls, 1 sex unknown) in North-East Nigeria, including 49 children's victims of multiple violations, Mission was unable to confirm the numbers.

On the claim that 63 children (9 boys, 54 girls), as young as 6 years old were recruited and used by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups such as Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS) (45) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) (18), in Borno State mostly from abduction, the Permanent Mission is aware of the wide-spread cases of abduction of children by Boko Haram-affiliated and splinter groups, in Borno State. The Permanent Mission wishes to observe that the draft does not state whether the allegations were verified or not. Nonetheless, the government of Nigeria is deeply concerned about the recruitment and use of children by these terrorist groups.

On the claims that 45 boys were detained by the Nigerian Security Forces (NSF) for alleged association with armed groups and also the claim that all except two children were released following United Nations intervention, Mission wishes to refute that claim in its entirety as it does not represent the true position of the facts. In this regard, the Permanent Mission requests the deletion of this paragraph since the claims are unverified.

On the claims that the United Nations was unable to verify the number of children in detention due to denial of access to detention facilities, the Nigerian government finds it difficult to reconcile this with the earlier claim that 45 boys were detained by the Nigerian Security forces. It is important to highlight that the Nigerian government has never denied any access to the United Nations officials or relevant stakeholders during the reporting period. It has rather facilitated access and security to those who comply with established national laws and standard protocols.

On the claims that the United Nations verified the killing of (34) and maiming of (54) of 88 children (53 boys, 34 girls, one sex unknown), as young as two years of age attributed to ISWAP (57), unidentified perpetrators (19), NSF (7) and JAS (5) in Borno (77) and Yobe (11) states, mainly from gunshots, the Nigerian government was unable to confirm the numbers. It is nonetheless deeply concerned about the killings and maiming no matter the number. However, the attribution of seven of those killings and maiming to the NSF seems to be contrived and disingenuous as it unfairly accuses the NSF of the commission of a heinous crime of which it has not been shown to be guilty of.

With regards to the claim that the United Nations verified sexual violence against 53 girls, including forced marriage (50) and rape (3), by JAS (44), ISWAP (6) and NSF (3) in Borno, Mission was unable to confirm the numbers especially the violations attributed to the NSF. Though Mission is aware of the wide-spread cases of sexual violence against women and girls by Boko Haram, JAS and ISWAP, nonetheless, it is important to highlight that the government is also deeply concerned about any reported cases of sexual violence against women and girls both in conflict and non-conflict areas or situation.

Mission wishes to state that sexual violence has been a feature of the violations of human rights committed by members of these terrorist groups, as non-state actors that are waging a war against the state. In addition, it is important to highlight that government frowns seriously on the issue of sexual violence and has been prompt in investigating and punishing any serious allegations of violations. Arrested Boko Haram, JAS, and ISWAP suspects who were accused of having subjected girls to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriage, and rape have also been prosecuted or being prosecuted. Same applies to members of NSF.

With regards to the claim that there were fifteen verified attacks on schools (4) and hospitals (11) all attributed to ISWAP (12), JAS (2) and unidentified perpetrators (1) in Yobe (8), Borno (5) and Adamawa (2) states which resulted in destruction and looting, Mission finds it disturbing and worrisome as its educational facilities continue to be under attack. The Permanent Mission wishes to underscore that Nigeria's commitment to protect education from attack goes beyond professing an ideal. In the last decade, Nigeria has faced real attacks on schools, educational institutions as well as hospitals. In essence, Nigeria is currently faced with a situation where non-state actors capitalise on the priority the country accords education by targeting vulnerable learners and educators for ransom.

It is against this backdrop that Nigeria launched the Safe School Initiative in 2014 in response to the growing number of attacks on schools, including the kidnapping of more than 200 girls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria.

Given the pride of place and high priority the government of Nigeria accords to education, the Safe School initiative is a major step in driving global action to protect the learning environment. While the attacks have reduced considerably, Nigeria, however, believes that one attack against a school or hospital is already bad enough. Therefore, Nigeria would continue to do its best to protect its schools and hospitals from attack and that was why Nigeria in 2021 in collaboration with Argentina, Norway, Spain, the African Union, and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack hosted the 4th International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration in Abuja.

In paragraph 7 of the draft report, it claims that some 211 children (115 boys, 96 girls), as young as three years old, were abducted by ISWAP (110) and JAS (101) in Borno (167), Adamawa (43) and Yobe (1) states, and that most children (122) escaped or were released, whilst 89 remained unaccounted for. Once again, the draft does not state whether or not the allegations were verified. If these were unverified, then this paragraph has no place in such a serious report as this. The Permanent Mission will therefore request its deletion.

With regards to the claim of fourteen verified incidents of denial of humanitarian access attributed to ISWAP (13) and NSF (1) in Borno (11) and Yobe (3) states, Mission cannot speak for ISWAP. However, the Permanent Mission agrees with the report in its observation regarding the attribution to the NSF, given that the very fact of armed conflict would necessarily imply some form of access-limitation, primarily for safety and security reasons. Nevertheless, the Nigerian Security Forces (NSF), in the discharge of their responsibilities, continue to work cooperatively and collaboratively with every relevant stakeholder, humanitarian and otherwise, to facilitate access to all in a safe and secure manner.

Mr. Chair,

As I conclude, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the Nigerian Government to the promotion and protection of the rights of every child. Our children represent our hope. They represent our joy. They represent our future. They also typify vulnerability. Violence against children as well as the phenomenon of children and armed conflict is not only traumatic for the affected children but also constitute a tragedy for the world. Accordingly, we, as members of the global community, must do whatever it takes to extricate children from the shackles and consequences of this evil. We must rescue, rehabilitate, resettle and reintegrate children affected by conflict. This is what Nigeria does, has been doing, and continues to do.

In the light of the foregoing, the Government of Nigeria, therefore, requests that the report takes account of these important clarifications, as doing otherwise, would be a disservice to the country. If published as it is, it would constitute a lack of recognition of Nigeria's invaluable contributions towards the protection of the rights of the child.

I thank you.
