Mr President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, a cross-regional Network composed of Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Switzerland, Thailand, my own country Slovenia, and South Africa as an observer.

The Human Security Network is an informal group of States that advocates a people-centered, holistic approach to human security, complementing the more traditional understanding of national and international security.

Let me thank today’s briefers for their statements and the Malaysian Presidency for convening the open debate on children and armed conflict, an issue which has long been a priority for the Network.

20 years after Graça Machel presented the report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, the Human Security Network observes with growing concern the increasing numbers of children that are negatively affected by situation of armed conflict and other situations as referenced in the latest report of the Secretary General and the statements of today’s briefers. Millions of children continue to be caught amidst armed conflicts, not only as bystanders but as recruits and as targets of multiple acts of violence such as attacks against schools and hospitals, abduction, mutilations, sexual abuse as well as hunger, disease and exploitation as tools of war.

We also note with concern that according to the latest report of the Secretary General, attacks on schools and hospitals as well as related personnel were prevalent in 2015 which requires our immediate and collective attention. In this regard, we call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 2143 which contains important provisions to ensure and protect the right of education for children.
Child protection in all situations remains the responsibility of every State in accordance with obligations under international law. It is essential that national accountability mechanisms are strengthened in order to ensure that perpetrators, including members of non-State armed groups, members of national armed forces and peacekeepers who commit grave violations against children are brought to justice. It is the responsibility of all States to investigate and prosecute those responsible for violations against children, to place pressure on the perpetrators, and to support the necessary measures to address these violations.

It is necessary for the United Nations to work in close cooperation with concerned governments. In many armed conflicts where non-state actors commit horrific crimes against children, the United Nations must be fully aware of the sensitivities on the ground and needs to work closely with the concerned governments to address the situation and provide assistance to children and their families.

The International Criminal Court may also have an important role to play in this regard. The existence of grave violations against children in armed conflict must be determined impartially and objectively based on facts on the ground. The ICC convictions and sentencing mark a critical turning point for all children victims of rape and murder in armed conflict as it acknowledges rape as a weapon of war and command responsibility.

Monitoring as well as accurate and timely reporting is crucial to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for violations. The Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, established in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 1612, 1882, 1998 and 2225, is a key mechanism of the UN’s children protection mandate. The integrity and credibility of this Mechanism as well as the authority of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict must be strengthened and supported, especially through engaging with Member States and using accurate, objective, reliable and verifiable information thus ensuring impartial and evidence-based listing of perpetrators.

The Human Security Network furthermore highlights the importance of focusing on the prevention of future violations, and rehabilitating and reintegrating those who have been affected by conflict through medical and psychosocial care.

Reiterating the call of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in May 2016, we would like to urge for universal ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

We remain deeply concerned for the safety of children in all armed conflicts and therefore urge all member states to keep the concerns of children and their wellbeing high on the international agenda.
Mr President,

Allow me to add few words in my national capacity. Slovenia aligns itself with the statements delivered by the representative of the EU and of Canada of behalf of the Group of friends of Children and armed conflict.

Slovenia believes that with effective implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, based on reliable and proved facts, we can make concrete steps to protect children from the impact of armed conflicts. We cannot allow political or other pressures impact this mechanism. Standards for listing and delisting parties to the conflict in the annex should be impartial and equal for all who commit grave violations against children.

We share the concerns of the impact violent extremism has on children and communities and that children associated with armed groups are in some situations detained for extended periods of time without due process.

Slovenia has been concerned by the prevalence of attacks against schools and hospitals. In April 2016 we expressed support to the Oslo Safe Schools Declaration and Lucens Guidelines to Protect Schools and Universities from military use in armed conflict. We encourage other countries, which have not yet done so, to support and implement these Guidelines.

We believe that education presents an important element of psychosocial rehabilitation of children affected by armed conflict. Therefore we are supporting several projects carried out by a Slovenian humanitarian non-profit organization ITF Enhancing Human security and Slovenian NGOs, aimed at addressing needs of children in Lebanon, Palestine and Ukraine.

Last autumn many people, including children, have sought refuge in Slovenia. We highly value the cooperation with UNICEF, which offers psychosocial and other assistance to these children. In order to foster an atmosphere of tolerance among all children in our educational system, we have also drawn up a work-sheet entitled Children Refugees to raise awareness on the rights of refugee children, which is based on the project "Our Rights" on human rights education of children.

Mr. President,

The latest Secretary-General's Annual Report reminds us that we have not yet succeeded to protect children from grave violations committed against them in conflicts. We are appalled that in many of the 20 countries addressed in the report the situation has actually deteriorated. We call for a scaling up of efforts to protect the most vulnerable; the youngest among us, and with them our future.

Thank you for your attention.