

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict Contribution to the Universal Periodic Review on South Sudan, March 2015

1. Background

South Sudan has been on the agenda of the Security Council for Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) since its independence in 2011. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA/in Opposition are listed in the annexes of the Secretary General Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict for recruitment and use, as well as killing and maiming of children. The White Army is also listed for recruitment and use of children. The SPLA has been listed for recruitment and use of children since 2005, then an armed group. South Sudan is one of the seven countries involved in the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, which aims to end recruitment and use of children by Government forces by 2016. South Sudan Government signed an action plan to end recruitment and use of children by the SPLA in 2012, to which it recommitted in June 2014. In December 2015, the SPLA/IO signed an action plan to end recruitment and use as well as killing and maiming of children. All gains made by the SPLA in the implementation of their action plan were erased with the conflict that erupted in December 2013.

The Secretary General issued a specific country report on children and armed conflict in South Sudan in December 2014. Conclusions were adopted by the Security Council Working Group on CAAC on 12 May 2015.

2. Recommendations

- Welcome the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in January 2015 and the integration of specific child protection provisions in the peace agreement signed in August 2015. Call on the Government to sign the CRC optional protocols, in particular the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC).
- Express deep concern at continuing grave violations committed against children by all parties to conflict, particularly killing and maiming, recruitment and use, and sexual violence. Express concern that the SPLA, Government security forces and allied militia accounted for the vast majority of these violations in 2015. Call upon the Government and all parties to conflict to immediately stop all grave violations against children.
- Express deep concern that the recruitment and use of children have continued unabated and that thousands of children are currently associated with all parties to the conflict. Express deep concern that children have participated in hostilities, sometimes on the frontlines in the Greater Upper Nile region and that some children have reportedly been ordered to kill. Call upon the Government and parties to conflict, including the SPLA/IO, to immediately and unconditionally release all children from their ranks and hand them over to child protection partners.

- Express deep concern at the scale and brutality of the killing and maiming of children, particularly in connection to the SPLA military offensive that started in April 2015 in Unity State.
- Express deep concern at the level of rape and other forms of sexual violence affecting children. Accounts were received of rape and gang-rape of girls who were killed when they resisted or tried to escape. Accounts of boys sexually mutilated and castrated were also received. Sexual violence has been widely used as a tactic of war targeting the women and children of certain communities suspected to be supporting or sympathizing with the opposition. Sexual violence has become a form of collective punishment and a way to instill fear and humiliation.
- Call upon the Government and the SPLA/IO to abide by their commitments to protect children as envisioned by the August 2015 peace agreement and the action plans that they have signed with the United Nations.
- Urge the Government to put an end to generalized impunity, bring the perpetrators of these serious and heinous crimes before justice, and hold them accountable. Call upon the Government to accelerate the process of establishing the Hybrid Court foreseen by the August 2015 peace agreement.