



**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the
United Nations, Ambassador Munir Akram at the United Nations
Security Council Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
(05 July 2023)**

Mr. President,

I would like to thank the UK presidency for organizing this year's annual debate of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

2. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba, and other briefers for their insightful statements.

Mr. President,

3. Pakistan shares deep concern expressed in the Secretary-General's latest report, which portrays a harrowing account of 27,180 verified grave violations against children. A staggering 1 in 6 of the world's children currently live in countries or areas affected by conflicts. It is evident that we need to do a lot more to ensure the safety, welfare and prosperity of our children.

Mr. President,

4. It does not take much to imagine the horrible experiences the children suffer and endure in situations of armed conflict.

5. In particular, children suffer immensely in situations of foreign occupation. This is, therefore the most visible anomaly in the report that the two blatant situations of foreign occupations perpetrated by Israel on one hand and by India in Jammu and Kashmir on the other are not listed in the report and are given a free pass. We just heard from the distinguished Ambassador of Palestine about the situation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the killing of children that is happening as we speak in Jenin.

Mr. President,

6. I must also point out to the visible suppression of the children of Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian occupation forces. An entire generation of Kashmiri children has grown up in a climate of unspeakable fear, violence and repression. The human rights and humanitarian situation of children in IIOJK has aggravated since 05 August 2019, when India unilaterally and illegally passed legislation to annex the occupied and disputed territory. We still remember the gut-

wrenching picture of a three-year-old Kashmiri boy sitting in shock on the dead body of his grandfather after he was killed by the Indian forces.

7. It is estimated that 13,000 Kashmiri children and youth have been arbitrarily captured by the 900,000 Indian occupation forces in Jammu and Kashmir. Thousands of innocent Kashmiris, including women and children, have been killed in "fake encounters" and staged "cordon-and-search" operations. Children and youth have been subjected to torture and ill-treatment in order to elicit information or "extract" confessions or secure commitment not to participate in the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination and freedom from India's illegal occupation.

Mr. President,

8. Last year, Pakistan released a comprehensive and well-researched Dossier covering accounts - corroborated by audio and video evidence - of 3432 cases of war crimes, including against women and children, perpetrated by senior officers of the Indian occupying forces in occupied Jammu and Kashmir since 1989. These officials must be held accountable.

Mr. President,

9. The Secretary-General's latest report has rightly urged India to implement measures, including the prohibition of the use of lethal and non-lethal force on children, ending the "use of pellet guns" and preventing all forms of ill-treatment of children in detention, and protection of children from sexual offences.

10. We would also urge the Office of the SRSG to demand the release of the 13000 abducted Kashmiri Youth whose whereabouts are not known and who we are told are subjected to torture in order to ensure that their families do not join the freedom struggle. It is only when India implements these obligations under international humanitarian law that it should be omitted from the report and the list in the report.

Mr. President,

11. Pakistan, as one of the earliest signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, remains fully alive to its responsibilities under the Convention. We have undertaken wide-ranging legal, policy and operational measures focusing on protection of children in security

situations. Earlier this year, Pakistan constituted a National Committee on Children protection and designated a national focal person in this regard. We have also recently endorsed the Vancouver's principles on Peacekeeping and Prevention of Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers.

12. Pakistan supports the mandate of the SRSG to deal with situations of children in armed conflict. However, we believe that the legal parameter of the SRSG's mandate must be scrupulously respected. The singular focus should address the situations of "armed conflicts". In that context, my delegation wishes to state for the record that references to Pakistan in the Secretary-General's report do not fall within the purview of its established mandate.

13. Despite our principled position on the SRSG's mandate, we will continue to engage with the SRSG's office to further strengthen child protection in Pakistan in line with our national framework and international obligations.

I thank you.