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I. Executive Summary

The Interactive Dialogue was opened by Ms. Peggy Hicks, presenting the High Commissioner's of Human Rights (HC) analytical report on best practices and main challenges in the protection and promotion of the rights of women and children in conflict and post conflict situations (ID).

The report is based on reports from 50 states and focuses on analysing how states can end impunity and ensure justice for women and children. Ms. Higgs highlighted that the main issue lies in the implementation of measures, however, she also named positive examples of remedies that took age and trauma into account to aid children and women in affected areas.

Following this report, Mr. Bernard Duhaime, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence (SR), shared his remarks on the discussion. He requested states to address that gender and age have implications on the effect during conflict and shed light on the impacts that loss of education, healthcare, housing and livelihoods have.

The interactive dialogue (ID) which followed, addressed the overall issue of conflict that relates to gender and age, the extraordinary effect on women and children this has.

Sexual conflict related violence and exploitation as well as the recruitment and persecution of child soldiers were frequently pointed towards.

However, states, as well as the report by the HC both showed that the issue in the protection of women and children in conflict or post-conflict does not lie in the legal frameworks, but rather its implementation. Therefore making it clear that international frameworks need to be respected by states and non-state actors alike.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) aligns itself with the report of the HC and the position of the SR Bernard Duhaime. While conflict situations are always with devastating effect, women and children are most vulnerable to targeted violations of their human rights, as they are instrumentalised to destabilise the enemy.

Therefore, international actors must fulfill their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, to prevent women and children from these inhumane losses.

II. Background

In 2024, the number of state-based armed conflicts worldwide reached a historic high of 61, the highest number recorded since the Uppsala Conflict Data Program began collecting data in 1946. These conflicts have profound and disproportionate consequences for women and children, who face heightened risks of killing and injury, displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, loss of access to education and healthcare, and other violations of their human rights.

Children are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of armed conflict. More than 473 million children, meaning more than one in six children globally, are estimated to live in areas affected by conflict. In 2024, the United Nations verified 41,370 grave violations against children, representing a 25 per cent increase from the previous year and the highest number ever recorded through the UN's monitoring mechanism. These violations include the killing and maiming of children, recruitment or use by armed forces and armed groups, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access.

Women and girls are likewise disproportionately affected by conflict, both through direct violence and through the erosion of their rights and access to essential services. Conflict increases exposure to sexual and gender-based violence, displacement, food insecurity, and barriers to healthcare and education, while existing gender inequalities can deepen during crises. The number of women and girls living in close proximity to armed conflict has also reached unprecedented levels: recent estimates put the figure at around 700 million women and girls living within 50 kilometres of an active armed conflict.

The effects of conflict do not end when active hostilities cease. In post-conflict settings, women and children may continue to face displacement, insecurity, trauma, disrupted education and healthcare, family separation, economic hardship, and limited access to justice and reparations. Protecting their rights therefore requires attention not only to preventing violations during conflict, but also to ensuring meaningful participation, protection, accountability and access to services throughout recovery and reconstruction.

III. Exhaustive Summary of the Interactive Dialogue

1. Report of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (HC)



Ms. Peggy Hicks presented the Report by the High Commissioner of Human Rights. The report is based on 50 submissions from states and focuses on how states can end impunity and ensure justice for women and children. She opened her presentation with a warning on the current situation that women and children live in, and what it means for their daily lives. She points to the disproportionate effect that conflict has on the lives of this group through targeted attacks on education, food provisions, sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Especially concerning are current conflict situations such as in Sudan, Ukraine and Palestine. The report calls on states to apply standards and translate them into protection and reachable justice, as well as legal aid. To be effective, remedy procedures need to be reachable and account for trauma and age, and women and children must have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in safeguarding procedures. Ms. Hicks points out further that victims need to be recognised as such to ensure protection, highlighting specifically the importance of protection for women human rights defenders. Children that have been born from conflict related sexual violence must be recognised as such.

Further, she explains that reparation must receive funding and guarantee of non recurrence, to restore rights and trust in public institutions. She underlined the urgency of action considering the current global conflict status. To shape peace and recovery, states must promote exchange of practical experience.

Following her presentation, Mr. Bernard Duhaime, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence (SR), shared his findings and position. He urged for states to address the implications gender and age have in conflict such as through enforced disappearances, loss of education, healthcare, housing and livelihoods, child soldier recruitment and sexual violation. He mentioned targeted attacks on schools in hospitals in conflict areas such as Ukraine, Sudan and Palestine.

Additionally, the SR pointed to the sustainability of gendered post-conflict resolutions, pointing out that a return to discrimination, dependency or exclusion for women, shall not be considered a measure of success.

As a positive example he mentioned *General Recommendation Nr. 33 on women's access to justice* (2015) and the *Convention on The Rights of The Child* on offering guidance to respect. However, gender based crimes prevail, bringing harm to justice, showing that what it needs is for international frameworks to be respected. He goes further in explaining that states must document gender based violence including domestic violence, challenge stereotypes, and abolish narratives that perpetuate discrimination. Later, he additionally points to the principle of intersectionality, warning of the cumulative consequences for women and children who are also part of another minority.

Focussing on post-conflict protection, Mr. Duhaime explains his research on transgenerational harm, meaning, how children and later generations are effected by conflict, especially those children born from conflict related sexual violence. He therefore asks from states to ensure targeted safeguards to protect children and women. The international community, he explained further, must respect its commitments on peace and security for women and children in zones of armed conflict such as Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, putting specific emphasis on the issue of political alliances where they protect perpetrators. The consequences of which, according to Mr. Duhaime, are borne by women and children.

2. Statements by Groups of Countries

The Republic of Poland on behalf of the Lublin Triangle



The Republic of Poland spoke on behalf of the Lublin Triangle and pointed to the violations of the Russian Federation in Ukraine on the rights of children and women. The representative criticised the abduction of children, displacements, sexual violations and the enforced disappearance of family members. He called for justice for the victims that is centred around the children and women affected as well as for identification and persecution of perpetrators. Therefore, he urged for the already collected evidence to be transferred into justice and remedy. He called for international and national accountability mechanisms.

Belgium on behalf of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict



The representative of Belgium, speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict focussed on the specific needs and own rights that are given to children. He

pointed out that 38.558 grave violations against children affecting 24.174 children have been reported, which are in disregard of both international human rights law and international humanitarian rights law.

The speaker called on states to respect their obligations and to give child survivors access to support systems that cater to their specific needs while holding perpetrators responsible in child sensitive investigations. Finally, he called for the protection of schools and hospitals.

The Republic of Estonia on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic states



The Republic of Estonia spoke on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic states. The speaker pointed out the disproportionate effect that armed conflict has on women and children and condemned the violations committed by conflict parties against this group. In particular, she mentioned the recruitment of children, and the use of mines, which end up maiming and killing children at a high rate. She called for women and children to be at the centre of conflict resolution and peacebuilding as well as in leadership positions of decision- and peacemaking. Lastly, the speaker called for accountability of human rights and humanitarian rights law violations through reparations.

The European Union



The Speaker for the European Union (EU) pointed towards the disproportional effect that conflict has for women and children as well. She also pointed out that this group makes up 70% of civilian fatalities in conflict situations, additionally falling victim to killings, forced displacements, health and education facilities. The speaker warned from preexisting stereotypes based on gender and age to stand in the way of the full equal and meaningful participation she called for. Lastly, she mentioned the EU action plan on human rights and democracy, as an example how women can be included in peacemaking.

3. Statements by other States

Afghanistan



The Speaker for Afghanistan thanks the HC for their report and findings on women and children in conflict and points to the Situation in Afghanistan. He highlights that, since the Taliban takeover, women and girls live under harsh restrictions on their movement and freedom following the Taliban's decrees, specifically Decree Nr. 12 and 18, strengthening discrimination and legalising child marriage.

He urges for accountability of perpetrators and an Independent Investigative Mission in Afghanistan in cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC) as well.

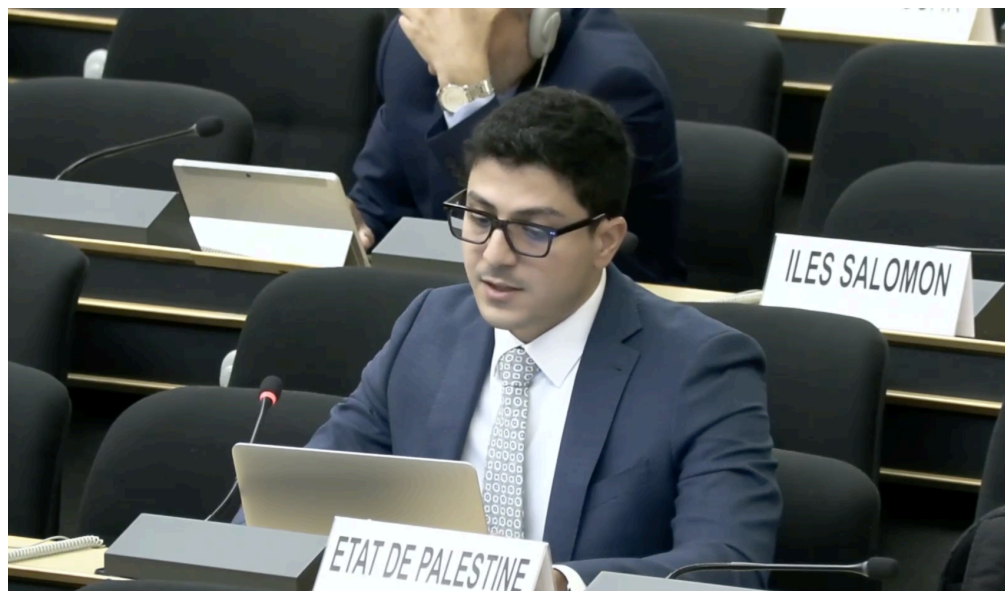
He urges support for women led civil societies and that other states and institutions only engage with Afghanistan under the condition of restoring women and children.

Australia



Australia highlights its women and peace security agenda, protecting women and children's rights as well as working with survivors. Additionally the speaker points out that through a flagship partnership with the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada and the Kingdom of Netherlands, four Taliban officials were sanctioned. She highlights that states need to ensure live saving humanitarian assistance and asks the HC and SR how consultations can translate into justice.

Palestine



The speaker for Palestine started by naming as the central persisting problem the gap of international legal framework and implementation in Palestine, where, despite women and children being exposed to killings, forced displacements, violence, and attacks on health infrastructure. The speaker warned further that for Palestine, impunity enables recurrence of

forced displacement and ethnic cleansing. He pointed out that, with a clear legal framework and violations effectively and reliably documented, the problem lies within the enforcement. Therefore, the speaker stated that accountability, persecution, comprehensive reparations, guarantees or non-reoccurrence and concrete actions by states are required.

The Republic of Colombia



The speaker for the Republic of Colombia started his contribution by stating that one in six children have been living in conflict situations, a situation which continues to worsen and may amount to losing a generation. He urged that no state or armed group should put a gun in the hands of a child and instead the rights of minors related to conflict should be restored by treating child soldiers as victims of human trafficking, instead of collaborators. He ends by underlining that a children's place is not at war.

4. Civic Societies and Non-Governmental Organisations

Lastly, Civic Societies (CSO) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) raised concern on the gaps between the existing standards and their implementation, suggesting for the law to be reviewed to be more effective.

The remedy for violations against the rights of women and children around conflict, according to the speakers, remains an issue of accountability. To solve this issue and create women and children-centred solutions, women and girls in particular need to be given opportunities of meaningful participation in the peacebuilding process. This includes to address structural norms and impunity that enable gender based sexual violence in the first place, including the exclusion of women from security and justice institutions. In regards to this, concerns of the safety of female UN staff were raised as well, especially, but not only, Afghanistan was frequently mentioned in this regard. Organisations pointed to the importance of survivor centres being funded sufficiently, so survivors would be able to access safe and meaningful recovery of justice and take up their transformative role in peacebuilding and justice recovery.

Further, at the centre of statements were the conditions of treatment of women's reproductive and gender specific health care. Besides targeted severe conflict related sexual and reproductive violence, forced and child marriages, healthcare of pregnant and birthing women was mentioned as being of particular urgency. A recent study by the UN-Population fund was cited, which mentioned 5500 pregnant and breastfeeding women in Gaza being at risk. Also in Gaza, women, according to the speakers, are exposed to starvation, displacement and the complete collapse of the healthcare system.

In conflict and post-conflict areas, speakers described women being forced to give birth in overcrowded shelters and unequipped tents, since often hospitals are out of reach or not functioning. Mentioned where urges for immediate action for women and newborn children in breach of death.

CSOs and NGOs raised the issue of the conditions and treatment of children associated with armed groups, to be treated as victims and be provided support, which is to be age and trauma appropriate, rather than punishment for their involuntary involvement in the conflict.

IV. Geneva International Centre for Justice Position

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) aligns itself with the report by the HC and is deeply concerned by the disproportionate implications that conflict has on women's and children's lives. Targeted attacks on infrastructure serving women and children are concerning and relate to the central role women play in a society, to reproduction and care standards. To hurt women and children means to hurt the future of a country.

Therefore, GICJ believes that women and children need to be at the centre of peacebuilding. And peacebuilding needs to address all harmful gender norms and roles. To achieve this it is pertinent that women are being given their place in the peacebuilding process through leadership and security positions. Children, and specifically those that have been forcefully involved in conflict, need to be treated as victims of human trafficking and provided with age appropriate psychological, methodological and physiological support.

The actual perpetrators of war, those in official positions and those on the ground, instead need to be held accountable through survivor oriented persecution that leads to trust recovery in public institutions and justice. Further, GICJ believes that gender and age implications in healthcare need to be addressed in humanitarian aid and establishment of survivor centres.

The structural norms that enable gender based violence and impunity for perpetrators will remain as long as women continue to be excluded from security and justice institutions.

Lastly, intersectional discrimination of those women and children that are also living in poverty, are ill or disabled or part of another discriminated group, should be taken seriously and countered through mechanisms that allow lasting justice.



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