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**Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion
and protection of the rights of children**

Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

Summary

The present report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [80/190](#). The report seizes the opportunity of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations study on violence against children to take stock of how violence against children has evolved since the study's publication. While acknowledging the substantial challenges that remain, the report highlights the advances achieved and stresses that progress is possible. It outlines the wide multi-stakeholder mobilization undertaken by the Special Representative and strong actions that have been taken to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, in all settings.

* [A/81/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. Guided by General Assembly resolution [62/141](#), by which the Assembly established the mandate, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children is a global, independent advocate for the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children. In its resolutions [76/147](#) and [78/187](#), the Assembly reaffirmed its support for the work of the Special Representative. The Assembly has recognized the progress achieved and the role of the mandate in promoting further implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children, and in supporting Member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Assembly has also noted with appreciation the Special Representative's leadership in the follow-up to the United Nations global study on children deprived of liberty and has encouraged the Special Representative to continue her work in this area. In its resolution [80/190](#), the Assembly further renewed the mandate of the Special Representative for the period 2026–2029, also noting the role of the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children, under the auspices of her Office, as both a contribution to, and an accelerator of, the prevention and protection of children against violence.

2. Seizing the opportunity of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations study on violence against children, the present report takes stock of how violence against children has evolved since the study's publication. It highlights key trends and the increasing scale and complexity of violence, due to ongoing and overlapping crises and the rapid evolution of technology-facilitated violence and crimes against children. The report also highlights the unprecedented multi-stakeholder mobilization and concrete actions that have been taken to address these complex, cross-sectoral and cross-border challenges, outlining the role and results of the mandate since the current Special Representative took office.

II. United Nations study on violence against children: 20 years on

A. Rapidly evolving landscape of violence against children

3. The United Nations study on violence against children, published in 2006, was a milestone. It transformed the global understanding of violence against children, highlighting that it is a widespread, preventable and unjustifiable violation of children's rights. Critically, it was the first United Nations study to systematically engage children and young people across the globe as active participants, recognizing their experiences, perspectives and recommendations as essential to understanding and addressing violence. The United Nations study demonstrated that violence against children occurs in every country and across all settings – the home, schools, care and justice institutions, workplaces and communities – and called for a comprehensive approach grounded in prevention, protection, participation and accountability. Its overarching recommendations included the development of national strategies, legal prohibition of all forms of violence, stronger data and research, investment in child protection systems, and the active participation of children in decisions affecting them. The United Nations study also called for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

4. Twenty years later, important progress has been achieved in implementing the recommendations of the United Nations study, including through the mandate's advocacy and support. However, significant challenges remain. Violence against

children in the settings described in the United Nations study has not been eliminated. New forms of violence have emerged, while long-standing forms of violence have evolved. The interlinked vulnerabilities faced by children have expanded worldwide, exposing children to various forms of violence in various settings.

5. The Special Representative has consistently placed a spotlight on persistent and emerging concerns through her annual and thematic reports, as acknowledged by the General Assembly.¹ These reports have charted some of the most crucial developments regarding violence against children. The reports' thematic priorities reflect the concerns expressed by the children with whom the Special Representative engaged during consultations, country visits, regional meetings and global forums, as well as by Member States, civil society and other stakeholders. In examining these themes in depth, the Special Representative has highlighted key lessons that help to accelerate action to better prevent and respond to violence against children.

The COVID-19 pandemic

6. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic highlighted how public health emergencies and the mitigation measures taken to prevent the spread of the pandemic can increase children's exposure to violence, while disrupting access to essential services and reporting mechanisms.² During the pandemic, the provision of essential violence prevention and child protection services to 1.8 billion children living in 104 countries was curtailed, while school closures disrupted the education of more than 1.6 billion learners worldwide.³ What began as a public health crisis evolved into a children's rights crisis. The school closures, movement restrictions, isolation, overcrowding and high levels of stress and anxiety increased the likelihood of children experiencing and witnessing violence at home. While online connectivity provided opportunities to maintain learning and access to some services, it also increased children's exposure to online harms. The pandemic demonstrated that child protection services, mental health and psychosocial support and child-sensitive reporting mechanisms are not optional: they are essential and life-saving services that must remain operational during crises.

Humanitarian, climate and economic crises

7. Multiple, overlapping and unprecedented humanitarian crises are driving children's vulnerability to violence worldwide. Almost 19 per cent of the world's children now live in conflict zones, a sharp increase from 10 per cent in the 1990s.⁴ Close to 50 million children had been displaced across and within countries due to conflict and violence globally by the end of 2024, with the global number of displaced children nearly tripling between 2010 and 2024.⁵ Children affected by conflict face heightened risks of sexual violence and life-long disabilities as a consequence of their being subjected to violence. Climate change and natural disasters also act as threat multipliers that exacerbate protection risks, with 1.1 billion children now exposed to at least three overlapping climate hazards.⁶ Taken together, these crises magnify existing vulnerabilities and place children at higher risk of negative coping

¹ See General Assembly resolutions 74/133, 76/147, 78/187 and 80/190.

² See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/article/leaders-statement-violence-against-children-hidden-crisis-covid-19-pandemic>.

³ See <https://www.unicef.org/reports/protecting-children-from-violence-covid-19-disruptions-in-prevention-and-response-services-2020> and <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-global-education-crisis>.

⁴ See <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/stories/2024-one-worst-years-unicefs-history-children-conflict>.

⁵ See <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/>.

⁶ See <https://www.unicef.org/reports/childrens-climate-risk-report-2026>.

mechanisms. The key lesson that has emerged is the need to embed key services – including child protection, social protection, physical health, mental health and psychosocial support, education, justice, access to birth registration and a legal identity – into disaster preparedness, displacement responses, climate adaptation and resilience-building efforts.

8. Rising food and energy prices, inflationary pressures and broader economic uncertainty have also emerged as significant drivers of children's vulnerability worldwide.⁷ Children living in poverty have been disproportionately affected. Economic shocks are contributing to both monetary poverty and food poverty, when an estimated 412 million children already live in extreme monetary poverty, and 1 in 4 children under the age of 5 are living in severe child food poverty.⁸ Poverty and economic precarity lead to children and families adopting negative coping strategies, such as those outlined above. While many countries have expanded social protection measures, child-sensitive budgeting, cash transfer programmes and poverty reduction initiatives, the depth and reach of these initiatives remain limited. Only 23.9 per cent of children are covered by social protection, meaning that 1.8 billion children are not covered.⁹ The lessons are clear: investments in child-sensitive social protection, including comprehensive cash, care and protection services for children and their caregivers, are essential to protect them from monetary and food poverty and reduce children's exposure to violence.

Rapidly evolving digital environment

9. One of the most profound transformations since the United Nations study was published has been the rapid expansion of violence against children in the digital environment. At the time of publication of the United Nations study, Internet access was limited and digital risks received only marginal attention. Today, 1 in 3 Internet users is a child and digital technologies have become an integral part of children's daily lives. While connectivity has created unprecedented opportunities for learning, participation and social interaction, it has also generated new forms of violence and exploitation. These include sexual exploitation and abuse; cyberbullying; harmful content; promotion of suicide and self-harm; hate speech; misinformation; privacy violations; fraud and identity theft; and technology-facilitated crimes such as trafficking and recruitment by criminal and armed groups. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are creating additional risks. Existing data underline the urgency of tackling this development. For example, more than 300 million children a year are victims of online sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁰ At least 1.2 million children disclosed having had their images manipulated by artificial intelligence into sexually explicit deepfakes in the past year.¹¹ A poll carried out by the Office of the Special Representative with over 30,000 children across all regions in 2025 found that 66 per cent think that cyberbullying has increased.¹²

10. Online violence is one of the most rapidly intensifying dimensions of child protection, characterized by its global reach, speed, anonymity and the difficulty of regulating the online environment. The Special Representative has consistently highlighted that online violence can no longer be treated as a separate issue; rather, it

⁷ See <https://data.unicef.org/resources/sofi-2025/>.

⁸ See <https://www.unicef.org/stories/child-poverty> and <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/1-4-children-globally-live-severe-child-food-poverty-due-inequity-conflict-and>.

⁹ ILO, *World Social Protection Report 2024–26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition* (Geneva, 2024).

¹⁰ See <https://www.childlight.org/newsroom/over-300-million-children-a-year-are-victims-of-online-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>.

¹¹ See <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/deepfake-abuse-is-abuse>.

¹² See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/news/To-Tackle-Cyberbullying-the-Entire-Online-Ecosystem-Must-Act-Faster-and-Together-to-Deliver-Child-Protection-by-Design>.

is increasingly intertwined with offline abuse, organized criminal activity and broader patterns of violence affecting children. A key lesson is that child safety and child privacy by design must be mandatory across all digital platforms and services, underpinned by robust child rights due diligence and reporting obligations.

Human and economic costs of violence against children

11. Another development since the publication of the United Nations study has been the increasing recognition of the severe impact of violence against children. Violence continues to cost children their lives, well-being and futures. In this regard, one of the most consistent concerns raised by children across all regions through their engagements with the Special Representative has been the devastating impact of violence on children's mental well-being. Witnessing or experiencing violence during their most formative years of development exposes children to toxic stress and makes them especially vulnerable to lasting mental health and psychosocial disorders, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavioural disorders, addictions, depression and suicidal ideation.¹³ One adolescent dies from suicide every 11 minutes.¹⁴ Beyond the impact on their mental health, child victims of violence may not reach their full education and health potential, which may limit their future income and productivity. The human cost of violence is devastating for children, families and societies. It can last a lifetime and even have intergenerational effects.

12. In addition to the human cost, violence against children imposes significant economic costs across countries. This holds true regardless of income status, region or cultural context. Governments incur direct costs in responding to the impact of violence on the short- and long-term health of child victims. The global cost of lost human capital associated with mental health conditions among children, for example, is estimated at \$393 billion annually.¹⁵ Despite the clear evidence regarding the huge human and economic cost of mental health issues, mental health and psychosocial support are still weak, including in humanitarian settings. In addition, there are other costs associated with the response of child protection and justice systems in providing rehabilitation to child victims of violence and enforcing the law against perpetrators. Violence against children also has indirect, long-term costs, as it undermines investments in children's health, education and other social sectors. National-level estimates of the overall direct and indirect costs of violence against children are staggeringly high, at up to 11 per cent of national gross domestic product (GDP). The annual costs of violence against children have been estimated to exceed annual government expenditure on health in several countries, in some cases by up to six times.¹⁶

13. Spending on measures to end violence against children has a high return on investment. In one recent national assessment, the cost of violence against children was assessed to be 85 times higher than the cost for that country of implementing its integrated strategy to end violence against children.¹⁷ The key lesson is the need to see spending on child protection and well-being involving all sectors and ministries – including health, education, justice, law enforcement, the interior, social welfare, child protection, information and communications, tourism and finance – not as additional expenditure, but as an essential investment in building human capital and ensuring people-centred development across the life cycle.

¹³ See [A/HRC/43/39](#).

¹⁴ See <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2021>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/media/348>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

20 years later: changed context but lasting relevance

14. Against the background of this changing landscape, the findings and recommendations of the United Nations study remain as relevant and compelling as ever. The road map set out by the United Nations study has not been fully implemented. While some States continue to advance reforms and strengthen protections for children, others face challenges in implementing good practices at scale, which may be due to various factors such as the shortage of resources, fiscal constraints, difficulties in ensuring coordination and institutional capacities, as well as reductions in bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

15. The road map set out in the United Nations study – rooted in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and echoed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals – can be achieved. As the United Nations study highlighted, all forms of violence against children are preventable. Through her engagement with key stakeholders across all regions, the Special Representative has observed many actions and growing momentum to tackle violence against children.

B. Preventing violence against children is possible

16. In order to end violence against children, it is necessary to adopt a cross-sectoral approach to tackling violence and its drivers, bearing in mind the intersectionality between violence against children and violence against women. This requires strengthening the entire child protection ecosystem – both online and offline – and investing in the integrated chain of services at the local level that children and families need.

17. Making this a reality requires a wide multi-stakeholder and cross-border mobilization. To this end, the Special Representative has engaged, mobilized and strengthened partnerships with Member States, local authorities and communities, regional organizations, parliamentarians, national human rights institutions, the United Nations system, the private sector, civil society and faith-based organizations, academia, children and youth, as well as survivors of violence.

Member States

18. The Special Representative's country engagement has been an integral part of these mobilization efforts. Since taking up her role in July 2019, the Special Representative has undertaken 65 visits at the country level to engage with national authorities in Member States, including 5 since her last report to the Assembly, and is preparing a further 10 visits for the remainder of 2026.¹⁸ Preparation for country visits includes close engagement with Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York, national authorities and United Nations country teams and regional teams, where relevant. Throughout her country visits and other country engagements since 2019, the Special Representative has met with 35 Heads of State or Government or their deputies, as well as with 728 ministers and senior officials across all sectors, in addition to 96 municipal and local governments. The sectors and ministries included

¹⁸ The Special Representative has visited and engaged with national authorities in: Andorra, Angola, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Chad, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Fiji, France, Gabon, Gambia, Greece, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Maldives, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zambia. In several cases, the Special Representative has undertaken follow-up visits.

economy, finance and planning, child protection, social protection, health, education, the interior and justice. The Special Representative's bilateral engagements have included 310 meetings with Permanent Representatives in New York and Geneva and regular high-level bilateral briefings with the Group of Friends for Children and Sustainable Development Goals in New York and the Group of Friends of the Rights of the Child in Geneva. The Special Representative has consistently followed up on her country visits and other high-level engagement with States, in close cooperation with United Nations country teams.

19. Throughout her engagement with Member States across all regions since taking office, the Special Representative has been encouraged by the actions taken to translate commitments to end violence against children into concrete change. Under the leadership of Heads of State or Government, more States are adopting whole-of-government approaches to prevent and respond to violence against children and its underlying drivers. Across regions, States are developing, revising and implementing costed national action plans to prevent and respond to violence, informed by participatory, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder processes. Efforts to strengthen legal and policy frameworks have also continued, including measures to prevent and prohibit violence, ensure accountability for perpetrators and strengthen protection and support for child victims.

20. Increasingly, attention is also being given to assessing the enormous economic and social costs of violence against children, as well as demonstrating the high return on investing in prevention and response measures. In addition, there have been increasing budget allocations for child protection and well-being services and the social service workforce. In parallel, child protection and well-being are increasingly being integrated into development plans at the national and local levels, as well as into cross-sectoral budgetary processes. Improvements have been made in the development and use of information management systems to guide decision-making and tools to track implementation and expenditure.

21. Progress has also been made in mapping and strengthening services at the local level through bottom-up and community-based approaches. These efforts have helped to establish more coordinated, accessible and context-specific services for children and their families. An increasing number of States are providing integrated services for children affected by violence, frequently alongside services for women, reflecting the interconnected nature of violence against both groups. At the same time, States continue to invest in strengthening the capacities of the social service workforce and other front-line professionals, while introducing and strengthening child safeguarding standards.

22. Many States are advancing child rights-based alternatives to deprivation of liberty, including diversion measures and restorative justice approaches. Significant investments have also been made in child-sensitive social protection, including comprehensive packages of cash, care and protection services for children and their caregivers. Furthermore, growing momentum has been observed in efforts to reform care systems, with a stronger emphasis on preventing unnecessary family separation, promoting deinstitutionalization and expanding family- and community-based alternative care.

23. Greater efforts are also being made to ensure that children and young people participate meaningfully in decisions that affect them. An increasing number of States are creating opportunities for children's views and experiences to inform the design, implementation and evaluation of laws, policies and services. Formal participation mechanisms have expanded at the local and national levels. Children's perspectives have further informed major global initiatives, including the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children and the Pathfinding Global Alliance.

Parliaments and national human rights institutions

24. Parliaments, parliamentarians and national human rights institutions play a central role in advancing child protection and well-being. They shape the legislative, policy, budget and accountability frameworks that safeguard children's rights. Since taking up office, the Special Representative has met with over 160 parliamentarians and addressed parliaments during her country visits, in addition to addressing 740 members of parliament from 130 countries at the 150th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Tashkent in April 2025. In particular, the Special Representative has supported the establishment or strengthening of dedicated parliamentary oversight mechanisms, including, most recently, the Special Parliamentary Committee on Child and Youth Well-being of Papua New Guinea. It was established as a permanent parliamentary committee in July 2026 with the unanimous support of parliament, the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition, following the Special Representative's visit in 2025.

25. The Special Representative has also engaged with 122 national human rights institutions during her country visits and meetings with regional networks and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions since 2019, highlighting their key role in monitoring the implementation of child rights obligations and in providing child-friendly complaint handling mechanisms. The Special Representative has advocated systematically for strengthening the mandate and independence of national human rights institutions, working closely with the relevant United Nations country teams, in line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and general comments No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Regional organizations

26. Intergovernmental regional organizations are key partners in global efforts to end violence against children. They play a critical role in adapting global norms and standards to their regional context, including through their standard-setting, monitoring, advocacy and awareness-raising roles.

27. The Special Representative has consistently engaged with the African Union Commission, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and regional economic communities, including through the development of an Common Position on Ending Violence against Children, adopted by the African Union, and the African Union model law on child online safety. Similarly, the Special Representative has participated actively in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) mechanisms to develop the next generation of ASEAN regional frameworks related to ending violence against children and violence against women, which are duly linked. In addition, the Special Representative participated in ministerial-level engagements of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation on progress achieved, challenges remaining and key actions needed to address violence against children in the region. The Special Representative has also supported efforts to embed child protection as a priority within the implementation of the Pacific Islands Forum 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

28. In Europe, the Special Representative contributed to the development and implementation of both the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022–2027) and the Strategy on the Rights of the Child of the European Union. Collaboration with the European Union in particular has included engagement around child participation platforms, integrated child protection systems, the implementation

of the European Child Guarantee and social guarantee, as well as new digital safety initiatives. In the Americas, the Special Representative was part of a recent regional consultation of children on children's experiences in the digital environment, co-organized by the Government of Mexico and the Inter-American Children's Institute of the Organization of American States, which culminated in a child-led call to action presenting concrete recommendations to policymakers and legislators to ensure safer digital environments. In addition, the Special Representative has maintained a strong partnership with the League of Arab States, the Arab Childhood Committee and the Arab Committee on ending violence against children, and other regional actors in addressing priority issues for children in the Middle East and North Africa.

United Nations system

29. Throughout her term, the Special Representative has mobilized the United Nations system as one in advancing the protection and well-being of children, including through her roles as Chair of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children and Chair of the United Nations task force on the global study on children deprived of liberty.

30. Within the context of the task force on children deprived of liberty, the Special Representative has supported progress by Member States in ensuring non-punitive approaches and alternatives to deprivation of liberty. Working closely with Member States, the Non-Governmental Organizations Panel on Children Deprived of Liberty, academia and other partners, the Special Representative has supported peer learning, the documentation of promising practices and advocacy related to deprivation of liberty in the administration of justice, in the context of immigration and on national security grounds, including in counter-terrorism responses. At the same time, she has supported efforts to promote and share examples of child-friendly justice systems, diversion and restorative approaches, deinstitutionalization and family- and community-based care. The Special Representative has also prioritized the release, repatriation, recovery and reintegration of children deprived of liberty in camps and detention facilities in the north-eastern Syrian Arab Republic and in Iraq. The Special Representative will continue to facilitate peer exchange through the task force and through the Pathfinding Global Alliance.

31. Through her membership of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and as its Co-Chair for 2023–2024, the Special Representative ensured that child protection remained a priority in advancing commitments at all levels to tackle trafficking in persons. This included promoting the implementation of the Coordination Group's "Call for accelerated action by 2025 to prevent and end child trafficking", launched under her leadership. The Special Representative also led the development of the Coordination Group's policy guidance on engaging with children in efforts to combat trafficking in children.

32. Throughout her term, the Special Representative has coordinated closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Development Coordination Office and held 187 meetings with United Nations regional teams and country teams, including during her country visits. Through that engagement, the Special Representative has worked to ensure integrated United Nations support to States in embedding the protection of children and their rights as a cross-cutting dimension of implementing the 2030 Agenda, as well as in United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks and the voluntary national review process. This is in line with the Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Child Rights Mainstreaming, which the Special Representative participated in developing and whose implementation she continues to support in collaboration with the Office of

the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Office of the Special Representative also participated in the development of the International Classification of Violence against Children, providing a common framework for the collection, analysis and comparison of data on violence against children and thereby enabling enhanced monitoring of progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. In addition, through regular engagements, memorandums of understanding and agreed joint actions and workplans, the Special Representative has deepened her collaboration and coordination with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Digital and Emerging Technologies, the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations System Staff College, among other entities. The Special Representative has also contributed to crucial intergovernmental processes and conferences occurring under the auspices of the United Nations, to promote the integration of child protection and well-being as a priority and its inclusion in the outcomes and follow-up activities. These processes have included the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.

Civil society, faith-based organizations, cultural and sporting organizations

34. Given their crucial role in the prevention and elimination of violence against children, engagement with civil society organizations has been a pillar of the Special Representative's work. Throughout her term, she has engaged directly with over 1,500 civil society organizations at the global, regional, national and local levels. This close collaboration has supported joint advocacy, information exchange and country-level engagement. The Special Representative has paid particular attention to expanding collaboration beyond international organizations to include grass-roots actors, child-led and youth-led organizations, survivor-led movements and organizations working with marginalized populations. In collaboration with the Civil Society Forum to End Violence against Children, she built connections between civil society organizations at the global level, as well as within and across regions. The Special Representative has also ensured that they were engaged as key stakeholders in the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children and the Pathfinding Global Alliance, including at the regional meetings of the Alliance held throughout 2025 and the global meeting held in 2026.

35. The Special Representative has also deepened her long-standing cooperation with faith-based organizations, religious leaders and traditional authorities, recognizing their unique influence in shaping social norms, mobilizing communities and promoting child safeguarding. The Special Representative continues to document and share positive examples of efforts by religious, traditional and community leaders and organizations, strengthening peer exchanges between countries. In addition, working closely with the Global Network of Religions for Children, she has supported initiatives and processes such as the follow-up to the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Building a Hopeful World for Children, adopted by the sixth Forum of the Global Network, in November 2024. Following the Global Forum, community initiatives and regional and context-focused dialogues have been organized by the members of the Global Network, and the Special Representative will continue her support through the global advocacy meeting of the Global Network, to be held in September 2026 in Nairobi.

36. The Special Representative has collaborated closely with religious, cultural and sports organizations to strengthen practices that ensure the protection and well-being of children, including during her country visits. These organizations and networks are powerful vehicles for empowering children, fostering social inclusion, supporting physical and mental well-being, and providing safe spaces, trusted networks and reporting channels at the local level that help to protect children from violence and exploitation. The partnership with World Scouting has promoted children's participation, child safeguarding and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Cooperation with the International Olympic Committee and other sporting actors has further reinforced efforts to create safe environments for children, strengthen safeguarding standards and support community-based prevention initiatives. The Special Representative has also worked closely with the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, including in relation to its annual reporting process.

Private sector

37. Since taking up her role, the Special Representative has catalysed private-sector action to tackle violence against children. The travel and tourism sector has been an important focus of these efforts. Building on the Special Representative's frequent engagements with the sector – including with relevant ministers and national associations of tourism companies during country visits – the Special Representative dedicated her report to the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session to the topic of the protection of children in travel and tourism.¹⁹ Following the launch of the report, the Special Representative's ongoing engagement with various stakeholders – including the World Travel and Tourism Council, leading companies in the travel, tourism, retail and entertainment sectors, civil society and the World Tourism Organization – led to an important milestone at the World Travel and Tourism Council Summit in September 2025: participating chief executive officers made a commitment to incorporate child protection as a key dimension in their companies' sustainability strategies. Following on from that commitment, an action paper outlining concrete steps that companies can take to embed child protection as a priority across the value chain is under development and is due to be launched at the World Travel and Tourism Council Summit in October 2026.

38. The Special Representative has engaged systematically with technology companies, particularly through multi-stakeholder platforms and processes including WePROTECT Global Alliance, the Global Cybersecurity Forum and the InterFaith Alliance for Safer Communities. These multi-stakeholder platforms have also facilitated the Special Representative's regular engagement with law enforcement in relation to child online protection, including with the Virtual Global Taskforce and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). Most recently, the Special Representative co-hosted the International Policy and Practice Exchange on Child Protection in the Digital Environment in April 2026 with the Government of Türkiye and UNICEF, which included the participation of leading technology companies. These various engagements have promoted action to integrate proactively child safety and child privacy from the earliest design stages, rather than treating them as an afterthought. In addition, these engagements are strengthening the multi-stakeholder and cross-border framework to protect children from online harm, while enabling safe digital participation.

¹⁹ [A/78/214](#).

39. The Special Representative has also engaged with the technology sector through the protection through online participation initiative,²⁰ co-led with the International Telecommunication Union and involving over 30 partners from industry, civil society, the United Nations and academia. In 2025, the initiative partners launched the five guiding principles: protect, progress, partner, participate, push. The principles are intended to inspire and guide technology companies, policymakers and children's helplines to advance on facilitating children's safe access to protection and support through digital means. That cooperation has already prompted participating companies to take actions such as involving children in advisory groups, linking users to protection and mental health services and developing tools to prevent cyberbullying.

Children and young people

40. Children are key stakeholders in the effort to advance their protection and well-being, and all of the Special Representative's work is informed by their views. She consistently engages with them – in strict compliance with child safeguarding standards – through country visits, as well as through online engagements and consultations. Since her appointment, the Special Representative has engaged directly with over 47,000 children. She has also launched online perception polls that have reached more than 3,240,000 children. These polls have informed diverse processes related to child protection and well-being, covering issues such as bullying, child poverty, online safety and artificial intelligence. In addition, the Office of the Special Representative has produced a total of 15 child-friendly materials – including reports and infographics – on diverse issues related to violence against children, which were developed with the input of children and translated into a range of languages. Beyond the official languages of the United Nations,²¹ Member States, civil society organizations and other partners have also translated and disseminated the Office's child-friendly materials in local languages. These reports are widely disseminated and used by different stakeholders at the national, regional and global levels to raise awareness, empower children and support peer exchanges between children.

41. The Special Representative has strengthened the visibility of children's contributions by launching a redesigned and updated child participation map on the website of the Office. The Office has gathered information on more than 700 child-led initiatives that demonstrate the creativity, leadership, expertise and determination of children to make a difference, with over 300 initiatives already available on the updated map and additional examples being added on an ongoing basis.²² From this broad and diverse pool of initiatives, illustrative examples include children creating safer school environments through educational games, as well as digital tools to prevent bullying, cyberbullying and gender-based violence. Girls have organized peer networks to help to prevent harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, while other young people have developed technology-based solutions to support those affected by humanitarian emergencies. In addition, children have taken action to preserve the environment and to tackle climate change. Children experiencing displacement have promoted protection, peacebuilding and community action, and others have engaged in policy dialogue and initiatives to support children's well-being.

42. The Special Representative promotes a culture of meaningful child participation among all decision makers and stakeholders. From village councils to national children's parliaments, children's views have been reflected in legal and policy

²⁰ See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/pop>.

²¹ See https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/publications?search_api_fulltext=.

²² See <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/en/child-participation/map>.

designs in more than 20 of the 65 countries visited by the Special Representative since taking up office. In addition, the Special Representative has promoted the involvement of children in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the voluntary national review process. The highest level of engagement was seen in 2025, with 24 out of 35 countries submitting voluntary national reviews in which they reported that they consulted with children and young people in their preparatory process.

Peer exchange, multi-stakeholder and cross-border cooperation

43. Every country faces different challenges. While no country has all the answers, every country has valuable experiences to share. The Special Representative has therefore strengthened peer learning, the exchange of good practices and bilateral and multilateral cooperation. She has also facilitated the assessment of common and cross-border challenges and the identification and dissemination of solutions, building trust between stakeholders. These efforts reflect the reality that ending violence against children requires the whole child protection ecosystem to work together.

44. The Special Representative's country visits and engagement with national and local actors have allowed her to connect those stakeholders directly with counterparts in other countries and regions. This has allowed for the exchange of experiences and actions – such as those highlighted above – that can assist in addressing the specific challenges identified in preventing and responding to violence against children.

45. The Special Representative's engagements with intergovernmental regional and subregional organizations have also provided a channel to support peer learning and exchange. This engagement has included participation in high-level advocacy opportunities, technical contributions to the development and monitoring of regional frameworks to combat violence against children, the provision of technical support and guidance, participation in public hearings and the creation of connections between organizations in different regions.

46. At the global level, the Special Representative has connected States and supported peer learning and exchange through key multi-stakeholder platforms and processes. A central pillar of this work has been the preparation of and follow-up to the Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children, held in Bogotá in November 2024, which brought together over 1,400 participants from 130 countries. The Special Representative engaged systematically in national and regional preparatory processes, as well as in efforts to support and monitor progress in implementing more than 400 specific pledges made at the Conference. The World Summit on Investing in Children's Well-being, to be hosted in Uzbekistan in October 2026, and the Global Ministerial Conference, to be hosted in the Philippines in November 2026, will present further opportunities in this regard.

Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children

47. Of particular importance is the Special Representative's bridge-building work through the Pathfinding Global Alliance. The Alliance brings States and other key stakeholders together to share experiences and support one another in the translation of commitments into effective action to tackle violence against children. It also connects with other global alliances in order to ensure synergy and complementarity. Launched at the first Global Ministerial Conference, the Pathfinding Global Alliance had 54 member States at the time of the finalization of the present report, and additional States have expressed their interest in joining.

48. Throughout 2025, the Special Representative convened a series of regional meetings for Pathfinding countries in Europe (Strasbourg, France, on 2 April, Bucharest on 14 October), Africa (Abuja on 7 and 8 May), the Americas (Mexico City on 10 and 11 July) and in the Asia-Pacific region (Manila on 12 and 13 November), with more than 170 participants in total. Building on these engagements, the first global meeting of the Pathfinding Global Alliance, held in Turin on 4 and 5 June 2026, marked a significant milestone for the Alliance. The meeting brought together more than 151 participants from Alliance member States, United Nations entities, civil society organizations, faith leaders and technical experts.

49. A major outcome of the global meeting was the launch of the marketplace for knowledge-sharing, a Member State-driven platform designed to facilitate peer learning, showcase successful practices and strengthen cooperation across the Alliance. More than 100 country-led “ideas in action” were submitted, capturing not only what was achieved, but how reforms were initiated, financed, coordinated, implemented and sustained, so as to help others to adapt successful approaches to their own contexts. The marketplace will continue to evolve as a living platform in response to member States’ priorities.

50. A further outcome of the global meeting was member States’ identification of priority themes where continued cooperation can accelerate progress. They launched thematic groups to continue their exchange and deepen cooperation on digital safety, child-friendly justice systems, alternative care and deinstitutionalization, community and local engagement, and investing in child protection and well-being. The Special Representative will support these thematic groups through documenting and disseminating concrete actions and practical tools, as well as convening regular multi-stakeholder meetings and facilitating peer exchanges between member States within and across regions.

51. Another key outcome of the meeting was the strengthening of cross-border and multi-stakeholder cooperation. The meeting facilitated 79 bilateral meetings among member States and other partners. Several follow-up initiatives are already under way. Member States are organizing study visits, technical exchanges and peer-learning activities to adapt successful approaches to their national contexts, generating new opportunities for collaborative initiatives on shared priorities. The Alliance will continue to support this dynamic, with future regional and global meetings providing further opportunities to review progress, identify emerging priorities and strengthen cooperation.

C. Looking ahead

52. Twenty years after the publication of the United Nations study on violence against children and with fewer than four years remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the world is not on track to keep its promise to end violence against children by 2030. Yet the unprecedented mobilization of committed champions in all countries and in all sectors shows that it is possible to turn the tide on violence against children. It is essential to continue this strong mobilization and action, with every stakeholder and every part of the world included.

53. Children can unite us. Multilateralism can deliver for children: it can provide solutions and connect those who are committed to ending violence against children, as illustrated by the Pathfinding Global Alliance. This kind of multilateralism – founded on inclusion, equality and cooperation – remains indispensable for addressing challenges that cut across sectors and transcend national borders.

54. Reflecting on seven years in office and based on the reiterated recognition by the General Assembly of the progress that the mandate has achieved, the Special Representative would like to underline the added value of the mandate in connecting all key stakeholders and keeping children's protection from all forms of violence at the top of the political agenda at the global, regional and national levels. The Special Representative emphasizes, however, that success cannot be achieved through the actions of one entity. She would like to pay tribute to the countless individuals and institutions that have dedicated themselves to protecting children from violence. Across governments, regional organizations, civil society, faith-based organizations, local communities, the private sector and the United Nations, committed leaders and practitioners continue to drive change, often in very difficult circumstances.

55. Above all, the Special Representative expresses her deepest gratitude to children and young people whose courage, creativity and resilience have shaped this work and inspired action at every level. As children have repeatedly shown through their voices and actions, a world free from violence is not an aspiration beyond reach.

56. An entire generation of children has grown up since the United Nations study on violence against children was published. The safe world they were promised has not yet been delivered. The international community must now continue working together, better and faster, for and with children, to ensure that they do not have to wait another generation to enjoy a world where they can grow and thrive, without fear and without violence.
