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Programme questions: evaluation

## Evaluation of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children

### Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

#### *Summary*

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) examined the relevance and effectiveness of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children in catalysing change in their respective areas of concern. The evaluation was conducted using a survey, interviews, on-site visits, case studies, direct observation, document reviews and secondary data analyses.

Despite political and operational challenges, as well as their small size, the three offices of the Special Representatives have been effective champions in their thematic areas. Member States, United Nations partners and civil society all agreed that the high-level political advocacy of the offices contributed to sustained global visibility and strengthened global norms. The Special Representatives effectively used their unique positions as high-level advocates to consolidate political buy-in for the sensitive issues they addressed.

The offices also catalysed positive action in the country and regional contexts where they worked; they effectively brokered and facilitated commitments with a range of parties to conflict, which contributed to, for example, the release of children from armed groups, prosecution of perpetrators of high-level, conflict-related sexual violence and justice reform for children.

\* The dates for the substantive session are tentative.

\*\* E/AC.51/2019/1.



While effective overall in utilizing their unique position as high-level advocates for the sensitive issues of children and armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and violence against children, efforts to do this using traditional and social media had mixed results. Proactive use of press releases and other traditional media channels provided an important avenue for wider public outreach, and global media reporting increased for all three offices over the period 2014–2017. However, advocacy campaigns did not consistently lead to discernible outcomes and use of social media could have been more strategic.

While the three offices have been effective overall in coordinating and mainstreaming with United Nations partners, their activities in these areas faced challenges. These included a lack of clarity around forms and desired outcomes of coordination efforts between the offices and their partners. At times, headquarters inter-agency coordination mechanisms chaired by these offices did not achieve their coordination potential. Moreover, despite their effective use as advocacy tools, the children and armed conflict and sexual violence in conflict reporting systems lacked coherence, for example, in reporting on a shared violation.

The offices have not systematically engaged in strategic planning to inform their activities. In some cases, they lacked distinct and discrete strategic plans, and thus did not adequately identify where and how to focus limited resources. The three offices also did not sufficiently coordinate among themselves, although in those instances when they did, positive outcomes resulted.

OIOS makes five important recommendations to the three offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General to:

- (a) Enhance their communication strategies;
- (b) Strengthen their respective headquarters coordination task forces;
- (c) Continue to develop options for incorporating lessons-learned mechanisms into their work programmes;
- (d) Introduce regular risk assessment and strategic planning into their work programmes;
- (e) Enhance coordination and cooperation between the three offices.

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## I. Introduction

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified for evaluation, on the basis of a risk assessment, the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the programme evaluation of the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, including these offices, for consideration at its fifty-seventh session, in June 2017.<sup>1</sup> Owing to differences between the offices and the balance of the Executive Office functions, OIOS conducted a separate evaluation of the three offices of the Special Representatives.<sup>2</sup>

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is General Assembly resolutions [48/218 B](#), [54/244](#) and [59/272](#) and [ST/SGB/273](#), which authorize OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. The Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation provides the reference for OIOS evaluations.<sup>3</sup>

3. The evaluation objective was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the three offices of the Special Representatives in catalysing change in their respective areas of concern. The evaluation topic emerged from the scoping described in the evaluation inception paper,<sup>4</sup> and was conducted in conformity with norms and standards for evaluation in the United Nations.<sup>5</sup>

4. Comments from the three offices of the Special Representatives were sought on the draft report and considered in the final report. The formal responses from the three offices are contained in the annex to the present report.

## II. Background

5. The offices of the Special Representatives have distinct thematic mandates established over the past two decades:

(a) **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.** In 1996, by its resolution [51/77](#), the General Assembly recommended the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to assess progress and challenges in strengthening the protection of children in conflict, raise awareness and promote the collection of information, work with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, relevant United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations, and foster international cooperation to ensure respect for children's rights;

(b) **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.** In 2007, by its resolution [62/141](#), the General Assembly requested the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children to act as an independent global advocate for promoting the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against children, promote and support implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 United Nations study on violence against children, identify and share good practices and develop more

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on its fifty-fifth session ([A/70/16](#)).

<sup>2</sup> OIOS informed the Committee for Programme and Coordination in April 2016.

<sup>3</sup> [ST/SGB/2016/6](#).

<sup>4</sup> Internal OIOS report IED-17-002.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016.

comprehensive data collection on violence against children, and collaborate with United Nations partners, Governments and external partners, including civil society;

(c) **Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.** In 2009, by its resolution 1888 (2009), the Security Council requested the appointment of a Special Representative to provide coherent and strategic leadership, strengthen existing United Nations coordination mechanisms, engage in advocacy efforts with Governments, parties to armed conflict and civil society, and promote cooperation and coordination of efforts among relevant stakeholders to address sexual violence in conflict. The office includes the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict established by the Council in resolution 1888 (2009) to assist national authorities to strengthen the rule of law with respect to accountability for sexual violence in conflict, which includes experts from the co-lead entities (the Department of Peacekeeping Operations,<sup>6</sup> the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

6. The Special Representatives have a direct reporting line to the Secretary-General. The Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict serve at the level of Under-Secretary-General and the Special Representative on Violence against Children serves at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. Staffing levels are shown in table 1.

Table 1  
**Regular budget staffing, 2016–2017**

Category	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General		
	Violence against Children	Sexual Violence in Conflict <sup>a</sup>	Children and Armed Conflict
Under-Secretary-General	–	1	1
Assistant Secretary-General	1	–	–
D-1	–	1	–
P-5	1	1	1
P-4	3	1	2
P-3	3	2	3
General Service (Principal level)	1	–	1
General Service (Other level)	1	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: A/70/6 (Sect. 1).

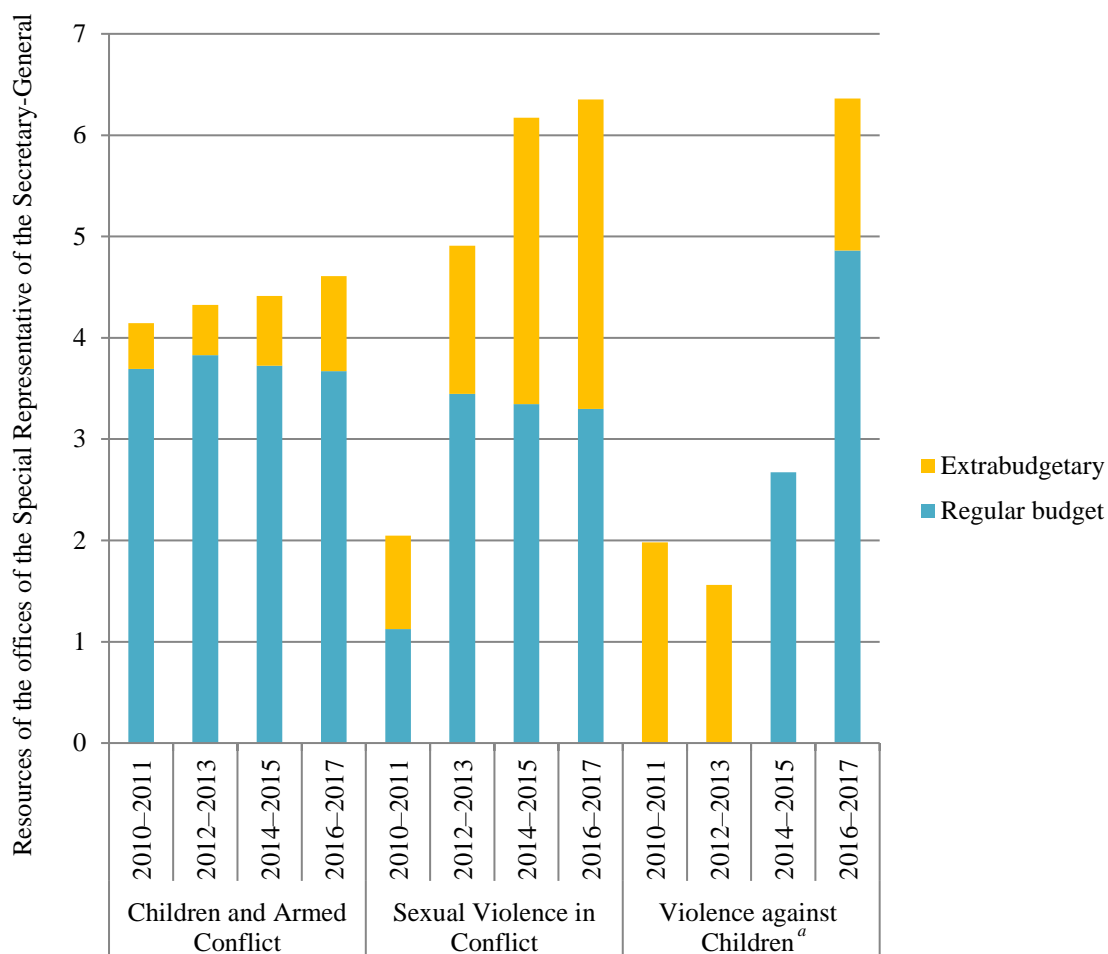
<sup>a</sup> The office has six posts funded by extrabudgetary resources.

7. Figure I shows how the financial resources for the offices of the Special Representatives have increased over the past four bienniums. Extrabudgetary funding has been an important funding source for the offices of the Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children; the latter was approved for regular budget funding in the biennium 2014–2015.

<sup>6</sup> Now the Department of Peace Operations.

Figure I  
**Financial snapshot of the offices of the Special Representatives, 2010–2017**

(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: Biennial budget fascicles and financial statements.

<sup>a</sup> Over the period 2010–2013, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children was funded entirely from extrabudgetary resources.

8. The offices of the Special Representatives are mandated to facilitate inter-agency cooperation in the United Nations system, including the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children, chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, and the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict initiative (United Nations Action) chaired by the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who also chairs the United Nations task force on children deprived of liberty which is supporting the development of a global study on that topic.

### III. Methodology

9. The present evaluation focused on the following questions:

(a) What role has each office of the Special Representative played in its respective field and how has this role differed from other United Nations entities and key stakeholders working on the same issues?

- (b) How effectively has each office advocated on its respective issues of concern?
- (c) How effectively has each office coordinated with other United Nations entities working on the same issues?
- (d) How effectively have the offices contributed to the mainstreaming of their focus issues into the work programmes of other United Nations entities?
- (e) To what degree have the offices contributed to the achievement of results in their respective areas of concern?

10. As the General Assembly mandate for this evaluation covered all three offices, OIOS assessed the key activities of each office individually as well as across the offices on a broader thematic level. The evaluation primarily covers the period from 2014 to 2017. The evaluation defines advocacy as raising awareness and catalysing positive change around the respective issues of children and armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and violence against children; coordination as bringing together and working with different entities to address their respective issues; and mainstreaming as bringing their respective issues into the agendas and work programmes of other entities.

11. Data collection was undertaken between July and December 2017. Evidence was derived from triangulation of documentary, testimonial, observational and analytical sources collected through quantitative and qualitative methods, including:

- (a) **Interviews** with staff of the offices (39) and Headquarters stakeholders (15);
- (b) **Case studies** of eight countries/regions where offices of the Special Representatives have been active based on field visits (3), interviews (103) and document reviews;<sup>7</sup>
- (c) **Missions** to Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Indonesia;
- (d) **Survey** of all Member States and a non-random sample of stakeholders of the offices;<sup>8</sup>
- (e) **Document reviews** of evaluations, audits, policies, office reports, headquarters coordination mechanisms and senior managers' compacts;
- (f) **Media analysis** of online news and social media using a social analytics company (Crimson Hexagon) in partnership with Global Pulse;
- (g) **Direct observation** of selected meetings of the offices and intergovernmental meetings.

12. In addition, an external advisory panel, comprised of two expert consultants, reviewed the inception and draft reports.

13. The evaluation faced limitations owing to a low Member State survey response rate and to methodological considerations as a result of using social media as a proxy indicator of outreach and engagement by the offices. To mitigate against these limitations, all analyses were triangulated with data from multiple sources to strengthen the evaluation results.

<sup>7</sup> Case studies included: Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea and Iraq); Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict (Central African Republic, Colombia and Myanmar); and Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (Latin America and South-East Asia).

<sup>8</sup> The survey was sent to 287 stakeholders, with 127 respondents for an overall response rate of 44 per cent, including individuals (46 per cent response rate) and Member States (7 per cent response rate).

## IV. Evaluation results

### A. Despite their broad mandates and small size, the three offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children have been effective champions in their respective thematic areas

*The offices have operated with broad mandates and limited resources*

14. The offices of the Special Representatives were established in recognition of serious gaps in addressing protection and human rights concerns and as expressions of the will of the international community to do better; their mandates were thus created broadly to allow the offices flexibility to respond on a global scale. Their geographic scope varied: the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children covered all forms of violence against children, in all settings and in all countries where children are affected by violence; the office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict covered 19 country situations in 2017, including conflict and crisis situations where there was credible information;<sup>9</sup> and the office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict covered 22 country situations of armed conflict in 2017 where children were exposed to grave violations.<sup>10</sup>

15. For the biennium 2016–2017, the offices were allotted between \$3 million and \$5 million in regular budget funding, with about 10 staff to implement mandates of large substantive and geographic breadth. Their resource allocations were arguably low relative to other United Nations special mandate holders with comparable functions. As a result, a limited number of staff in the offices covered large geographic areas: for example, one staff member in the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children covered all of sub-Saharan Africa and two or three staff in the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict covered all of sub-Saharan Africa and Colombia. All three offices indicated that requests for support often exceeded office capacity, and country partners in most case studies (6 out of 8) expressed demand for more visits and other activities from the offices, while recognizing that the offices were already thinly spread across their respective portfolios.

*The offices have been effective in promoting and sustaining global visibility for their respective issue areas*

16. Interviewed and surveyed representatives of the United Nations, the offices of Special Representatives, civil society and Member States agreed that the offices acted as effective global advocates for their respective issue areas. Of surveyed stakeholders, 93 per cent rated the advocacy work of the offices positively overall, and most noted that the greatest value of the offices was to raise awareness and increase visibility. Within United Nations intergovernmental forums, Member States expressed strong support for the mandates of the offices and commonly stated their specific commitment to addressing related issues, including in open debate sessions of the Human Rights Council, the Security Council and the General Assembly.

*The three offices have contributed to strengthening global norms and standards*

17. The offices of the Special Representatives effectively worked through intergovernmental channels to propagate norms in their respective areas. Table 2

<sup>9</sup> The Secretary-General indicates in his report on conflict-related sexual violence of 2017 (S/2017/249) that many countries not in the report are affected by the threat, occurrence or legacy of conflict-related sexual violence.

<sup>10</sup> The Secretary-General stresses in his report on children and armed conflict of 2017 (A/72/361-S/2017/821) that information is indicative and not representative of all violations.



illustrates specific contributions by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The offices also facilitated, together with their partners, the publication of United Nations system-wide standards in their respective areas. In one case, the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Violence against Children worked in tandem to support ratification by Member States of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Table 2

**Examples of contributions by the offices of the Special Representatives to global norms and standards**

	<i>Office of the Special Representative</i>		
	<i>Children and Armed Conflict</i>	<i>Sexual Violence in Conflict</i>	<i>Violence against Children</i>
Non-recruitment of children into government security forces	x		
Thematic resolutions adopted by the Security Council related to conflict-related sexual violence <sup>a</sup>	x	x	
Prohibition of State parties listed in annual reports of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence as troop-contributing countries	x	x	
United Nations Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice			x
Inclusion of violence against children into the Sustainable Development Goal agenda, including target 16.2			x
Ratifications and signatories to Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child <sup>b</sup>	x		x

*Sources:* Case studies, senior managers' compacts of the Special Representatives and interviews.

<sup>a</sup> Including, most recently, Security Council resolution 2331 (2016).

<sup>b</sup> According to the Office of Legal Affairs, as at 1 March 2018 there had been 8 signatories and 51 ratifications since 2014 with respect to the three Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

*While traditional media channels provided an important avenue for wider public outreach, efforts to leverage social media have not been strategic*

18. The offices of the Special Representatives made proactive use of traditional media channels, such as press releases, interviews and official statements, to increase awareness of their work and to advocate for their respective issues at the global and national levels. Global media reporting increased for all three offices over the period 2014–2017. In the top 30 online newspapers, the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict were mentioned most frequently, followed by the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children.<sup>11</sup> High media interest around the annual report of the Secretary-General listing violations related to children and armed conflict and sexual violence in conflict violations indicated that the process contributed to sustaining

<sup>11</sup> Between 2014 and 2017, the top 30 online newspapers published 103 articles mentioning the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 91 articles mentioning the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and 28 articles mentioning the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (list is not exhaustive).

global visibility around the issues. Engagement with the United Nations News Centre of the Department of Public Information allowed for broadcasting of messages to wider channels; the offices of both the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict effectively used this medium.<sup>12</sup>

19. The offices of the Special Representatives also used social media such as Twitter and Facebook, but less strategically. Firstly, the communications strategies of the offices lacked social media performance measurements beyond basic static counting of followers, which has limited their capacity to adapt their respective approaches in an evidence-based manner.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, the offices did not have a plan for how to proactively engage target audiences through social media linked to other advocacy activities by the offices, resulting in missed opportunities to reach a wider global audience. Table 3 shows variable performance for the analysed office accounts across several social media metrics.

Table 3  
**Selected social media metrics for the offices of the Special Representatives**

Area/metric	Offices of the Special Representatives <sup>a</sup>		
	Children and armed conflict	Violence against Children	Sexual Violence in Conflict
<b>Activity</b>			
Number of Twitter posts, 2014–2017	3 788	3 389	2 813
Number of Twitter posts per week (average), 2014–2017	18	16	14
<b>Voice and reach</b>			
Twitter share of voice (percentage of relevant posts in thematic area)	0.25%	< 0.01%	~3%
Number of Twitter impressions	200 million	123 million	61 million
<b>Engagement</b>			
Number of Twitter followers	38 212	5 922	43 804
Twitter follower percentage increase, 2014–2017	65%	636%	93%
Number of Twitter retweets, 2014–2017	13 659	52 601	4 362
Number of Twitter replies, 2014–2017	728	249	281
Number of Twitter mentions, 2014–2017	45 813	19 262	24 918
Number of Facebook page “likes”	15 699	4 321	33 858
Number of Facebook followers	15 720	4 293	33 325

Source: Twitter, Facebook and Crimson Hexagon.

Note: Data as at 8 February 2018, unless indicated as covering a specific period; multiple accounts were combined for the offices of the Special Representatives on Violence against Children and on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

<sup>a</sup> Accounts analysed: @childreninwar; @childrenandarmedconflict; @UNAction; @endrapeinwar; @SRSRVAC; @ZerViolence2030; and @martasantospaispage.

<sup>12</sup> Estimated number of stories related to offices of the Special Representatives over the period 2014–2017: Sexual Violence in Conflict: 96; Children and Armed Conflict: 82; Violence against Children: 15.

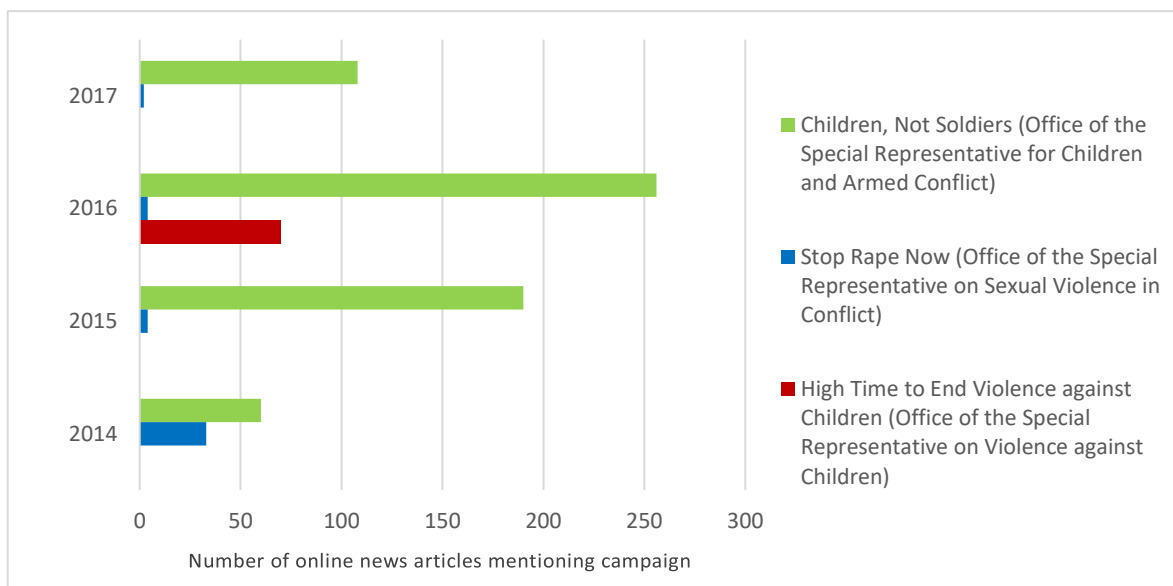
<sup>13</sup> Two offices had indicators on social media followers in planning documentation: budget of the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children (A/70/6 (Sect. 1)) and communications strategy of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict.

*Campaigns and mobilization initiatives had mixed results based on targeted objectives and partner synergies*

20. Outcomes related to advocacy campaigns by the offices of the Special Representatives, whose media coverage is shown in figure II, was uneven. Through clear objectives and strong partnering, the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict effectively co-led the Children, Not Soldiers campaign with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), which stimulated all eight countries that were targeted to sign action plans for ending recruitment of children into armed forces by 2016. The Office integrated its campaign messaging into overall advocacy activities, focused the campaign objectives on one grave violation, and leveraged its institutional partnership with UNICEF, allowing Children, Not Soldiers to gain broad visibility with Member States and the wider public.

Figure II

**Online news articles of advocacy campaigns affiliated with the offices of the Special Representatives, 2014–2017**



Source: Crimson Hexagon (January 2014 to September 2017).

Note: Data not exhaustive.

21. However, campaign and mobilization initiatives by the offices of the Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children have not led to either discernible outcomes or significant public visibility over the period 2014–2017. The Stop Rape Now campaign managed by the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict was launched in 2007 by United Nations Action members and later subsumed into the Office. While the campaign website continues to be updated minimally, there were no known activities over the evaluation period. The Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict attributed this primarily to a lack of human resources. Of the total surveyed stakeholders, 31 per cent (10 out of 32) indicated fair or poor management of campaigns and events by the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The Office of the Special Representative launched its High Time to End Violence against Children multi-stakeholder initiative in 2016; almost all interviewed stakeholders familiar with the initiative questioned how the activities of the Office fit together with those of the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, which

UNICEF supports administratively, since both share the same goals.<sup>14</sup> Both the stakeholders and the staff of the Office also indicated poor conceptualization of the High Time to End Violence against Children initiative.

## **B. All three offices have catalysed positive action in most countries and regions where they have worked through high-level political advocacy**

*The offices have facilitated achievement of national and regional commitments to address violence against vulnerable groups*

22. The offices of the Special Representatives effectively brokered and facilitated commitments and agreements with parties to conflict, including both non-State and governmental actors (see table 4). Such political dialogue led to concrete actions to release children from armed groups, pursue accountability for emblematic conflict-related sexual violence cases and adopt regional plans to address violence against children. As noted in the 20-year anniversary report by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, over 115,000 child soldiers have been released since 2000 because of dialogue and action plans led by the Office.<sup>15</sup> The investigation and prosecution of high-level perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence advanced with sustained support from the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in selected country contexts, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea. In addition to the results shown in table 4, the offices of the Special Representatives on Violence against Children and on Sexual Violence in Conflict contributed to policies, guidelines and strategies of partner regional entities. Overall, 88 per cent of surveyed stakeholders stated that the offices played a positive catalytic role in stimulating action by multiple actors; 93 per cent rated them positively in facilitating political commitments.

Table 4  
**Political commitments and agreements facilitated by the offices of the Special Representatives, 2014–2017<sup>a</sup>**

<i>Country/region covered by agreement</i>	<i>Agreement (year)</i>	<i>Party to conflict</i>	
		<i>Non-state actors</i>	<i>Governmental actors</i>
<b>Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict</b>			
Arab States	Cooperation agreement (2014)		x
Yemen	Action plan (2014)		x
South Sudan	Action plan (2015)	x	
	Action plan (2016)		x
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Road map to accelerate action plan implementation (2015)		x

<sup>14</sup> The Special Representative on Violence against Children serves on both the Executive Committee and the Board of the Global Partnership.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations, “20 years to better protect children affected by conflict” (2016). Available from [https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Twenty-Years-of-Work-Updated-Booklet\\_web.pdf](https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Twenty-Years-of-Work-Updated-Booklet_web.pdf).

Country/region covered by agreement	Agreement (year)	Party to conflict	
		Non-state actors	Governmental actors
Sudan	Joint statement on the situation of children in Darfur (2015)	x	
	Action plan (2016)		x
	Action plan (2016)	x	
Nigeria	Action plan (2017)	x	
Mali	Action plan (2017)	x	
<b>Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict</b>			
South Sudan	Joint communiqué (2014)		x
	Communiqué (2014)	x	
Africa	Framework of cooperation (2014) – International Conference on the Great Lakes Region		x
	Framework of cooperation (2014) – African Union		x
Côte d’Ivoire	Action plan (2014)		x
Mali	Communiqué (2017)	x	
Iraq	Joint communiqué (2016)		x
Arab States	Framework of cooperation (2016)		x
<b>Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children<sup>b</sup></b>			
Global	Annual joint statements on the role of regional organizations/institutions (2014–2017)		x
Latin America	Declaration on violence against and exploitation of children (2014)		x
South-East Asia	Resolution on children and adolescents (2014)		x
	Regional plan of action (2015)		x
Africa	Agenda for children 2040 (2016)		x
South Asia	Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals related to ending violence against children (2016)		x

Source: Websites, data request and case studies of the offices of the Special Representatives.

<sup>a</sup> Based on (a) active support from the offices of the Special Representative, and (b) demonstrated Member State commitment. Other agreements were established before 2014. For brevity, full details of the names of the parties are not included.

<sup>b</sup> Regional agreements involving the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children were generally supported by national action plans.

23. System-wide efforts to strengthen the United Nations response to children and armed conflict, conflict-related sexual violence and violence against children,

including through child and women's protection posts in mission contexts, were essential to achieving and implementing such political agreements. United Nations partners with operational mandates, in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, OHCHR, UNDP and UNICEF, laid the groundwork for the offices of the Special Representatives to engage in high-level dialogue. The Security Council played an active complementary role in creating mandates for instruments in the areas of children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence, including the listing of parties in the Secretary-General's annual reports, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Informal Expert Group on Women and Peace and Security. The monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence were effective advocacy instruments regarding grave violations against children and patterns of sexual violence.

24. Given the cross-border nature of several conflicts on their respective agendas and as a core part of their mandates, the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict in addition took a regional and subregional approach to establishing political agreements. As indicated in table 4, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict reached cooperation agreements with organizations in Africa and the Arab States, including the League of Arab States, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The Office established these partnerships along with implementation plans with shared advocacy objectives. In addition to the activities shown in table 4, the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict have continued ongoing cooperation with several organizations based on agreements reached prior to the 2014–2017 period.

25. The Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children contributed to policy outcomes as reflected in commitments by a wide range of actors.<sup>16</sup> At the regional and subregional levels, the Office initiated and participated in forums with regional organizations, Member States, civil society organizations, government officials and children who were perceived as helping to catalyse political will and elevate critical issues such as bullying and detention of children. The Office successfully led cross-regional forums that assembled like-minded intergovernmental institutions. Such results were achieved through sustained engagement following a consultative process with partners that capitalized on the regionally oriented implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 study on violence against children (A/61/299). In selected countries, its work around specific advocacy and policy dialogue goals precipitated government commitments, including the promotion of legislative reforms and national plans of action on violence against children, development of data surveys on violence against children in Africa and Asia and justice reform regarding children in Latin America. Research and related publications produced by the Office were seen by stakeholders as strong components of this advocacy work.

26. While the precise roles of the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict in promoting compliance with country-level agreements were not clearly defined, their engagement faced significant political and operational challenges. Removing parties to conflict from the list in the Secretary-General's annual reports constitutes one means by which to assess whether such commitments have been successfully implemented. As shown in figure III, four

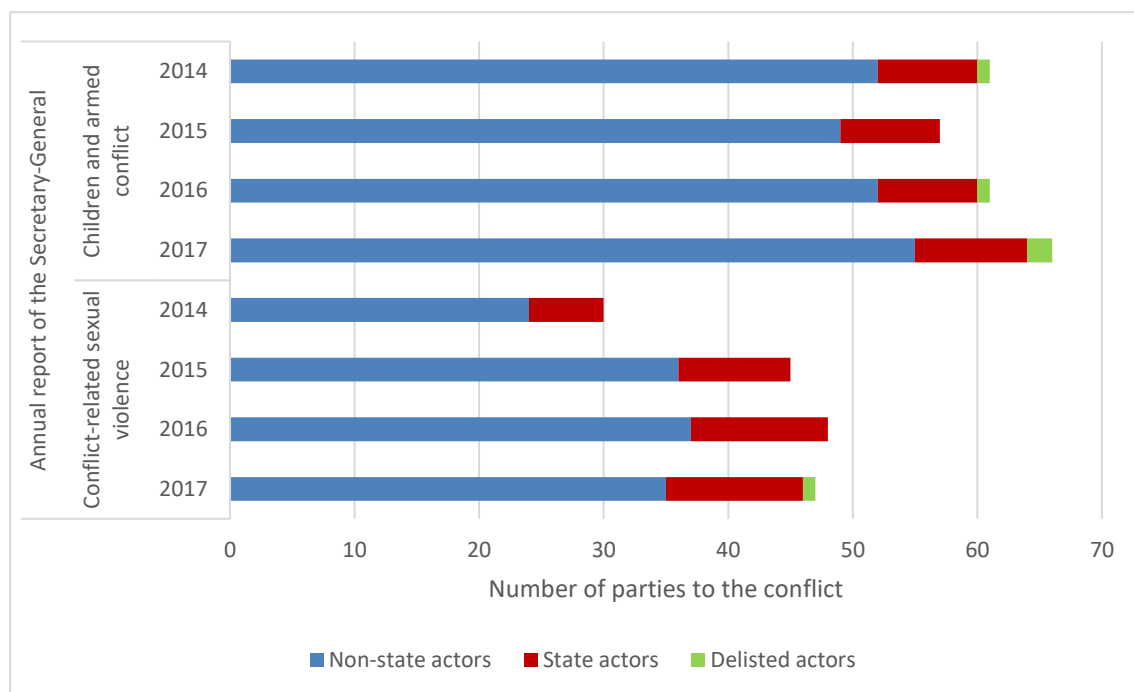
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<sup>16</sup> According to the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, since the beginning of its mandate countries with a comprehensive legal ban on all forms of violence against children increased from 16 to 54 and countries with a national agenda on violence against children increased from 47 to over 90.

cases of delisting were achieved in the period from 2014 to 2017. All related case studies of the two offices indicated that constraining factors to delisting more parties included the gravity and complexity of the conflict, including the characteristics of implicated non-state actors, and the strength of institutional partnerships in the country concerned. Staff of the offices noted the lack of capacity, including specialists both in the headquarters offices and in the field, as an additional constraining factor.

Figure III

**Listed and delisted parties to conflict in the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence, 2014–2017**



Source: Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence (2014–2017).

*High-level advocacy with Member States has been a critical tool for both creating and sustaining interest, as well as for pushing for change in sensitive areas*

27. The Special Representatives effectively used their unique position as high-level advocates to consolidate political buy-in for the sensitive issues they addressed. Of the surveyed stakeholders, 93 per cent rated the offices positively in their work conducting advocacy with Member States, and almost all staff of the offices who were interviewed (32 out of 34) considered advocacy as their most effective area of work compared with mainstreaming and coordination. This was performed through bilateral engagement and group of friends arrangements at the headquarters and country levels; the latter was most proactively organized under the children and armed conflict thematic umbrella to facilitate regular and structured engagement with Member States.

28. Advocacy efforts targeted at government decision makers brought greater visibility to the issues. Almost all case studies (7 out of 8) indicated that the offices had responded to requests from United Nations partners to undertake advocacy to address political blockages to progress in their respective thematic areas. For example, the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children responded to UNICEF requests and through subsequent advocacy helped to elevate

violence against children issues in national policy and legislative agendas. In Colombia, both the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict worked at the request of United Nations country teams to engage in peace negotiations over the period 2014–2016, supporting the integration of child protection and conflict-related sexual violence concerns into the process. Such examples demonstrated strong complementarity between global advocacy by the offices and United Nations system programme mandates.

**C. While the three offices have been effective overall with regard to coordinating and mainstreaming with United Nations partners, their activities in these areas have faced challenges**

*The roles of the offices of the Special Representatives in coordinating with their United Nations partners were not always clearly defined, with some related challenges*

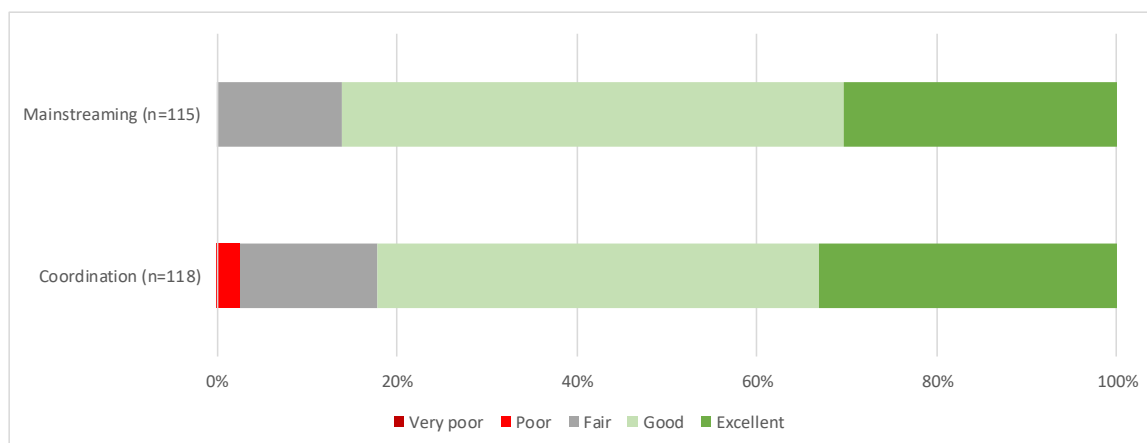
29. The mandates of the offices of the Special Representatives reference coordination with other United Nations entities, although the emphasis varies: the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict is required to foster cooperation; the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict is required to promote cooperation and coordination; and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children should work closely and cooperate with and establish a mutually supportive collaboration with United Nations entities.<sup>17</sup> These broad mandates have necessitated clarity around the forms and desired outcomes of coordination and collaboration efforts by the offices, which has at times been lacking. None of the eight case studies resulted in an assessment of “high” clarity of the roles of the offices; six out of eight were assessed as having “moderate” clarity, and one “low”.

30. Overall, stakeholder and staff ratings for coordination and mainstreaming activities by the offices of the Special Representatives were generally positive, as shown in figures IV and V. However, approximately one quarter of the staff interviewed (10 out of 39) expressed some concern that working relationships with their United Nations partners needed strengthening, noting that these partners were often primarily focused on their own defined programmes of work. In most case studies, fostering of coordination and collaboration by the offices with other United Nations actors was determined to be “somewhat effective” (5 out of 8), while one was deemed “somewhat ineffective”. In addition, in half of the case studies (4 out of 8), mainstreaming work by the offices was “somewhat effective”, with two case study analyses resulting in an assessment of “somewhat ineffective”.

<sup>17</sup> General Assembly resolutions [51/77](#) and [62/141](#) and Security Council resolution [1888 \(2009\)](#).



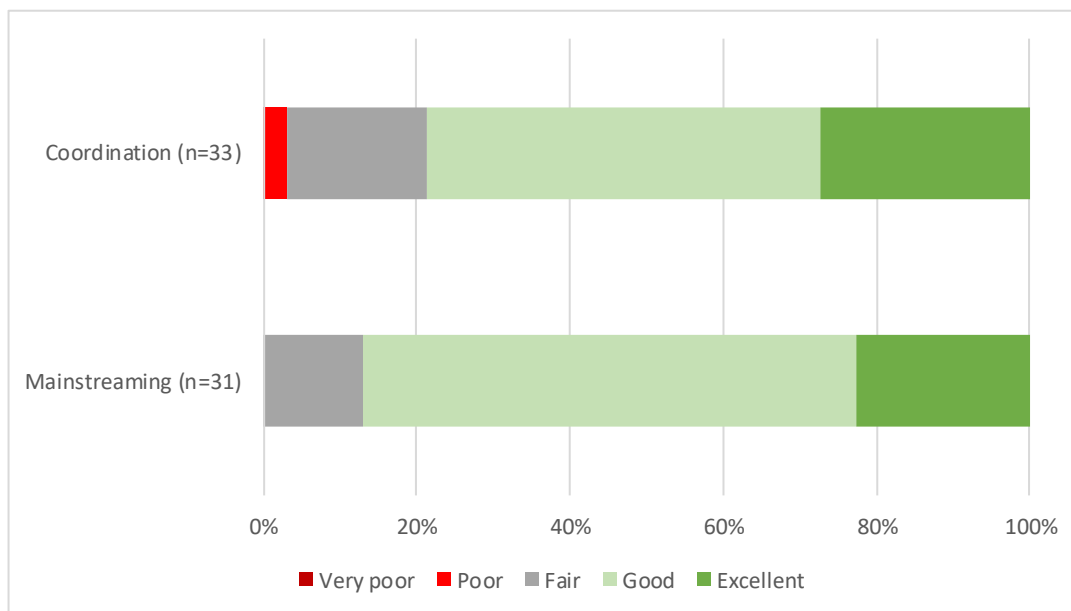
**Figure IV**  
**Stakeholder ratings on coordination and mainstreaming work by the offices of the Special Representatives**



Source: Stakeholder survey.

Note: n = number of respondents.

**Figure V**  
**Staff ratings on coordination and mainstreaming work by the offices of the Special Representatives**



Source: Interviews with staff of the offices of Special Representatives.

Note: n = number of interviewees.

*Headquarters coordination task forces have had some limitations*

31. Each office chairs, or co-chairs, an inter-agency coordination task force at Headquarters, which have been utilized to varying degrees, as shown in table 5.

Table 5  
**Task forces at Headquarters chaired or co-chaired by the offices of the Special Representatives**

<i>Office of the Special Representative</i>	<i>Primary coordination body</i>	<i>United Nations members</i>	<i>Meeting information</i>		
			<i>Frequency (on average)</i>	<i>Participation (on average)</i>	<i>Agenda items</i>
Children and Armed Conflict	Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict	16	2 a year	Director-level staff or higher from 17 partners	Discuss draft children and armed conflict annual reports and related issues
Sexual Violence in Conflict	United Nations Action	13	7 a year 1 to 2 a year	Technical-level staff from 10 partners Director-level steering committee	Prepare for/debrief country missions; discuss endorsement of annual reports of the Secretary-General
Violence against Children	Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children	6	1 a year	Technical/high-level staff with 4 partners	Discuss violence against children-related developments and opportunities for United Nations partners to advance and mainstream violence against children in the United Nations agenda

Source: Meeting notes, 2014–2017.

32. Partners of the offices of the Special Representatives identified several limitations associated with the task forces and suggested areas for improvement. Regarding United Nations Action, it has in recent years become more oriented towards sharing information than towards coordination, with the exception of ongoing joint projects under the auspices of the United Nations Action multi-partner trust fund. All United Nations partners of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict interviewed who had familiarity with United Nations Action indicated that it was thus not achieving its coordination potential. Observation of a recent United Nations Action working level meeting corroborated this feedback: while significant engagement and information-sharing was observed, the meeting did not sufficiently address how two different missions by the offices of the Special Representatives to the same country would be coordinated. The Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict indicated that effectiveness was adversely affected because the focal points for United Nations Action were only able to dedicate 20 per cent of their time to the network.<sup>18</sup> Regarding the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict, stakeholders noted that its narrow focus on coordination related to the annual report of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was necessary and useful, but this did not facilitate broader and ongoing coordination among United Nations partners working on the same issue. Finally, as noted in table 5 and based on a review of meeting notes, the frequency of and participation in meetings of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children was limited.

<sup>18</sup> The recently appointed Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict has indicated a desire to reinvigorate the United Nations Action network, including mobilization of greater participation at the principal level.

*Coordination with country and regional level United Nations partners has also been challenging*

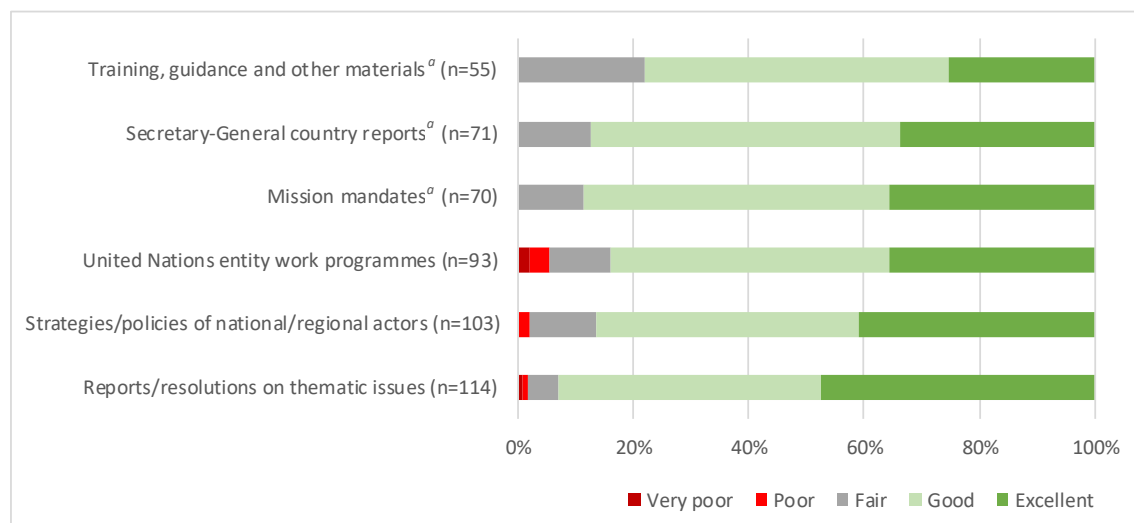
33. A key coordination challenge at the country and regional levels was the need to clarify, and achieve mutual agreement on, the roles and responsibilities of the offices of the Special Representatives in relation to United Nations partners in the field. Of eight case study locations, none was assessed as having “high” alignment and complementarity between the offices and other United Nations entities; seven were assessed as having “medium” alignment, and one “low”. In addition, some stakeholders interviewed in the field and some stakeholder survey respondents noted the need for greater coordination by the offices of the Special Representatives.

34. While there was consistent focus by the offices of the Special Representatives at the country and regional levels on supporting operationalization of Member State commitments to prevent grave violations and end violence, changing circumstances led to variation in the types of coordination activities undertaken in the eight case studies. Most coordination work in the three children and armed conflict case study countries was performed through the children and armed conflict country task forces on monitoring and reporting; examples of variation around coordination activities included the degree of leadership by the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in negotiations with Governments and non-state actors and the level of detail at which the Office supported drafting, operationalization and monitoring of agreements, including action plans. In the three case study countries related to the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, coordination usually occurred through the Team of Experts and included engagement on project-specific activities such as fact-finding missions and engagement with national Governments. Coordination in the two case study regions of the Office centred around joint advocacy work and policy dialogue to promote mainstreaming to address violence against children in regional and national agendas.

*While mainstreaming work at the headquarters and regional levels facilitated integration of priority areas into the work of partners, it faced some challenges with United Nations partners*

35. The offices of the Special Representatives supported integration of their respective thematic areas into the work of United Nations entities at the headquarters level and at regional organizations. The offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict aimed to integrate their priority areas into policy, guidance, training, peacekeeping or special political mission mandates, and other activities within the peace and security area. All three offices often provided inputs into the resolutions and reports of United Nations intergovernmental bodies. Stakeholders surveyed indicated the general effectiveness of this work, shown in figure VI, and considered it useful in keeping a spotlight on these issues both within the United Nations system and with partners. For example, most case studies by the two offices indicated supportive advocacy around budget and post allocations for related protection functions in mission settings, as well as mandate renewals. The Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children was recognized for its critical role in mainstreaming violence against children as a distinct concern in the Sustainable Development Goals agenda.

Figure VI  
**Stakeholder ratings related to mainstreaming work by the offices of the Special Representatives**



Source: OIOS stakeholder survey.

<sup>a</sup> Not applicable to the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children.

36. Nevertheless, staff of the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict identified ongoing challenges to institutionalizing effective mainstreaming, particularly with United Nations partners. Most of the staff (16 out of 29) indicated internal factors negatively affecting this work, including changes in staff, leadership and policy. United Nations partners were also less positive in their assessment of mainstreaming by the offices across most categories compared with the other stakeholder survey respondent groups aggregated in figure VI; the largest gaps were in training/guidance and entity work programmes, both of which were rated 16 per cent less positively by United Nations partners. Staff from all three offices noted that responsibility for achieving results in mainstreaming did not rest solely with them but also depended on the active cooperation of entities with which they engaged in mainstreaming.

**D. Despite being used as effective advocacy tools, reporting on children and armed conflict and sexual violence in conflict has faced potential risks related to unclear roles and responsibilities and lack of coherence**

*Reporting using the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangement on conflict-related sexual violence have been successfully used for advocacy*

37. As noted in paragraph 23, the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements have been useful instruments in supporting the offices of the Special Representatives in undertaking their critical advocacy roles.

*Organizational roles and responsibilities associated with the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict were clearer than those associated with the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence*

38. In all three case studies on the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the monitoring and reporting mechanism had achieved a high degree of maturity. Almost all stakeholders interviewed who provided information on the mechanism deemed it to be effective overall. Respective roles and responsibilities between headquarters staff of the Office and country-level members of the country task force on monitoring and reporting were reported to be clearly documented; stakeholders interviewed in the Central African Republic and Colombia, in particular, noted that data collection responsibilities were understood in a consistent manner across United Nations partners.

39. There was more variation regarding the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence across the three case studies of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, due in part to this system's more nascent development. A fundamental challenge was the lack of an institutional partner to anchor and coordinate the establishment and functioning of the arrangements at the country level. While UNICEF or relevant peacekeeping missions consistently coordinated data collection at the country-level, responsibility to coordinate the arrangements varied across different settings which led to a lack of clarity and consistency. In Colombia, stakeholders who provided information on the arrangements deemed this reporting mechanism to be less effective than the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. Responsibility for country-level compilation of data on conflict-related sexual violence was assigned to a designated subgroup of the gender-based violence cluster; interviews with members of this group and other United Nations partners indicated that there was not sufficient clarity on respective roles and responsibilities. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, some stakeholders interviewed cited gaps in understanding among relevant parties on how data for the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements were reported and coordinated between United Nations partners. Among the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict stakeholder survey respondents, 32 per cent rated the coordination of field monitoring data as either "fair" or "poor", compared with 18 per cent of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict survey respondents giving similar low ratings. Owing to the multitude of field and headquarters-based entities with some form of responsibility, inherent coordination challenges exist with both these monitoring systems.

*Coherence between the two reporting systems on a shared violation, as well as with other United Nations systems reporting on related issues, has been somewhat lacking*

40. Owing to differing methods and standards, the data produced by the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict and those produced by the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangement on conflict-related sexual violence in some instances lacked coherence, which posed potential reputational risk for the United Nations if not adequately explained.<sup>19</sup> A review of data for the one violation type that the two systems had in common over the 2014–2017 period, conflict-related sexual violence cases against children, identified such discrepancies. Out of the 10 countries for which both systems were used for reporting on such incidents, there were three with a higher number of violations reported in the monitoring mechanism on children and armed conflict than those reported in the monitoring arrangement on

<sup>19</sup> The systems are designed to collect data based on different Security Council mandates.

conflict-related sexual violence. While the two systems used different methodologies and sources for establishing trends and verifying cases, figures in the monitoring arrangement on conflict-related sexual violence for this shared violation should always exceed figures in the monitoring mechanism on children and armed conflict, as the former includes both child and adult victims.

41. Other United Nations entities were also responsible for reporting related data, notably gender-based violence statistics, which included conflict-related sexual violence. Case study and interview data indicated that the different methodologies being employed, including different violation verification criteria, resulted in two sets of statistics on conflict-related sexual violence. A guidance note on information-sharing between the monitoring arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence and the gender-based violence information management system was prepared under the auspices of United Nations Action.<sup>20</sup> In one case study country, every United Nations partner interviewed that was directly involved in the collection of conflict-related sexual violence and/or gender-based violence statistics cited risks related to misinterpretation of these different data sets. Some cited a specific instance where a misinterpretation of these closely related numbers caused confusion regarding the degree to which conflict-related sexual violence had decreased.

*Member States have expressed a strong interest for the offices of the Special Representatives to share and report on lessons learned*

42. Member States have expressed a strong interest for the offices of the Special Representatives to play a role in learning lessons and best practices in their respective thematic areas. In several intergovernmental meetings, Member States repeatedly expressed their interest in learning about how other national Governments were dealing with comparable issues, such as the development of legislation. None of the three offices had a systematic mechanism in place to identify, store and disseminate such knowledge for improved system-wide programme effectiveness. Some progress on this issue was already under way: the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reported having started a lessons learning function; the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict identified and documented lessons learned associated with work by the Team of Experts; and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children has focused on documenting and sharing lessons learned in its overall advocacy approach through various methods. Staff of the offices added that additional resources would be required to perform this role effectively.

## **E. The offices of the Special Representatives have not systematically engaged in strategic planning to inform their activities, including planning around possible synergies between the three offices**

*Distinct and discrete strategic plans for the offices of the Special Representatives are lacking*

43. Strategic planning processes and documentation varied widely across the offices of the Special Representatives. As table 6 indicates, all three performed some planning within the context of the budget process and the Special Representatives' senior managers' compacts, but only one developed an annual strategic plan. Furthermore, the offices were exempted from submitting programme performance reports for intergovernmental review, thus increasing the importance of ensuring that

<sup>20</sup> Provisional inter-agency guidance note (2016), available from [www.gbvims.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Provisional-Guidance-Note-on-Intersections-Between-GBVIMS-MARA.pdf](http://www.gbvims.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/Provisional-Guidance-Note-on-Intersections-Between-GBVIMS-MARA.pdf).

programme planning for the offices was sufficiently strategic. While two of the three offices did have some form of a workplan, these had several shortcomings: the plan of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict was not up to date; the plan of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict did not integrate the work programme of the Team of Experts and United Nations Action; and neither plan included adequate information on how the office would coordinate and collaborate with its United Nations partners at the country and regional levels.<sup>21</sup> In addition, there was no evidence that risk assessment to address prioritization among competing demands was undertaken by any of the offices. This point was also noted by an OIOS audit of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in 2016, which stated that the office was informally managing risks but needed to prepare and document a strategic plan and perform formal risk assessments.<sup>22</sup> Several interviewed staff from all three offices echoed the need for more systematic and timely strategic planning beyond their core mandated reporting responsibilities.

Table 6  
**Strategic and workplanning processes of the offices of the Special Representatives, 2014–2017**

	<i>Office of the Special Representative</i>		
	<i>Children and Armed Conflict</i>	<i>Sexual Violence in Conflict</i>	<i>Violence against Children</i>
Programme budget (biennial)	x	x	x
Senior managers' compacts of the Special Representatives (yearly)	x	x	x
Strategic plan (yearly)		x	
Workplan (yearly)	x <sup>a</sup>	x <sup>b</sup>	
Risk assessment			

Source: OIOS data request.

<sup>a</sup> Available only for the period 2015–2016.

<sup>b</sup> Prepared by the Team of Experts (joint programme 2015–2019), by United Nations Action (2015–2017) and by the Office of the Special Representative for implementation of several regional partnerships (2015–2017).

44. The three offices also lacked standardized workplans outlining activities they would undertake at the country and regional levels, although some methods were utilized on an ad hoc basis. The Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict had implementation plans with some regional partners related to country-specific joint communiqués and in case study countries women's protection or gender advisers took on some work planning. With regard to the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the monitoring and reporting mechanism field manual included information on roles and responsibilities among United Nations partners. The Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children worked within the framework of eight regional action plans and related cross-regional round tables. Nevertheless, detailed country and regional workplans were largely missing in the eight case studies. The specific roles of offices of the Special Representatives to support Governments and/or work with United Nations partners were thus not sufficiently documented.

<sup>21</sup> OIOS notes that some workplans had some information on how staff of the offices of the Special Representatives would work with their colleagues in the field.

<sup>22</sup> OIOS, Internal Audit Division, report No. 2016/173, p. 2.

*Inadequate strategic planning, including systematic risk assessment, has resulted in insufficient focus on where and how to use limited resources*

45. Given the broad mandates and unmet stakeholder demand associated with the work of the three offices of the Special Representatives, as discussed in paragraph 15, the offices needed to make two critical decisions on where and how to focus their efforts. Yet these decisions have not always been informed by a systematic assessment of risks and needs. This has differed somewhat between the three offices: the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict covered 22 geographic situations in 2017; the geographic focus of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict covered 19 countries in 2017; and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children had no restrictions on where to focus geographically due to its global mandate. However, across all three offices, the determination on how to engage with Member States and United Nations and civil society partners has, at times, been made through a more opportunistic approach. For example, in several cases, engagement with national Governments by the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children was unplanned and was primarily the result of an opportunity created by another United Nations entity, which led to the invitation by the national Government to meet. The Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict reported undertaking several recent planning exercises, but these have not been a regular part of the work planning process.

46. The balance between advocacy and operational work of the three offices has not always been clear. In Colombia, several stakeholders interviewed noted there was insufficient clarity regarding the role of the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict in following up on the recent peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo, an agreement that was reached with critical support provided by the Office. Regarding the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the issue pertained primarily to the Team of Experts. In all three case study countries assessed, the Team of Experts undertook activities described by most of its United Nations partners as “project-level collaboration” or “operational activities”. While this was within the mandate of the Team of Experts, stakeholders raised questions about boundaries between the Team and field-based agencies. For example, in Guinea all stakeholders interviewed indicated that the Team worked in a somewhat isolated manner, concentrating its efforts directly on the legal preparations deemed necessary to prosecute sexual violence in conflict cases. This was deemed successful particularly in terms of fostering national ownership. At the same time, stakeholders raised questions regarding the sustainability of such efforts. In Latin America there was no articulated strategy for how the Office intended to operationalize its strategic collaboration with United Nations partners in the field; this collaboration was often demand-driven based on partner advocacy needs. While the approaches described above have enabled flexibility, they have also created several risks, including duplication with United Nations partners, unclear roles, unmet client expectations, lack of sustainability and opportunity costs of not engaging in other settings that have unmet needs.

*The three offices of the Special Representatives have not been sufficiently strategic in the coordination of their own work programmes and working methods*

47. Table 7 summarizes the areas in which all three offices work and illustrates their common areas in terms of target population, type of violence and context. In this respect, there is considerable overlap across their mandates.



Table 7  
Areas of mandate coverage of the offices of the Special Representatives

		<i>Office of the Special Representative</i>		
		<i>Children and Armed Conflict</i>	<i>Sexual Violence in Conflict</i>	<i>Violence against Children</i>
Target population	Children	x	x	x
	Adults		x	
Types of violence	Sexual violence	x	x	x
	Grave violations	x	x <sup>a</sup>	x
	Other forms of violence			x
Context	Conflict settings	x	x	x
	Non-conflict settings		x <sup>b</sup>	x

<sup>a</sup> Covers one grave violation (sexual violence against children).

<sup>b</sup> Conflict covers post-conflict and crisis settings.

48. The offices of the Special Representatives have not adequately planned and coordinated between themselves regarding their respective work programmes, thus missing opportunities for enhanced synergies and efficiencies. In those limited instances where joint planning did occur, positive outcomes have resulted. For example, the aligned initiatives by the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict helped to support negotiations for the Colombia peace process, and joint activities by the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Violence against Children strengthened advocacy for the Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Occasional joint press releases have also helped to further amplify coordinated messaging around shared agendas. However, there were no formal mechanisms in place to share information and strategically coordinate around workplans, visits by the Special Representatives, media engagement and Member State and partner engagements. Stakeholders surveyed noted that there was room for greater coordination between the offices, and such coordination was assessed to be limited in all seven country case studies where two or more offices were working.

## V. Conclusion

49. The situations of children in armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and violence against children are, without question, tragic. It was to raise greater awareness around these issues, and to more effectively focus the work of the United Nations in addressing them, that the three positions of Special Representative were created. Despite the relatively small size of their offices, and the enormity of their mandates, all three have been effective champions in their respective thematic areas on the global, regional and national stages.

50. Yet large gaps remain, owing as much to factors beyond the control of the three offices (such as their limited budgets and the lack of political will among Member States) as to their own strategies and approaches. As thematic mandate holders, the Special Representatives cannot be entirely successful without effectively harnessing the strengths and capacities of the larger United Nations system. But for this to occur, partnerships must be strengthened, roles further clarified and work programmes more

closely aligned. The responsibility and accountability for these actions do not rest solely with the three Special Representatives, but they play a critical and pivotal role as the “guardian” of their respective thematic areas.

51. As advocates, the three offices have successfully strengthened global norms and standards, as well as prompted other United Nations entities to support implementation of those norms and standards on the ground. They have achieved these goals in a complex working environment. Despite the delineation between non-conflict and conflict settings, these offices have addressed situations in which the fundamental root causes of violence, inequality and abuse are perpetuated across all settings. Adding a further dimension to the work of the offices of the Special Representatives are the changes anticipated with the Secretary-General’s reform agenda for peace and security.

52. Moving forward, it must be acknowledged that there is overlap between the three offices in the beneficiaries they serve, the environments within which they work, the issues they address and the goals they wish to achieve. While fully recognizing and appreciating the separate mandates given to each office by Member States, enhanced coordination and cooperation between the three offices could facilitate greater effectiveness and efficiency in the United Nations response to all three issues. This could include joint work planning and additional information-sharing in areas of common focus. Such increased cooperation could strengthen the ability of the offices to be strong independent advocates for their respective areas of concern.

53. The three offices of the Special Representatives have existed long enough to take stock of their past achievements and look ahead to their future roles. The offices have undoubtedly acted as catalysts for transformational change by inspiring, supporting and guiding positive action. Their unique added value as the voice of the Secretary-General, with moral authority and expertise, can be further enriched by identifying and capitalizing upon synergies between the three offices. While this evaluation did not review the question of structural efficiency, the three offices should discuss and consider a more integrated approach in order to achieve greater synergies and influence. It is also essential that Member States, who crafted and supported the offices through their mandate renewal process, are consulted on such fundamental issues. This is especially important within the context of ongoing United Nations institutional reform, as well as within the broader framework of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

54. Considerable progress still needs to be made in addressing the critical issues of children in armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and violence against children. Progress is reliant on making the right choices for how the three offices will function, the continued strong commitment and hard work of the Special Representatives and their staff, as well as the commitment and resolve of the entire United Nations system.

## VI. Recommendations

55. OIOS makes the following five important recommendations to the three offices of the Special Representatives:

### **Recommendation 1 (result A, paras. 18–21)**

56. **Enhance their communication strategies** to more effectively share their advocacy messages, taking into consideration the following components:

- Establishment of performance benchmarks for engagement through social media and other communication activities against which to measure results

- Strengthening of synergies with United Nations media channels, including the Department of Public Information<sup>23</sup> and partners in the field with in-house communications capacity
- For the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, formulation of more targeted campaign initiatives.

*Indicator of achievement: Revised communications strategies that factor in relevant components mentioned above*

**Recommendation 2 (result A, para. 21, and result C, paras. 31–32)**

57. **Strengthen their respective headquarters task forces**, in consultation with their partners, specifically:

- For the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, by assessing the feasibility of enlarging the current narrow focus of the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict on the annual report to include wider coordination considerations
- For the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, by identifying and implementing measures to improve United Nations Action so that it better supports coordination of programme activities
- For the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, by ensuring the Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children holds frequent and regular meetings with the participation of its members as well as further identifying ways in which the office and the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children can mutually support the shared goal of accelerating progress towards Sustainable Development Goal target 16.2.

*Indicator of achievement: Meeting agendas, minutes, follow-up notes and any other relevant documentation demonstrating strengthened coordination function*

**Recommendation 3 (result D, para. 42)**

58. **Continue to develop options for incorporating lesson learning mechanisms into their work programmes** to collect best practices, including on the work of other United Nations entities and results achieved by national Governments. This should take into consideration other related knowledge management platforms such as those housed within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other United Nations partners.

*Indicator of achievement: Plan with options for lesson learning mechanisms*

**Recommendation 4 (result C, paras. 33 and 34, and result E, paras. 43–47)**

59. **Introduce regular risk assessment and strategic planning into their work programmes**, to better target where and how they will engage at the country, regional and global levels. This should also include consideration of the roles of the offices of the Special Representatives in relation to their regional and country level United Nations partners, as well as the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

<sup>23</sup> Now the Department of Global Communications.

*Indicator of achievement: Development of strategic risk assessment and planning mechanisms by the offices of the Special Representatives*

**Recommendation 5 (result E, para. 48)**

60. **Enhance the coordination and cooperation between the three offices**, taking into consideration the following components:

- Joint work planning, including assessment of possible efficiency gains achieved through joint mission travel
- Additional information-sharing in areas of common focus
- Collaboration around joint media campaigns and other communication activities
- For the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict and on Sexual Violence in Conflict, joint review of opportunities for increased coherence of data collection and reporting using the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements.

*Indicator of achievement: Relevant documentation demonstrating enhanced coordination and cooperation, including documentation of joint planning meetings*

(Signed) Heidi **Mendoza**  
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services  
March 2019

## Annex\*

**Management responses****Response by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to the Office of Internal Oversight Services programme evaluation of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children**

On behalf of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, I welcome the evaluation report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). We have appreciated the significant efforts of the evaluation team to research and understand our mandate and to thoroughly assess our activities, including through speaking to our team, United Nations colleagues and other stakeholders and reading extensive documentation. We made every attempt to provide complete information systematically and transparently to the evaluators and spent significant time ourselves in ensuring we complied fully with all requests.

We have appreciated the opportunity to examine our progress over the past several years and welcome the recommendations contained in the report.

In particular, we welcome recommendation 3, which calls on the offices to incorporate lessons learned into their ongoing work. During the reporting period before the report was issued, I created a Lessons Learned and Best Practices Unit in my office. This unit is looking back over 20 years of the children and armed conflict mandate as well as interviewing partners and stakeholders to collate lessons learned globally and draw together best practices, to be shared with colleagues in the field and with a broader audience to further the protection of children. This unit will also institutionalize a lessons learned mechanism that will automatically feed information back into the system to ensure these lessons are constantly applied.

As regards recommendation 1, I would like to underline the extraordinary success that we have had in our communications work during the review period. We carried out a two-year campaign entitled “Children Not Soldiers”, which is generally agreed to have been extremely effective and to have catalysed real change on the ground for children. Through this campaign, we were able to encourage the signature of all eight countries appearing in annexes to the Secretary-General’s report on children and armed conflict to sign action plans with the United Nations to end the recruitment and use of children. Also over the reporting period, our metrics for social media and other platforms multiplied by many times and we were also able to leverage United Nations-wide platforms to spread the word about children and armed conflict. I am also pleased to report that in the first half of 2018, we will be launching a new global campaign aimed at raising awareness and encouraging action on the entire children and armed conflict agenda.

Regarding recommendations 2 and 4, we are equally supportive. We had reached the same conclusion independently that the headquarters task force chaired by the

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\* In the present annex, the Office of Internal Oversight Services sets out the full text of comments received from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children. The practice has been instituted in line with General Assembly resolution [64/263](#), following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee. The comments have been reproduced as received.

Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict could benefit from a wider agenda to further mainstream this issue into the entities of the task force. This is a recommendation we will be actioning in 2018.

On carrying out additional strategic planning and introducing risk assessment into our work programme, it would indeed assist my Office in most strategically targeting our limited resources. This will also be actioned during 2018. As the OIOS audit of my Office was quoted in the evaluation, it is worth noting some additional relevant conclusions of that audit which was finalized in 2016: a monitoring and reporting framework on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict was established and functioning; performance indicators were in place; mechanisms were in place for coordination with other entities/agencies; activities to raise awareness on the plight of children affected by armed conflict were conducted in a manner consistent with the mandate; reports to the Security Council relating to the protection of children in armed conflict were timely and consistent with the approved monitoring and reporting mechanism; risks to achievement of the mandate were being managed but had not been formally documented; annual reports to the General Assembly and Human Rights Council were timely and consistent with the Office's mandate; and management of extrabudgetary funds was consistent with organizational policies.

On recommendation 5, we agree wholeheartedly that increased cooperation among the three offices, as well as with other relevant entities, could increase our collective efficiency and impact positively on our outcomes. We are in frequent contact with the other two offices specifically, including providing talking points to the other Special Representatives when they travel to countries that are on the children and armed conflict agenda and consulting before and after trips to the field. While it is necessary to maintain the unique identities of each of the three mandates in order to have maximum impact, there are certainly more opportunities that could be taken advantage of in the realm of campaigns and communications that we will explore.

The coherence of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangement data collection and reporting is also referred to in sections of the text of the evaluation, including as a header in which the two systems are compared, entitled "Coherence between the two reporting systems on a shared violation, as well as with other United Nations systems reporting on related issues, has been somewhat lacking". As noted in the text, these two mechanisms have different methodologies, different systems and different mandates, from which one should conclude that two different outcomes could be expected. Therefore, comparing two unique data collection and monitoring systems clouds unnecessarily the measurement of efficiency in the one area of small overlap, namely, the violation of *sexual violence* only for those *under 18* in situations of *conflict*. The way the text reads, specifically at the beginning of paragraph 40, could lead the reader to believe that the two reporting systems overall should aspire to increased coherence between them, and not just on this small area of mandate overlap. During the reporting period, the two offices shared information and data in this area to increase coherence in reporting and to paint the broadest possible picture regarding the violations the offices are mandated to cover. I agree with the statement in the report that additional explanation should be supplied regarding this particular issue to reduce potential reputational risk; however, expectations should be realistic in this regard as two separate monitoring systems will not always reflect exactly the same data, even on a small area of overlap.

A point that was raised at the beginning of the evaluation process is the usefulness of appearing to compare three offices with separate mandates to each other. As we understand it, the reason the three are being assessed at the same time is because all happened to appear in section 1 of the biennium budget. As such, the

stated objective of the evaluation was: “To assess the relevance and effectiveness of the offices of the Special Representatives for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children in catalysing change in their respective areas of concern.” Such an objective is a welcome and needed opportunity to learn from the past and help plan for the future.

While we understand well the constraints in reporting within a certain word count, and therefore amalgamating some common conclusions about three offices makes sense, we found that the overall format of the report could lead a reader to believe that the primary objective of the report is to compare these offices to each other. Additionally, because the descriptions of the three offices’ activities are merged in generalized statements in several paragraphs, many nuances between the offices regarding both successes and challenges have been lost. This has led on occasion to an oversimplification of the activities of each office, and more importantly, to a lack of clarity in the text as to which office needs to improve in which area, which makes addressing these concerns more difficult (e.g. paras. 30 and 33 and figures IV, V and VI). However, we will take on board all comments determined to be relevant to my office and endeavour to make improvements in these areas.

Overall, we have appreciated participating in this process as it has sharpened our focus on our work and methodologies. There are several good points of analysis in the report and we will be taking those on board immediately.

We thank the evaluation team and OIOS for their dedication to this task and for their efforts to ensure that the report was accurate and as helpful as possible. We look forward to continuing to review the elements of this report as it will help greatly in our work.

## **Response of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict to the Office of Internal Oversight Services programme evaluation of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children**

Further to my memorandum of 23 March 2018 transmitting my formal management response, I herewith attach a revised response based on discussions between our offices.

Thank you again for your cooperation with this exercise.

### **Introduction**

**My Office acknowledges and accepts, in principle, the five overarching recommendations outlined in the report.** However, we have made a number of qualifying observations and caveats specific to our mandate during oral interviews and consultations throughout the process, as specified in the narrative below. The recommendation plan of action, required as part of the implementation process related to this report, also reflects the qualifications and caveats as expressed hereunder.

At the outset of the review process, our Office expressed the concern that a simultaneous review covering three complex mandates, to be captured in a single report of 8,500 words, may result in insufficient context, depth of analysis and mandate specificity; it is my view, unfortunately, that this is the case. Therefore, it necessitates this detailed management response that reflects the current state and challenges for the conflict-related sexual violence mandate.

### **Considerations related to the question of the overall relevance and effectiveness of the offices of the Special Representatives**

While the report acknowledges that despite “political and operational challenges, as well as their small size, the three offices of the Special Representatives have been effective champions in their thematic areas”, it fails to acknowledge the fundamental paradigm shift that has occurred since the establishment of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the transformative nature and approach of the mandate, moving from an exclusively remedial, reactive and service-delivery response, to a proactive, political-diplomatic and preventive approach to addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

In the past eight years since the adoption of Security Council resolution [1888 \(2009\)](#), the silence that has endured through the ages has finally been broken; conflict-related sexual violence is no longer history’s invisible and unspoken crime. It is recognized as a tactic of war, torture and terrorism that constitutes a legitimate threat to the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security. It is now understood that an operational security and justice response is required to prevent sexual violence, combined with comprehensive services and reparations for survivors.



## Considerations related to the methodology of the review

While the Office recognizes some of the practical constraints and challenges in conducting the review, there are nonetheless several aspects of the methodology that are problematic, with implications for the evaluation results, conclusions and final recommendations:

(a) As mentioned above, the simultaneous treatment of the three mandates with a comparative emphasis in order to draw overarching recommendations and conclusions, has adversely impacted the scope and specificity of the recommendations in particular;

(b) In terms of the guiding questions of the review, it would have been important to address an additional question to the United Nations Action entities and other United Nations stakeholders on their role and performance in support of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The emphasis on the overall responsibility of the United Nations system was deemed a crucial factor by the Security Council in crafting the mandate, as expressed in resolution 1888 (2009), in which the Council encouraged the entities comprising United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as other relevant parts of the United Nations system, to support the work of the aforementioned Special Representative of the Secretary-General and to continue and enhance cooperation and information-sharing among all relevant stakeholders in order to reinforce coordination and avoid overlap at the headquarters and country levels and improve system-wide response;

(c) The selection of a limited number of country case studies and some of the broad conclusions that have been drawn on that basis ultimately fails to capture the overall gains that have been made and the strategic considerations and assessments of risk and opportunity that have consistently informed the execution of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate;

(d) The limited time frame determined for the review (2014 to 2017) has resulted in an incomplete picture of the progress and challenges of the conflict-related sexual violence mandate.

## Considerations related to the evaluation results and recommendations

### On coordination

The analysis of coordination could benefit from a broader and more nuanced perspective. The review has focused primarily, if not exclusively, on the United Nations Action forum as the primary coordination vehicle for the mandate and concludes that in recent years it has served primarily as an information-sharing forum. However, an assessment over the lifespan of the mandate reveals that the United Nations Action network has been effective and crucial in several respects beyond the important aspect of information-sharing, such as knowledge building, guidance development and elaboration of training materials; discussion on strategic initiatives and catalytic action in priority countries; preparation and follow-up of missions of the Special Representative; and policy considerations, consensus building and decisions at the level of steering committee principals, including discussion and clearance of the annual report of the Secretary-General.

Moreover, the scope of the review omits an innovation that has incentivized and driven coordination, namely the United Nations Action multi-partner trust fund. The trust fund disburses funds to United Nations Action entities for projects and initiatives in priority countries to catalyse responses to conflict-related sexual violence. A

condition of funding approval for any project is that it be developed, submitted and executed by two or more United Nations Action entities. Implementation of these joint projects is one of the most salient and practical manifestations of coordinated action and partnership building. The Special Representative has prioritized the mobilization of resources for the trust fund, raising millions of dollars for projects, and the continued functioning of a small United Nations Action secretariat.

In addition, a vital part of the strategy of the Office of the Special Representative has been to simultaneously strengthen bilateral relationships and coordination with specific United Nations Action entities, which the review has not examined or taken into consideration as an aspect of overall coordination. Key substantive and strategic considerations inform these bilateral relationships which have been built with each of the 14 United Nations Action entities on specific dimensions of the mandate, in order to ensure a holistic, survivor-centred and cross-sectoral response. These bilateral relationships are a fundamental manifestation of coordination and mainstreaming of conflict-related sexual violence considerations in policy and programmes throughout the United Nations system.

Furthermore, the review does not take into consideration issues of coordination and mainstreaming inherent in the structure and functions of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence, which is composed of officers from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Every engagement by the Team of Experts contributes to country-level coordination in support of affected countries.

I wish to address a specific reference in paragraph 40 of the report,\* which notes that survey respondents rated as either “fair” or “poor” the “coordination of field monitoring by the Office”. I am concerned that the focus on and inclusion of this reference reflects a lack of understanding of the role of the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict related to the implementation of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements. It is not reasonable to expect an Office with a programme staff of four officers to coordinate field monitoring in over 20 situations of concern. This is the role and responsibility of the relevant operational entities at the country level, including women’s protection advisers who are mandated by the Security Council for this purpose. The role and contribution of the Office related to monitoring, analysis and reporting on sexual violence in conflict has been to facilitate the legislative basis for establishment of a global monitoring system through Council resolution 1960 (2010); provide policy guidance on implementation of the monitoring arrangements, including a definition and conceptual framing of conflict-related sexual violence agreed in the United Nations system; and ongoing consultation with women’s protection advisers and other field-level focal points on implementation.

I agree in principle with the review’s recommendation 5 to enhance coordination and coherence particularly between the offices of the Special Representatives on Sexual Violence in Conflict and for Children and Armed Conflict. However, as noted above, the collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, which is already an aspect of our daily work and interactions, is one among several critical partnerships that the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict wishes to enhance. Further discussion will be required between the offices to determine practical measures or procedures to enhance collaboration.

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\* Paragraph 39 of the final version of the report.

## On mainstreaming

The review defines mainstreaming as “bringing the respective issues of children and armed conflict, sexual violence in conflict and violence against children into the agendas and work programmes of other entities”. As noted above, the focused and strategic bilateral engagements with each United Nations Action entity are representative of the coordination role of the Office, but also of the mainstreaming of conflict-related sexual violence considerations in the policies and programmes of United Nations partners in order to foster a comprehensive and multisectoral response.

However, the review does not examine or take into account another fundamental aspect of mainstreaming, related to how conflict-related sexual violence considerations are now reflected in key aspects of the work of the Security Council itself. This is at the heart of the transformational change and paradigm shift that has occurred since the establishment of the mandate, anchoring conflict-related sexual violence as a peace and security issue – it constitutes a central focus and strategy of the Office of the Special Representative. The conflict-related sexual violence infrastructure created by resolution 1888 (2009) is now fundamentally linked to United Nations sanctions through resolutions 1960 (2010), 2106 (2012) and 2331 (2016); every relevant country-specific sanctions regime includes conflict-related sexual violence as part of its sanctions designation criteria, and the expert panels and monitoring teams of the Security Council committees consistently interact with my Office and increasingly include conflict-related sexual violence as part of their investigations and reports to the committees. A number of individuals have been designated for sanctions for sexual violence crimes. The Security Council committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities now contains in its update resolution explicit reference to conflict-related sexual violence and a cross-reference to resolution 2331 (2016), which represents a critical linkage of the conflict-related sexual violence agenda with the United Nations counter-terrorism infrastructure. All country-specific resolutions of the Council covered in the Secretary-General’s report on conflict-related sexual violence consistently carry language on sexual violence, including references to the implementation of the joint communiqués of the Special Representative, in line with the key operational paragraphs of resolutions 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2012). Considerations of conflict-related sexual violence are now consistently reflected in the Security Council’s peacekeeping mission mandate authorizations and renewals, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration provisions of Council resolutions. A core aspect of the work of the Office of the Special Representative’s programme team is to interact with Council delegations to provide language and advice on sexual violence in conflict for Council resolutions and presidential statements.

Another central aspect of the mainstreaming strategy of the Office of the Special Representative has been to build Member State consensus beyond the Security Council. This includes working with the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for a General Assembly declaration on the prevention of sexual violence in conflict that has been endorsed by 146 countries to date and working with Argentina for adoption of Assembly resolution 69/293 designating 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. These political level commitments are not reflected in the review report as they were achieved prior to the determined review period, yet they are important and indicative of efforts to universalize the consensus, foster accountability for conflict-related sexual violence crimes and encourage greater resource allocation for the programmatic response.

### **On coherence between the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements and the monitoring and reporting mechanism**

It is appropriate that the recommendations encourage the offices of the Special Representatives to consider opportunities for “increased coherence” between the respective monitoring systems. However, in the evaluation results and recommendations there is little or no mention of the central responsibility in this regard of the field-based entities that anchor monitoring of violations, namely the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, OHCHR and UNICEF, and to a lesser extent the United Nations Population Fund, in terms of their lead role related to the gender-based violence area of responsibility, which also feeds some data into the monitoring arrangements. The discussion of coherence between the systems should be driven primarily at the field level, which is where information sharing and joint analysis is most critical. This would ensure that the information ultimately transmitted to the offices of the Special Representatives, including for the reports of the Secretary-General, is coherent and consistent. The Office of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict has consistently encouraged such field level interaction, as reflected in the provisional guidance note on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1960 (2010).

It should also be noted that the issue of human rights information-sharing, common verification standards and shared databases is a long-standing and complex challenge in the United Nations system and was the focus of intensive consideration over the past three years in the context of the Human Rights Up Front Initiative spearheaded by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and OHCHR. Therefore, expectations should be realistic of the role that the offices of the Special Representatives can play to ensure coherence of the United Nations system in this regard, notwithstanding their role as guardians of their respective agendas.

### **On strategic planning and risk management**

The evaluation results indicate that “inadequate strategic planning, including systematic risk assessment, has resulted in insufficient focus on where and how to use limited resources”. While I agree that strategic planning and risk assessment has not been consistently structured across the different components of the Office and that improvements can be made to ensure more regular and structured strategic planning and risk assessment processes, the report leaves an incorrect impression of a lack of a clear and focused strategy of the mandate and continuous consideration of opportunities and risks that inform that strategy.

Currently, strategic planning is reflected in the workplans of the Office of the Special Representative, which have been built on the basis of the Security Council resolutions and the Special Representative’s six-point priority agenda established in 2010; the multi-year joint programmes of the Team of Experts for 2012–2014 and 2015–2019, which are agreed by the entities composing the Team, namely UNDP, OHCHR and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and ultimately approved by the Special Representative; and the United Nations Action strategic frameworks, which are normally agreed among the member entities on an annual basis.

In terms of “where and how” to focus, the overarching strategic imperative is to prioritize the situations of conflict where incidents, trends and patterns of sexual violence are occurring, with the aim of preventing these violations.

Within this broad set of countries, the strategy of the Office of the Special Representative has been to further prioritize engagement in situations where the Secretary-General has listed State parties in order to support those Member States to put in place prevention measures and ultimately ensure their de-listing. Therefore, it

will be noted that structured agreements in the form of joint communiqués, frameworks of cooperation and implementation plans exist with all the State parties currently listed by the Secretary-General, with the exception of the Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic where to date agreements have not been reached in spite of our engagement. The largest expenditure of mandate resources has been in these situations.

In addition, strategic decisions have been made to focus on a number of other countries as test cases for important dimensions of the agenda. For example, in Guinea the focus has been on supporting a nationally owned and led accountability process for grave violations that were originally referred to the International Criminal Court by the Security Council. In Colombia, the focus was to engage with the parties to the conflict for the inclusion of provisions on conflict-related sexual violence in the peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo and to support the implementation of the provisions. In Mali, the focus is on developing a more structured engagement with non-state armed groups, six of which have now issued unilateral communiqués on sexual violence in conflict. In Iraq, the focus is on engaging with federal and regional authorities to ensure accountability for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant fighters who have used sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism, to address the sale, trade and trafficking in women and girls and to secure services and reparations for survivors. At the same time, the mandate must also be flexible and responsive to address urgent and sometimes unanticipated situations. For instance, the Office is now focusing priority attention on Myanmar and Bangladesh related to the Rohingya crisis, with frameworks of cooperation under discussion with both countries.

### **On incorporating lessons learned**

The strategic approach of the mandate as outlined above continues to generate lessons learned and best practices that feed into all ongoing engagements and inform strategic decisions on future priorities.

In addition, at the level of the Team of Experts, a lessons learned retreat was organized in 2015, and a lessons learned publication building on the retreat is anticipated in 2018. The Team of Experts also organized, in 2017, an experience-sharing exercise among African militaries with whom the mandate is engaged, for them to share lessons learned on the measures being undertaken to prevent sexual violence in conflict. The report of this exercise will also serve as a lessons learned resource for armed forces in several countries.

In 2013, a five-year review of United Nations Action was conducted by an independent expert, with a number of recommendations made on the basis of lessons learned and innovative practices by the network since its establishment in 2008. That review has informed decisions related to United Nations Action priorities.

I agree with the observation that the mandate would benefit from more systematic stocktaking of lessons learned and incorporation of experience into strategic planning and risk assessment. However, I am sceptical about recommendation 3 as it has been articulated in the report. Building on the forthcoming Team of Experts lessons learned report and the United Nations Action five-year review, I would like to prioritize a more comprehensive exercise that looks at every aspect of work under the mandate, including political engagements related to Security Council processes, advocacy for and implementation of national and regional level agreements and engagement with civil society. The resulting product will feed into my decision-making regarding the future strategic direction and priorities of the mandate. From such an exercise, we will also be in a better position to determine how

to incorporate lessons learning processes more systematically into our work programmes.

One important caveat in this regard relates to resources and the capacity required to establish lessons learning mechanisms. A number of United Nations entities have well-established lessons learning and best-practice hubs, with the resources required to sustain such structures. Yet, the report makes recommendations regarding an additional process for which the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict will be responsible, without any reference to the additional resources that will be required for its execution.

### **On resources for effective execution of the mandate**

I am extremely concerned that the review does not explicitly address the fundamental issue of capacity and resources for the Office to comprehensively execute the Security Council mandate. During the consultations with the OIOS team, my Office emphasized the fact that the regular budget allotment and staffing capacity for the Office was agreed early in the life of the mandate, at a time when both the scope of countries covered and the depth of the country engagements were significantly more limited than they are now. As practice has been established in this area, there is now also a far greater demand and expectation of Member States for support from the Office. The practical inability of the Office to engage with national authorities and provide support as may be required in all the countries covered in the ambit of the Secretary-General's report constitutes one of the most critical reputational risks for the Secretary-General and the United Nations system. Currently, the Office has only eight regularly budgeted posts, reduced from the level of nine posts originally established.

Consequently, the Office relies heavily on extrabudgetary resources, which carries a number of risk factors. The capacity and time required to fundraise and report to multiple donors is a risk factor for the execution of the programme. The unpredictability of extrabudgetary resources hampers strategic planning and is also a significant reputational risk factor as the Office may not be able to sustain engagements with national authorities in affected countries until such time as United Nations field-based entities are able to take up the burden. There is also a significant political risk, with sensitivities from many Member States that the mandate not become "donor driven" and that certain countries not have greater "leverage" over the mandate and its priorities as a result of their financial support, which is sometimes earmarked and conditional.

One of the consistent requests expressed by my Office throughout the review process was that the OIOS team also make a realistic assessment of the "size of the task and mandate" related to existing staff capacity; and for this to be compared with other offices and mandates in the United Nations system. Therefore, I consider it essential for the review report, at a minimum, to surface these concerns, as well as the significant risk factors noted above, and for these considerations to be reflected as part of the report follow-up process.

**Response of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children to the Office of Internal Oversight Services programme evaluation of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children**

Thank you for your memorandum of 5 March 2018, sharing the draft report of the evaluation of the offices of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, on Sexual Violence in Conflict and on Violence against Children.

I would like to acknowledge the spirit of collaboration and engagement of the focal points in the evaluation team in the process of the evaluation and their openness in reviewing the data and evidence gathered. This has been a constructive process and has resulted in a draft report containing useful information and helpful suggestions to strengthen the work of my Office. We are on the whole in agreement with the draft report and its recommendations.

As acknowledged in the draft report, the mandate of the Special Representative on Violence against Children covers all forms of violence, in all settings and in all countries, in line with General Assembly resolution [62/141](#), which defined its scope by building on the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children ([A/61/299](#)). To ensure a strategic focus and achieve concrete results, the mandate of the Special Representative has, from its inception, given particularly high attention to three key priorities, namely, the development in each country of a national agenda on violence against children, the enactment of a comprehensive legal ban on all forms of violence against children and the consolidation of data and research on violence against children. These priorities informed the planning and implementation of the activities of the Office of the Special Representative, as well as its cooperation with partners, including regional organizations and national Governments.

The draft report states that “the three offices lacked standardized country and regional level work planning mechanisms.” In this regard, I would like to note that, as highlighted in the draft report itself (para. 25), at the regional and subregional levels, the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children initiated and/or participated in forums with regional organizations, Member States and other partners that helped to catalyse political will, and it successfully led cross-regional forums assembling like-minded intergovernmental institutions; these results were achieved through sustained engagement following a consultative process with partners that capitalized on the regionally oriented implementation of the recommendations of the 2006 study. I would also note that in this process, my Office has worked in close cooperation with regional partners to support the development of eight regional plans on violence against children, which have been adopted at the head of State or the ministerial level. These high-level regional plans include key commitments to ensure children’s protection from violence and provide a strategic planning framework for advancing and assessing progress in violence prevention and elimination. Periodic meetings are held with regional partners to assess and advance progress in their implementation and in several cases a regional monitoring mechanism was put in place and regional studies were co-produced to monitor progress. Moreover, my Office organizes an annual cross-regional meeting bringing together regional organizations from across the globe to assess, accelerate and sustain progress in regional implementation of commitments towards children’s protection from violence.

The draft report states that “in several cases, engagement by the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children with national Governments was unplanned and the result of an opportunity created by other United Nations entities.” In this regard, I would note that, as acknowledged by the draft report itself (para. 25), in selected countries the work of the Office was oriented around specific advocacy and policy dialogue goals that precipitated government commitments, including the promotion of legislative reforms and national plans of action on violence against children and the development of violence against children data surveys. These were indeed the core priorities pursued by the Office of the Special Representative in its mandated cooperation with Member States across regions. But in addition, while acting within the framework of the priorities set out for my mandate in General Assembly resolution [62/141](#), my Office has consistently been open to seizing all opportunities to effectively support national implementation efforts and to advocate for increased protection of children from violence. As has been systematically documented in the reports of the Special Representative to the Assembly and the Human Rights Council, my engagement with Governments has primarily been aimed at supporting the mandate’s key priorities, namely the development in each country of a national agenda on ending violence against children; the enactment of a legal ban on all forms of violence against children; and the consolidation of data and research on violence against children. This has led to concrete results, including a visible increase in the number of national plans of action on violence against children, from 47 (at the start of the mandate) to more than 90 today, as well as an increase in the number of countries with a comprehensive legal ban on violence against children, which more than tripled (from 16 at the start of the mandate to more than 50 now). In some cases, special opportunities were sought to support Governments’ strong expression of political will and commitment to act and achieve positive change by consolidating measures for violence prevention and elimination, as well as to address emerging concerns and prevent the adoption of measures that might create high risks for children’s protection in any setting, for example, through the adoption of laws and policies that might weaken the level of children’s safety and care. These actions have always been undertaken in close cooperation with United Nations partners, regional organizations and national Governments and in collaboration with civil society organizations.

The draft report states that “in Latin America there was no articulated strategy for how the Office of the Special Representative on Violence against Children intended to operationalize its strategic collaboration with United Nations partners in the field with associated risks.” The period under review (2014–2017) was critical to further advance implementation of the three subregional plans on violence against children which had been previously adopted at the ministerial level and developed in cooperation with United Nations and regional partners: for South America (in 2011), Central America (in 2011) and the Caribbean (in 2012). Guided by this policy framework, between 2014 and 2017 regular coordination meetings were held in the region and my Office undertook 14 official country visits that were planned and organized in close collaboration with United Nations country teams, with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) often playing a lead role, as well as with national authorities. These missions achieved concrete results, including widening of the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on a communications procedure; the enactment of new national laws on ending violence against children, including in the school context and in the administration of juvenile justice, and on enhancing the protection of child victims; as well as the promotion of household surveys on violence against children. My Office also promoted high-level regional meetings on violence against children in close cooperation and with the active participation of United Nations partners and Member States and in



collaboration with civil society; these included an Organization of American States (OAS) inter-american congress, held in Brazil (2014); an OAS inter-american meeting, held in Barbados (2017); a Caribbean Community regional meeting, held in Trinidad and Tobago (2014); a regional forum with the private sector in Brazil (2017); and a world congress on the rights of the child held in Mexico. In addition, my Office hosted four regional expert meetings which were co-organized with United Nations partners, regional institutions and Member States and promoted in cooperation with civil society organizations, respectively on early childhood (2015), children in centres of detention (2016), crime prevention and child protection from violence (2016) and children on the move (2017).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your colleagues for the excellent cooperation over the course of the evaluation.

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