

The Oslo Conference on Safe Schools

PROTECTING EDUCATION FROM ATTACK

Oslo, Norway 28-29 May 2015



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A conference that brought states together to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and show their political commitment to protect education from attack, including by using the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

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1 Introduction by the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Børge Brende

As a result of armed conflict, 28 million children are currently out of school and are being denied their right to education. The military use of schools and universities has been documented in 25 conflict zones worldwide. These figures bear witness to the devastating impact of armed conflict on children and young people. We therefore welcomed the opportunity to convene the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools: Protecting Education from Attack on 28–29 May 2015. At the Conference, representatives of states came together to show their interest in – and commitment to – our common goal of enhancing the protection of schools and education in situations of conflicts and crisis. During the Conference, 37 countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. In the time since the Conference, an additional 12 countries have endorsed the Declaration, bringing it to 49 at the time of publishing this report. The Safe Schools Declaration is still open for endorsement, and I encourage more countries to follow suit and make a commitment to take action on this important issue.

Conflict situations are, by their very nature, violent, unsafe, unpredictable and frightening. For the people affected, the future is often unclear and hope is scarce. In situations such as these, children and young people are more dependent than ever on the stability, protection and learning environment that schools and universities can provide. Without access to quality learning, children are not only being deprived of education today; they are also being robbed of future opportunities. This affects all of us. Attacks on education are therefore not only a humanitarian and development issue. They are also social, political, and moral issues, to which we are obliged to respond.

The Safe Schools Declaration is a political initiative to reduce the impact of conflict on education. The Declaration endorses the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. The Guidelines provide practical guidance for the parties to conflicts, with a view to reducing the impact of armed conflict on schools and universities, on individual pupils and students, and on society as a whole. Both documents were developed through a process of consultations that began in 2012, initiated by civil society, and then led by Argentina and Norway, supported by a core group of states to completion. The process drew on expertise from states, international organisations and civil society. This partnership remains essential to our work.

Our intention is that the Declaration and Guidelines should now provide the framework for a collective effort to achieve real change in the lives of young people affected by conflict. Strengthening education is a key priority for Norway. And nowhere is the need to strengthen education more urgent than in situations of armed conflict. We remain committed to this work and look forward to continued cooperation with our international partners to ensure safe schools for all.

Børge Brende, utenriksminister




Foto: Sjøwall/
Utenriksdepartementet

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3 States that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration

To date, 49 states have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration. The following 37 states endorsed the Declaration during the Conference in writing and/or in statements: Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, the Czech Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Finland, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Montenegro, Mozambique, Nigeria, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Uruguay, and Zambia. In addition, the Central African Republic, Chad, Costa Rica, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Niger, Panama, Sierra Leone, South-Sudan and Sweden endorsed the Declaration shortly after the Conference. The Safe Schools Declaration is still open for endorsement.



Representatives from 37 countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration on 29 May 2015 in Oslo.

States that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration
(where no date is given, the state endorsed the Declaration on 29 May 2015)

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Afghanistan | 26. Liechtenstein |
| 2. Argentina | 27. Luxembourg |
| 3. Austria | 28. Madagascar |
| 4. Brazil | 29. Malaysia (17.06.15) |
| 5. Bulgaria | 30. Montenegro |
| 6. Central African Republic (23.06.15) | 31. Mozambique |
| 7. Chad (30.07.15) | 32. New Zealand |
| 8. Chile | 33. The Netherlands |
| 9. Costa Rica (02.06.15) | 34. Niger (23.06.15) |
| 10. Côte d'Ivoire | 35. Nigeria |
| 11. Czech Republic | 36. Norway |
| 12. Ecuador | 37. Palestine |
| 13. Finland | 38. Panama (17.06.15) |
| 14. Georgia | 39. Poland |
| 15. Greece | 40. Portugal |
| 16. Honduras | 41. Qatar |
| 17. Iceland | 42. Sierra Leone (12.06.15) |
| 18. Ireland | 43. South Africa |
| 19. Italy | 44. South Sudan (23.06.15) |
| 20. Jamaica | 45. Spain |
| 21. Jordan | 46. Sweden (25.06.15) |
| 22. Kazakhstan (24.07.15) | 47. Switzerland |
| 23. Kenya (23.06.15) | 48. Uruguay |
| 24. Lebanon (24.06.15) | 49. Zambia |
| 25. Liberia | |

4 Summary of Conference. May 29th 2015

The six main sessions of the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools were held in Oslo on 29 May 2015.

The Conference was opened by Mr Børge Brende, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide, Norwegian Minister of Defence, George Warner, Liberian Minister of Education, and Ziauddin Yousafzai, UN Special Advisor on Global Education and co-founder of the Malala Fund, also spoke at the opening session.



Ziauddin Yousafzai, UN Special Advisor and co-founder of the Malala Fund, called for states to show courage by clearly stating that the current situation with attacks on schools is completely unacceptable.

During Session II

A Growing Challenge – Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Attacks on Schools, Mr Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, spoke about the immediate consequences and global effects of attacks on schools. Ms Yvette Stevens, Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the UN in Geneva, then spoke about attacks on schools' long-term effects on society.

Session III

The Military Use of Educational Facilities in Conflict, was opened by Mr Bede Sheppard, Deputy Director in the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch and member of the steering committee of GCPEA. Mr Sheppard spoke about the consequences of the military use of schools and about how states can use the Guidelines to improve the

situation on the ground. Elisabeth Decrey Warner, Executive President of Geneva Call, then spoke about the relevance of the Guidelines for armed non-state actors.

In Session IV

Ensuring Safe Schools – A Broader Engagement, Mr Farooq Wardak, Former Minister of Education in Afghanistan, spoke about the continuation of education in conflict and re-establishing education in post-conflict situations. Mr Sikander Khan, Deputy Director of Emergency Programmes in UNICEF, then talked about the present and future consequences of lost education due to conflict. Finally, Ms Iris Mueller, Legal Advisor at the ICRC, spoke about the protection of education in armed conflict.



Ine Eriksen Søreide, Norwegian Minister of Defence, stressed the importance of full respect for international law in armed conflict.



Angkhana Neelapajit, Chairperson of the Justice for Peace Foundation, talked about the military use of schools in Thailand.

Session V

Addressing the Issue – Endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration was opened by State Secretary in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bård Glad Pedersen. Mr Pedersen presented the Safe Schools Declaration. More than 20 states took the floor to endorse the Declaration. A number of observer states took the floor and stated their intention to endorse the Declaration in the near future. In addition, various UN organisations and NGOs stated their strong support for the Declaration.

Session VI

Closing Remarks, was led by Minister Plenipotentiary Julio César Mercado of Argentina and Anita Bay Bundegaard, Director and UN Representative of Save the Children in Geneva/GCPEA.

5 Summary of Public meeting on Protection of Education in War and Conflict. May 28th 2015

On 28 May, the day before the main sessions of the Conference, a public meeting was held on the topic of *Protection of Children and Education in Conflict*. The aim of this meeting was to discuss challenges and possible solutions to attacks on schools and the military use of schools. The meeting was co-hosted by Save the Children Norway, the Norwegian Students' and

Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH), the Norwegian Red Cross, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack. It was held at Ingeniørenes Hus conference centre in Oslo and drew approximately 180 participants, including representatives of states, representatives of NGOs, and students.

Session 1

Welcome. The Protection of Education in Conflict

The aim of the first session was to raise awareness about the scale and consequences of attacks on education and the military use of schools in conflict situations. The session was chaired by Mr Jørn Wichne Pedersen, President of SAIH.

Mr Kanwar Waseem of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) highlighted some practical examples of how PRCS works to protect schools in Pakistan. In the immediate aftermath of the Peshawar school attack of 16 December 2014, the first reaction was to strengthen the armed protection of schools. PRCS successfully advocated that the Government should take a different and complementary approach, based on risk mitigation and integrated into a broader

urban disaster management strategy. In concrete terms, emergency assessments and emergency plans were developed for schools in conflict-affected areas and students and staff were trained, including through evacuation drills. Such an approach can greatly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the response in the event of a future attack.

Ms Diya Nijhowne, Director of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), highlighted key facts from GCPEA's research on attacks on education. For example, in the period 2009–2013, a significant number of attacks took place in 30 countries around the world – more than ever previously reported. Education is being deliberately attacked around the world, partly as a result of the military use of educational facilities. This practice can cause educational facilities to lose their

civilian status and become 'legitimate' military targets – placing them at increased risk of attack. *The Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*, an initiative spearheaded by GCPEA in 2012, propose concrete, practical actions to address this problem.

From the perspective of an NGO, Ms Tove R. Wang, CEO of Save the Children Norway, highlighted the negative consequences that attacks on educational facilities and the military use of these facilities have both on access to education and education quality. Attacks on education are a brutal way of denying children their right to education. Ms Wang emphasised that the Safe Schools Declaration marks the beginning of a paradigm shift towards respect for places of education as zones of peace, but that in order to achieve real results,



Zama Coursen-Neff, Executive Director of the children's rights division at Human Rights Watch and Chair of the GCPEA's steering committee.

the issue of education under attack needs to be adequately addressed at all levels.

Ms Anne Lindboe, the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children (*Barneombudet*), is an advocate for children and young people who works to uphold the rights of children. Ms Lindboe highlighted how access to education is a fundamental human right for all children. She stressed that children's ombudsmen and other legal representatives have an important role to play in advocating that their governments endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration. This is a message she is bringing to her counterparts in other countries.

Session 2

The Military Use of Schools

The second session aimed to highlight the particular impact of the military use of schools and how the 'the Guidelines' can be implemented. The session was chaired by Ms Zama Coursen-Neff, Executive Director of the children's rights division at Human Rights Watch and Chair of the GCPEA's steering committee.

Attacks on education have devastating consequences for children, young people and society. Mr Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, spoke of the negative consequences that the military use of educational facilities has on children's access to school. The harmful consequences often continue to be felt after schools reopen, since pupils and students often suffer from high levels of trauma, which limits their ability to

learn. Examples from Colombia, South Sudan and Syria were used to illustrate the problem. Mr Egeland encouraged states to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, stating that efforts in this field are long overdue, and that the international community has an obligation to ensure that all children are safe in their learning environment.

A concrete example of the impact of conflict and the military use of schools on education was given by Ms Angkhana Neelapaijit, Chairperson of the Justice for Peace Foundation, Thailand. 10 years of conflict between the ethnic Malay Muslims and the Thai Buddhists in Southern Thailand has had severe negative consequences for education, as schools are viewed by both sides as symbols of either oppression or insurgency. Schools have been targeted by arson attacks, and students, teachers and other staff have been killed or wounded by insurgents as a result. Schools have also been widely used as bases by military and paramilitary forces, thus increasing the risk of attack. The Government of Thailand has launched measures to give teachers increased armed protection. However, these measures have had mixed success, as in some cases the presence of armed security officers has made teachers even more vulnerable to attack.

Protecting education in areas of crisis and conflict is a high priority for the Norwegian Government. For this reason, together with Argentina, Norway has led the process to finalise the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* and to develop the Safe Schools Declaration. According to Mr Bård Glad Pedersen,

State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway will strive to ensure that as many countries as possible endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, if not during the Oslo Conference, then as soon as possible.

Mr Øystein Bø, State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Defence, explained how Norway plans to implement the Guidelines. Underlining that they are not legally binding, the Guidelines are interpreted as recommending that, as far as practically feasible, the Armed Forces should avoid using schools for any military purpose in armed conflicts, and that they should consider all practically feasible options before attacking a school that has become a 'legitimate' target. This will enhance compliance with international humanitarian law. In case of an armed conflict on Norwegian territory the Guidelines may have an impact on 'dual use objects', i.e., buildings owned by the armed forces but used for civilian educational purposes in peace time. The lease agreements for such dual use objects will as a consequence of The Guidelines in the future contain a termination clause in the event of armed conflict.

Throughout the session it was highlighted how the international community, including the various actors present, had an obligation to make sure that schools are safe. It was stressed that the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools marks the beginning of a process, and that real investments need to be made to ensure that the endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration is followed up by concrete action.

6 Session I: Opening of the Conference

6.1 Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

In December last year, the Taliban attacked a school in Peshawar, Pakistan. More than 140 people were killed, 132 of them children. Also last year, Boko Haram kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls in Nigeria. In April this year, al-Shabaab attacked a university in Garissa, Kenya. 147 people were killed, most of them students. These are just a few examples. Between 2009 and 2013, according to a recent report, schools were attacked in 70 different countries. This trend is both appalling and unacceptable. Schools are supposed to be places of hope and learning, not places of fear. Today's conference marks the beginning of our response. We must reaffirm that schools should always be safe. We must increase our efforts to uphold the right to education, even in conflict situations. By making schools safer, we are protecting the future.

This is why we (Norway) have invited you to Oslo – to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration and the *Guidelines to Protect Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict*. I would like to welcome my good colleague, Minister of Defence Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide. Only when different sectors and ministries work together, can we achieve progress.

It is a pleasure to welcome His Excellency Mr George Warner, Minister of Education of Liberia. Mr Warner represents a country emerging from years of civil war, and has invaluable insights regarding the importance of education during conflict. I would also like to recognise the key role played by civil society and humanitarian organisations in this process. For many of you here, the Declaration and the Guidelines



Børge Brende, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, thanked Argentina and the core group for the close cooperation in developing the Safe Schools Declaration.

are the result of many years' work to enhance the protection of education.

I would like to thank Argentina for working side by side with us. And the core group: Cote d'Ivoire, Spain, Austria, New Zealand, Nigeria and Jordan.

We have developed these documents together. But the Declaration and Guidelines are only the beginning. By working together, by building on and implementing what we agree on today, we can achieve real changes on the ground.

The challenge is clear: As result of conflict, 28 million children are out of school and denied their right to education. The military use of schools and universities has been documented in 25 armed conflicts. These figures are not just numbers. They bear witness to the devastating impact of armed conflict on children and young people. Conflict situations are violent, unsafe, unpredictable and frightening. The future is often unclear and hope is scarce. It is precisely in such situations that children and young people need the stability, protection and learning environment that schools and universities can provide. Without access to quality learning, children are not only deprived of education today, they are also deprived of their future tomorrow.

This affects all of us. Attacks on education are therefore not only a humanitarian and development issue. They are social, political, and moral issues, to which we must respond.

The Safe Schools Declaration is a collective political effort to reduce the impact of conflict on education. The Guidelines provide practical guidance for armed

forces – to help them reduce their impact on schools and universities, on the education of individuals and on the wider society. The Declaration provides a political framework – to support the guidelines, but also to form the basis for practical action.

The Declaration and Guidelines are *not* legal instruments; they are voluntary political documents – that express our commitment to safe schools for all.

Strengthening education is a priority for Norway. We are doubling our development assistance to education. We have decided to allocate a larger share of our humanitarian assistance to education in crises and emergencies, including NOK 10 million to the Safe Schools Initiative. In July, we have invited all states to a Summit on Education for Development here in Oslo. We want to mobilise strong and renewed political commitment to reach the 58 million children who are being denied their right to education, and to improve the learning outcomes of those who attend school. What we agree on today will be an important contribution to the Summit.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that Mr Ziauddin Yousafzei is here today. Not only is he UN Special Advisor on Global Education. He is also the father of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala. He knows what it means to fight for the right to education. Malala has dedicated her award 'to all the forgotten children who just want an education'. In her Nobel lecture, she called for initiatives to make education a reality for all, including in conflict situations. The Declaration and the Guidelines that

we are endorsing today are a small step in the right direction. We want children on their way to school to be able to think about mathematical formulas, not about what is hiding behind the next corner. We want children on their way to

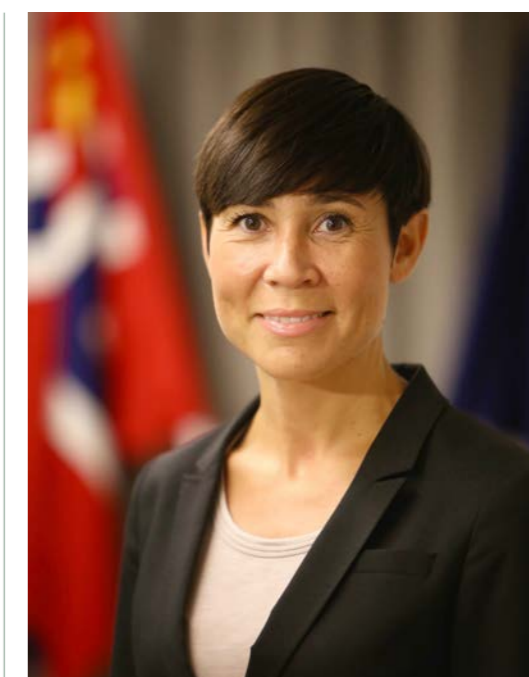
school to become small walking symbols of hope and progress, not of fear.

Thank you all for coming here today, I look forward to our continued cooperation to ensure safe schools for all.

6.2 Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Defense, Norway

Firstly, I would like to thank Børge and his colleagues from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for organizing this conference on Safe schools and protecting education from attack. I am grateful for the close co-operation we have had on this issue over the past months. Today I am pleased to see that so many nations are attending the conference, as well as the eminent speakers who will further address the topic today. Protecting education from attack is an issue of great importance, and I welcome this conference.

Historically, we know that civilians and children in particular, are among those hardest hit in situations of armed conflict. I sadly regret that this continues to be the case in today's conflicts. We are witnessing schools being purposely used by armed groups as shelters, for the storage of weapons or even as detentions centres. Their use is rendering the otherwise protected civilian objects into lawful military targets. These armed groups are, as part of their military tactics, taking advantage of the states' obligation to adhere to the laws of armed conflict. We also see children, in particular girls, being denied the right to education every day, simply because they are girls. Girls and young women are abducted because of the mere fact



Ine Eriksen Søreide, Norwegian Minister of Defence.

that they are exercising their right to education, or even worse, murdered.

We are appalled by the way Boko Haram is deliberately targeting school girls, in their quest to establish an oppressive regime where they can strip civilians of their basic human rights. Equally, in the Middle East, ISIL is carrying out atrocities against civilians aiming for a caliphate that would enslave its population in a brutal society. So the question is: how can we prevent this? Our starting point is that this is a global

effort. It is for the international community to make this a number one priority. Second, our response is neither a military nor civilian. It is both.

I will focus on the responsibility of the Norwegian Armed Forces. What are we doing to protect education from attack? I like to stress the importance of full respect for the applicable international law in armed conflict. Understanding and respecting the law of armed conflict is a crucial benchmark in the Norwegian Armed Forces. Knowledge of the law of armed conflict is central when participating in international military operations. Today's operations often take place at different levels of conflict, between peace and war. Today's operations often also take place amongst civilians. The absence of the rule of law is not only damaging in the actual situation. It can also change the entire outcome of the conflict. As such, a military operation cannot under any circumstances be considered successful if the law of armed conflict has not been respected.

One focus area in the Norwegian Armed Forces is training soldiers in the law of armed conflict, both theoretical and practical training. Understanding how to apply the law of armed conflict is at the core of the military profession. It is part of our officers' DNA. But knowledge isn't everything. The most important is the soldiers' attitude towards the legal framework. We cannot only teach them the laws of war, we also need to teach them the ethics of war. In the bigger picture, the law of armed conflict is also important in strengthening the Armed Forces' legitimacy, both with respect to the local population as well as to the

Norwegian population and international community. We build trust and strengthen legitimacy by acting in accordance with the law of armed conflict. Theory must be translated in to practical situation. Rules must be made available to young soldiers. Remember, the Geneva Conventions are over sixty years old and sometimes difficult to interpret.

This is why the Ministry of Defence decided to draft a Norwegian manual of the law of armed conflict. The Manual was published in 2013 and is aimed at practitioners. It explains the legal framework in everyday language making it available not only to the legal advisors, but more importantly, to the soldiers and officers actually using the legal framework every day: from the lieutenant and his platoon at tactical level, to the colonel at operational level planning operations. The manual addresses key questions in the laws of armed conflict, such as: who is a lawful target? Which weapons are legal? And just as important: Who is protected? Which weapons are prohibited?

With this in mind, let me return to today's topic: the protection of education from attack. With the Safe Schools declaration being endorsed later today, I would like to welcome the development of the (Lucens) Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict. The guidelines are non-legally binding guidelines designed specifically for the protection of schools in armed conflict. These guidelines do not involve any new legal commitments. However, they clarify already existing commitments in international law. The purpose is to provide guidance that will further reduce the

impact of armed conflict on education. So how have we put into effect these guidelines in the Norwegian Armed Forces?

When it comes to international operations we have already for all practical purposes fulfilled the wording of the guidelines. Difficulties in implementing the guidelines were mostly connected to the event of an armed conflict occurring on Norwegian territory. Even if the guidelines only apply in armed conflict, we need to adapt ourselves already in peacetime. As is said in the Armed Forces: we train as we fight.

Let me offer you one example. The Norwegian crisis management system is based on a civilian-military effort. The guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict presuppose a clear distinction between the civilian schools and the military efforts. In this particular instance abandoned schools needed for "accommodation" of say allied forces, is put in to question. The guidelines obviously raise the threshold of when this is acceptable. A second example is "dual use"-objects, which are buildings that serve both a military and a civilian purpose. Many of Norway's military bases are located in scarcely populated areas. In these places there are some "dual use"-objects, in terms of buildings that are owned by the Armed Forces and put at the disposal of the local population simply because it financially wouldn't be sustainable, or even affordable, to build twice as many buildings. Sometimes these buildings are used for education. For example gym centers used by schools for physical education as well as by the army for physical training

of the forces. Both examples are clearly beyond the scope of these guidelines as they represent a 'win-win'-solution in all ways. But they nevertheless fall within the wording of the guidelines and are therefore matters that are under our consideration during the implementation process.

As part of the implementation process the Ministry of Defence has interpreted the guidelines to mean the following: As far as practically feasible, the Armed Forces should avoid using schools for any military purpose in armed conflicts. If the enemy/adversary in an armed conflict is using a school in a way that renders it into a lawful target, all practically feasible alternative options are to be considered before attacking the object. If the Armed Forces own realty/buildings that is/are being rented out/leased to civilian educational facilities, the leasing contracts are, for the future, to contain a cancellation clause if an armed conflict should occur on Norwegian territory.

All these various efforts, national and international, have one common goal: It is to honour our commitments and join efforts in safeguarding schools in armed conflicts. I wish you all a successful conference. And I look forward to hearing about the outcome of the endorsement of the declaration.

6.3 George Warner, Minister of Education, The Republic of Liberia

Education in Liberia has come under attack twice in the last 30 years: during a 14 year civil war, and the Ebola outbreak. Both have had devastating consequences on infrastructure, students, teachers, and learning outcomes. Schools were closed on both occasions, most recently in September 2014, to curb the spread of Ebola. This prudent measure was pivotal in containing exposure to the virus of children and their families. The Education system also faces the challenge of pervasive poverty, which limits school enrolment, private investment in education, and adequate nutrition for children. Girls face the added risk of sexual violence.

The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) was established in 2010 by organizations from the field of education in emergencies and conflict-affected fragile states, higher education, protection and international humanitarian law who were concerned about on-going attacks on educational institutions, their students, and staff in countries affected by conflicts and insecurity. One of the GCPEA's primary concerns is the devastating impact of the use of schools and other education institutions by armed forces and armed groups. In many contemporary conflicts around the world, military forces and non-state armed groups have used schools and other education institutions for bases, barracks, firing positions, munitions caches, and other purposes.

The vision of the Coalition is to establish a world in which all who wish to learn,

teach and research, at all levels and in all forms of education and all those who support them, will be able to do so in conditions of safety, security, dignity and equality, free from fear, consistent with the principles of mutual understanding, peace, tolerance and academic freedom. I want to assure you that Liberia supports that vision.

I am pleased that my country Liberia was amongst the sixteen countries involved in consultations and the drafting of Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.¹ Liberia has also provided technical expertise and advocated for the introduction of the Guidelines into international and regional processes. During the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Replenishment Pledging Conference in Brussels in 2014, Liberia's then Minister of Education Hon. Etmonia D. Tarpeh called on the GPE to support the Guidelines.

My country is a champion to this all-important issue in education. We will continue to advocate with all parties in armed conflicts to avoid threatening students' safety and education by using these Guidelines as a model for responsible practices.

¹ Other participant countries included: Argentina, Canada, Cote d'Ivoire, France, Finland, Germany, Liberia, Luxembourg, Nepal, Netherlands, Norway, Philippines, Qatar, Senegal, and Switzerland.

6.4 Ziauddin Yousafzai, UN Special Advisor on Global Education and Co-founder of the Malala Fund. Summary of Introduction

Mr Yousafzai began his statement by underlining that he is not a professor or analyst of international relations and conflict. He is, however, one of millions who have suffered during war and conflict. His home in the Swat valley became a hub of terrorism and a centre of fear following the arrival of the Taliban. The Taliban harmed all aspects of life, including schools and education – and the education of girls in particular. As the level of militancy escalated, the Taliban bombed and set fire to more than four hundred schools, while recruiting teenagers as soldiers and suicide bombers. The inhabitants of the Swat valley became sandwiched between the Taliban and the Army, following the latter's counter-offensive. The state is supposed to protect civilians and educational institutions. Instead, the soldiers used schools during the campaign as barracks and bases, and cited expediency as a justification for doing so. Is it wise to win a war, only to lose a generation? Mr Yousafzai and the rest of the civilians in the Swat valley were displaced during the campaign against the Taliban. When they returned he visited the school where he was headmaster, and found the building in disarray. He still very clearly remembers the muddy boot-prints on the chairs the children used to sit on.

Mr Yousafzai underlined that this is not only his story or the story of his country. It is the story of almost 70 countries where educational institutions and schools are currently under attack. It is the story of the 26 countries where

schools are being used by state forces. It is the story of the 150 students who were ruthlessly murdered in Kenya and the 200 girls who were abducted in Nigeria. It is the story of children in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gaza, and far too many other countries. Why are we failing to protect our children and the education they are entitled to?

Mr Yousafzai called for states to show courage by clearly stating that the current situation is completely unacceptable. As citizens of this ever more closely connected world, we have to give the same sanctity to schools and places of learning as we do to mosques, churches and temples. If places of worship protect the legacy of faith, then schools and educational institutions protect and continue the legacy of our culture and civilization, of our way of life. A safe world without safe schools is impossible.

Mr Yousafzai thanked the governments of Norway and Argentina, as well as the core group countries, for 'knocking on the doors' of nations and stirring our conscience. He completed his statement by expressing hope that all the states present would contribute to giving hope to the millions of children who are suffering and unable to attend schools due to war and conflict.

7 Session II: A Growing Challenge – Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Attacks on Schools

7.1 Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council: Attacks on Schools – the immediate consequences and global effects

Today is a big day. There are many Civil Society Organisations in the room that have worked hard for this day. We are delighted that so many countries have come to Oslo and are able and willing to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration. Congratulations to Norway and Argentina for taking the leadership role to make this happen.

When schools are militarised it has a devastating effect, it is an outrage. That is why the Safe Schools Declaration is so long overdue. I have been a humanitarian worker, with the UN, NGOs, in the Government, Red Cross, for more than 30 years. During these 30 years we have made progress in assistance – in peace and in war, but not enough progress has been made in protecting people in times of war. We are faced with a protection crisis, and those we are failing to protect are the most vulnerable – children and women. Today we make a step towards better protecting some of the most vulnerable: the children.

70 countries across the globe experience some kind of attacks on schools, by military armed forces, militias, and terrorists. My organisation, the Norwegian Refugee Council, has education programmes in 20 of the countries heavily affected by attacks on schools. Last week

a girl was killed when she stepped on a land mine in a school supported by NRC in Colombia, injuring two other young girls. I visited their sister school last year and remember it as a joyous day, with children dressed in their best clothes, with schoolbags on their backs. The parents said, “Our pride is the school. It is what ties the community together. It is what preserves our culture. We have one big threat though: when the army comes to fight the guerrillas they lodge in the school and then we cannot use the school”. In situations like this, the school is no longer perceived as neutral ground and may be subject to attack, to landmines or children may be forcibly recruited. Last week we saw one devastating example of such conduct, in Colombia. It has to stop!

There are many other examples too. In Syria, the most devastating war on our watch, schools are regularly attacked. In Idlib, attacks very well may soon cease as there are hardly more schools to attack. 90% of the schools in Idlib are currently non-functioning.

In places in South Sudan, the entire male youth population have fled from certain villages due to the military use of schools, since they fear being forcibly recruited. Girls are kept away



Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council, encouraged states to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, and argued that efforts in this field are long overdue.

from school, in fear of rape or sexual abuse. It has to stop!

I am supposed to speak about the immediate effects of militarisation of schools. My simple answer is: it is devastating. When schools are used for military purposes, it become exposed and more vulnerable to attacks, more exposed to mines, more exposed to the entire things Malala’s father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, reflected in his presentation. And what we end up with is that whole societies lose hope for the future. If there is one thing that schools signify it is hope, and normalcy – if we have a school, we have a future. Our society has a future. If a school is militarised it will be closed, and it may be closed permanently. Armed forces often use the argument that they are there to protect the people, but the contrary happens with the militarisation of schools. It means the end of hope for community.

I will end with an appeal. On behalf of non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations, we urge all countries present here today to endorse the Safe Schools declaration. Today marks the start of a campaign to encourage all countries and all governments to endorse the declaration. Help us convince those who are not here today to join. All countries are urged to encourage all parties to armed conflicts to act in accordance with the commitments in the Safe School Declaration.

10 years from now those who endorse the Safe Schools declaration today will look back and say “why on earth did we not do this earlier?” And those who did not endorse today will ask themselves why they were not more committed to making sure that children and youth are safe in school. And they will say to themselves: “We really should have been in Oslo that day, and we should have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration”.

7.2 Yvette Stevens, Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone in Geneva: Attacks on Schools – the long-term effects on society

I would like to start by thanking the Government of Norway for this initiative, and for inviting me to speak here today. I would start by making some general observations on the long-term effects of attacks on schools and education during conflicts and then illustrate these by the specific experience of my country, Sierra Leone.

So why is safeguarding schools and education in situations of conflict important in the long-term? First and foremost, during conflicts, children and young adults who are deprived of the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged in education activities, revert to clandestine activities, diverse negative social consequences. In addition, when there is a breakdown of law and order and most development activities are put on hold, education is the one single development activity that can be maintained in such situations. Furthermore, the provision of education and skills training during conflicts would equip populations with the necessary skills needed for rebuilding their communities and countries once the conflicts end.

Populations in areas affected by conflicts are usually concerned with the lack of educational opportunities for the children and would revert to a number of innovative measures to address this. Thus, in South Sudan where a conflict raged for decades, many parents arranged for their sons to gather in groups to cross the border in search of education. *The lost boys* of Sudan,



Yvette Stevens, Ambassador at the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone in Geneva, talked about the long-term effects of attacks on schools and education.

who were accommodated in Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya in the late eighties, belonged to these groups.

While the safe schools initiative could ensure that States observe certain measures during conflicts to protect schools, for non-state actors this would not be easy. Many of non-state groups, such as Bokko Haram, are against western education and destruction of schools is part of their strategy to achieve their evil objectives. In Afghanistan, attacks on educational institutions for girls are commonplace. In view of the impacts of attacks on schools and education on the wellbeing of communities and the development of countries, this *Safe Schools Initiative* is very important, if the Millennium Development Goals and the

Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved by countries emerging from conflicts.

Sierra Leone fought a civil war from 1991 to 2002. This 11-year war devastated the education system. It destroyed 80 per cent of the educational infrastructure across the country. Armed groups attacked and destroyed schools and colleges, decimating the already weak infrastructure of education. In 1997 and for an entire academic year, children stopped schooling altogether due to the levels of tension in the country. By the end of the conflict, a significant number of school-going children had outgrown school age, while others had lost two to three years of schooling.

Schools and other infrastructural facilities were targeted and destroyed by armed groups. An assessment carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 1996 revealed massive physical damage to schools. Many school buildings were burnt down, while others were looted leaving nothing behind. Furniture and fittings such as windows, doors and even sheet roofing were stripped off the buildings. Some of the armed groups used looted furniture as firewood. Other equipment and teaching materials were destroyed. The few buildings that survived the carnage deteriorated due to abandonment and lack of maintenance. Subsequently, another survey in 2001, just before the end of the war, entitled the National School Survey Report or NSSR, identified 3,152 schools with a total number of 4,854 school buildings, which were destroyed. Teaching and learning materials too were vandalized.

This disrupted the educational careers of many children and removed them from their familiar environment into internal displacement camps and refugee camps in neighbouring countries. The mass movement of the population affected by war into safer areas put much pressure on the education system in towns and cities. Most schools began to run double shifts, while makeshift structures were set up in camps to provide education for displaced children. In spite of these provisions, many children stopped attending school as they had to fight for their daily survival. Consequently, hundreds took to the streets begging in order to assist their parents in providing their daily meals. In 2001, just before the end of the war, 67 per cent of all school-aged children were out of school. Some had never had the opportunity to enrol in formal education because they were born during the war period. Consequently, in the period of war, illiteracy increased in Sierra Leone.

Many of the uneducated and unskilled are in urban areas, where a number are engaged in menial income-generating activities, mainly petty trading. Others are idly roaming the streets in search of a means of livelihood.

Government took the following positive steps to address the educational crisis after the war:

- Free primary education was introduced in the 1999/2000 academic year (a year before the end of the war) in classes 1-3, and this opportunity was extended to classes 4-6 in the 2001/2002 academic year.
- The Rapid Response Education Programme (RREP) was initiated to

facilitate the re-entry into the formal school system of school-aged children between 10 and 13 years of age who had missed formal schooling. The programme lasted for five months, after which the children re-entered the formal school system.

- The Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School (CREPS) scheme was designed to return over-aged children to primary school. The six-year primary school syllabus was compressed into three years.
- Non-formal Primary Education (NFPE) was introduced, aimed at children without access to formal primary schools. This programme concentrates on literacy, numeracy and vocational skills training, but some bright children are integrated into primary schools.
- Adult literacy classes for older young people and adults were set up.
- The Government embarked on the massive rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools (MEST, 2001).

However, these steps have not averted all the long-term social and economic consequences of the attacks of schools and education during the war.

The social consequences are worrying. Many of the youths that are now unemployed in the urban areas were child soldiers who were disarmed during the disarmament process following the war. While they received a meagre rehabilitation allowance, some crash vocational training courses and tools, these were not enough to guarantee them economic survival. Many are still prone to incitement by unscrupulous persons or groups to revert to violence to serve their selfish purposes. Others

revert to crimes such as robbery to survive. Maintaining law and order is an on-going challenge for our police force.

In the economic sphere, the lack of trained Sierra Leone personnel is also having a negative impact. This is more so the case because, in addition to the inability to train the required skilled and semi-skilled personnel, many of the trained and skilled personnel fled the country during the war for “greener pastures” and are not returning to the country in large numbers.

The dearth of skilled and semi-skilled manpower in the country was thus considerably worsened as a result of the war. Sierra Leone is a country that is endowed with vast natural resources, but most of our economic activities ceased during the war. Since the end of the war, investors have been attracted to the country and the investment prospects are high. Employment opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled manpower are expanding widely, but foreign companies are bringing in foreigners to assume these functions at great costs, while unemployment remains rampant. In a bid to ensure the use of local goods and services for the increased economic activities, the Government of Sierra Leone drew up its local content policy, which has, as one of its objectives, the promotion of the employment of Sierra Leonean citizens in all sectors of the economy.

Under this policy, in all enterprises operating in any sector of the economy; at least 20% of the managerial and 50% of intermediate positions should be held by Sierra Leonean citizens. The Work

Permit Committee can however provide an exemption to this requirement where the requesting enterprise proves that there is no sufficiently skilled manpower to take-up the managerial or intermediate posts. The respective ratio will be increased over the time and after 5 years of establishment will stand at 60% for managerial positions and 80% for intermediate positions. Where it is proven that required skills are not present locally and the ratio cannot be met, the company must demonstrate a capacity building plan to substitute expatriate with local capacity within five years.

But in order to meet these and other skills requirements, there needs to be

increased efforts to promote targeted training. Vocational training based on the results of a labour-market survey is important, in this regard. I have attempted in this brief intervention, to demonstrate some of the long-term impacts on society of the attacks on schools and education during conflicts. Such long-term impacts must be borne in mind and the efforts of all stakeholders must be pooled together to guarantee that schools are kept safe and that education is not abandoned during conflicts. In cases, in which such impacts are already being felt, measures need to be taken to address the problems through adult literacy programmes, vocational training and employment creation.

8 Session III: The Military Use of Educational Facilities in Conflict

8.1 Bede Sheppard, Deputy Director in the Children’s Rights Division – Human Rights Watch/GCPEA: Consequences of the military use of Schools – how states can use the guidelines

I’ve been asked to talk briefly about the consequences of military use of schools. And I thought the easiest way to do this might be to share the story of how it first hit home to me in my work that the use of schools by armed forces can have a devastating effect on students’ access to education. But I’ll admit that I hesitated at first about telling this story in such a formal setting, because, you see, it begins with a pair of underpants. A pair of dark brown green underpants. Next to a pair of camouflage trousers. Hung up on a washing line that was strung across

the courtyard at a middle school in a town called Kasma in India. You see, these were the very first things that I saw when I entered through the school gate. And as I went in further into the school, I also saw discarded beer bottles in the school playground, and a whiskey bottle in a classroom window. I met with the schools’ headmaster – he was a large man with these very thick glasses – and he explained to me what was going on. He told me that almost four years before, a group of government security forces had moved into the school, and

were using two of the schools' 15 classrooms as a base, and a barracks – essentially a place to sleep and hang out when they weren't launching operations against a local rebel group that was active in the area.

Now, this school was in a very rural part of India where they already had a real problem with children dropping out of school, due to things such as early child marriage, or because children felt compelled to start working early. And as a result, the government had actually given this school money for 200 scholarships to help bring girls who had already dropped out of school, back into school. But, because of the presence of these just 10 armed men who were using two of the school's classrooms, the parents of these 200 girls were unwilling to let their daughters return to school, despite these scholarships. And the reason was that they were unwilling to leave their teenage daughters alone in this environment with these young armed men, out of fear of possible sexual misconduct, or abuse, or harassment.

And so that's when it really hit home to me. Here you had a government who with one hand was trying its utmost best to get girls into schools, but because of the activities of another arm of the government, they were failing. And it's unfortunate to have to point this out, but the fear of those parents of the girls at Kasma Middle School were not unfounded.

Members of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack have documented that soldiers using schools for military purposes have indeed raped and sexually violated and harassed

students who were trying to continue their studies in their schools while they were being used for military purposes. We have also documented instances of children being forcibly recruited to join armed groups by the fighters in their schools.

And there are other security consequences for students. The presence of an armed force inside a school turns that school into a target for enemy attack. And we have documented cases where indeed schools have been damaged and destroyed in attacks because they were being used for military purposes, and in the worst cases students and teachers were present at their schools at the time of attack, and some have been injured and even killed as a result of such attacks. And so the military use of schools leads to students being excluded and dropping out from schools and universities, lower levels of new enrollments into schools, poorer rates of attendance in schools, and lower levels of transition from one level of schooling to the next. The education of girls seems to be particularly negatively affected by the practice of military use of schools.

Now we've already heard today that the military use of schools had been documented in 26 countries in the past decade. But let's just put that number into perspective. That's the majority of countries with armed conflict during that time period. And we've found instances in the Americas, in Africa, in Europe, in the Middle East, and in Asia. So we can say this is a global problem. And therefore, it's in need of a global response. And that's what today's Safe Schools Declaration and Guidelines are offering. The Decla-

ration is for states who voluntarily wish to stand on the side of better protections for the children and students who aspire to continue their studies, even amidst the chaos of war. It's for states who recognize that words are no longer enough. This is the time to take action. Now because these Guidelines were developed in consultation with experts from ministries of defense and armed forces from different areas around the world, and because they draw upon examples of good practice already exercised by some armed forces, the Guidelines are incredibly practical. They acknowledge that parties to armed conflict are invariably faced with difficult dilemmas requiring pragmatic solutions. They are, therefore, very flexible. As is the Declaration. They also recognize that different militaries and different countries have different command and control mechanisms for their forces.

So the Guidelines ask that parties to armed conflict – both government armed forces and non-state actors as well – incorporate their guidance as far as possible and as appropriate, into their doctrine, military manuals, rules of engagement, operational orders, trainings, and other means of dissemination, to encourage appropriate practice throughout the chain of command. But it recognizes that parties to armed conflict should determine the most appropriate method of doing this.

And that's why it's so important to emphasize that today is just the beginning. Because as more and more states become more and more aware of the negative consequences of military use of schools and universities, they are being more concerned about developing con-

crete measures to deter the practice. And this means it is an opportunity for us all to learn from one another about the best way to implement these Guidelines. And that's why I felt we were particularly fortunate to hear from Norway's Defence Minister today about the careful and deliberate steps they are taking to work out the most appropriate way for Norway to incorporate the Guidelines. We will all learn from the best examples of good practice by states.

And on that note, I wanted to end with a more positive story from an investigation I carried out for Human Rights Watch. It comes from the Philippines, where they have one of the world's best laws protecting schools from military use. I was in the far north of the country when I had heard rumors that the armed forces had established a base inside a local school, and I had gone to investigate whether this was true. I got to the school late in the day, and I always find it a bit eerie when you get to a school and it lacks that joyous cacophony of children playing or learning. But as I walked toward the school I could not see any of the telltale signs of military occupation that I usually see when investigating this problem. There were no barbed wire, sandbags, observation fortresses, or armed sentries.

Instead, a genial-looking man was fumbling with his satchel as he closed the school gate. And when I asked for the school headmaster, his face lit up: "Well, that's me!" When I explained why I had come to his school, he shook his head, saying: "No, that's not true." And then he took me to his home, and told me what had really happened. The military had been conducting operations in

the area the year before, and an officer had come to ask the headmaster whether the troops could establish a temporary base in the school's kitchen building. As the headmaster explained to me, "I opposed it, I said no," and that then "There was a heated discussion between the officer and myself."

A few days later, when the headmaster was enjoying coffee after church, a more senior officer approached him. The officer began by complaining about how cold it was where the soldiers were camping, and again broached whether they could set up a barracks in the school. The headmaster's eyes twinkled as he told me the next part: "I told him about the Philippines' law... I told him about the law that is for the protection of children." And as the headmaster told me this, he was rummaging in his bag to pull out a dog-eared copy of the law. He told me: "I always carry with me some legal documents... So I told him, 'I'm sorry, General, but we are concerned with children, and it is very clear that

schools should not be used for military purposes." And by this time, his finger had found the relevant provision in his copy of the law, and he looked up at me, grinning.

Now, as I said, the Philippines is one of the few countries in the world that has both legislation and military policies explicitly regulating the practice of militaries using schools. And as this case – and the smile on the headmasters' face illustrate, having clear explicit standards protecting schools from military use can give teachers and communities a tool to help protect their schools. However it shouldn't be left to teachers to fend off armed forces. The challenge now is for governments to ensure that they are giving clear and explicit guidance to their forces about how they can better protect students, teachers, and schools. And that's why I want to thank all of the states who are here today, willing and eager to take this next step.

8.2 Elisabeth Decrey-Warner, Executive President of Geneva Call: The relevance of the Guidelines for armed non-state actors

Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers for having invited Geneva Call to take the floor at this important conference. Geneva Call is convinced that the protection of schools during conflict is essential. We have played an active role in this process, notably by being a member of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, as well as by taking part in the drafting committee of the Guidelines. I am therefore very

pleased to be here to explain why it is so important to engage **also** with armed non-State actors on this topic. Whether we like them or whether we don't like them – they are part of the problem. So they will be part of the solution.

Perhaps two words on Geneva Call, as not everybody knows us. Geneva Call is a neutral, impartial non-governmental organization dedicated to engaging with

armed non-State actors to respect international humanitarian norms in armed conflict, particularly those norms related to the protection of civilians. We are currently focusing our efforts on banning the use of anti-personnel mines, protecting children from the effects of armed conflict, and prohibiting sexual violence in armed conflict and working towards the elimination of gender discrimination. We also respond to requests from armed groups to help them build their knowledge of international humanitarian norms and their capacity to implement them. Geneva Call's key tool for engaging with armed non-State actors is the *Deed of Commitment*. The *Deed of Commitment* process gives armed groups the opportunity to formally sign a document, express their agreement to abide by humanitarian norms and to take ownership of these rules. This is followed up with trainings and monitoring.

Protecting education has been on Geneva Call's agenda for some time now. Back in 2002, when Geneva Call was still a young organization, we had planned a meeting with a military leader from an armed group. The day before the meeting, we heard that this group had laid anti-personnel mines around a school and its football pitch. I had to ask myself, "Why am I going to meet this guy? Somebody who's able to lay mines where children play and go to school? What could I possibly say to a guy like that?" I nearly decided to leave without meeting him, but finally I decided to stay. During the meeting, I couldn't help but ask him: "Why did you lay mines around the school and its football pitch?" I learned that it was because the adversaries were using the school as a dormitory, and because they played foot-

ball on its pitch and used it as a landing pad for their helicopter. That was the day I understood how important it was to work towards protecting schools from military activities of all parties to a conflict. I understood how one belligerent's behaviour could lead to a reaction from its opponents, both then having a huge impact on innocent children, on their education, on their future.

On this question of impact, I would like to add something: yesterday we mentioned several consequences: schools are closed, education is interrupted, etc. One important aspect was not mentioned. When schools are attacked and destroyed, when violence is everywhere, when militarization of the society is becoming stronger and stronger, and when children have nothing to do because their schools are closed, the temptation for these children to join an armed group and to fight "for a cause" is strong. In fact, putting children at risk by using a school for military purposes can lead to an even greater risk for these children: that of becoming a child soldier. We have collected several testimonies attesting that.

It doesn't matter who is occupying the school, or who is using it for training or exercises; it doesn't make any difference to the child if the author of the misuse are the State armed forces or an armed group. Its school has become synonymous with the risk of attack, potential violence and death. Regular armed forces or armed groups? The result is the same. This is why we have to work with all the parties to the conflicts.

In November last year, Geneva Call

organized a one-week meeting with representatives of 35 armed groups from 14 countries. The Guidelines were included in the agenda and presented and discussed with the contribution of Human Rights Watch, Save the Children, and Prof. Steven Haines. At the end of the week, the armed groups present adopted a final declaration. They mentioned the Guidelines in the text and decided “to take them into consideration.” Also, as part of its child protection work, Geneva Call has already engaged with about 50 armed non-State actors on this topic. Some of them have carried out awareness raising programmes and put into place internal policies against targeting schools or using schools for military activities. 15 of them have signed the *Deed of Commitment* for the protection of children from the effects of armed conflict. The most important element of the Deed is the prohibition of the use of children in hostilities. But there is also an article by which the armed groups commit themselves to avoid using schools, or premises used by children, for military purposes. In addition the *Deed of Commitment* includes some “positive obligations” such as providing education in areas that the group controls. I quote the text: “We accept also to provide children in areas where we exercise authority with the aid and care they require..., we will: take concrete measures towards ensuring that children have access to adequate food, health care, education, and where possible, leisure and cultural activities.”

But it could lead to a new problem: If armed groups control territories and facilitate or provide education to children in the regions under their control, they will also feel responsible for pro-

tecting these schools. They may do so with military people, wearing military uniforms and bearing weapons, and surrounding the school. And... you see the problem: The groups are trying to do good, but finally they end up doing wrong... This is part of my message today. The reality in the field is sometimes very complex, and we need to find pragmatic solutions. For that the Guidelines will be a very useful tool in Geneva Call’s work. It will be important to continue the dissemination of the Guidelines to armed non-State actors so they can learn about them, implement them and use them as tools to prevent the use of educational institutions for military purposes. The Guidelines are intended for use by all the parties involved in armed conflicts and consider armed non-State actors to be essential stakeholders in their implementation. This is important for them. They must feel that this process does indeed concern them – that they are included in thinking about, disseminating and implementing the process.

Geneva Call will continue to work on this topic. We will continue to disseminate the Guidelines to armed non-State actors and engage them. Simultaneously, we will do more research on which factors lead to the use or attack of schools. This will help us to develop the strong arguments, which we need to convince armed groups to change their behaviour. Finally, we will also raise awareness of the Guidelines in communities affected by conflict. Civilians in the field very often have contacts with fighters from armed groups. They sometimes have relatives inside these groups, and they can be good advocates for the cause of protecting schools. We should not forget

their potential to play an important role in upholding the Guidelines. Today, States will endorse the Safe School Declaration. For obvious reasons armed non-State actors are not invited

to do the same! However, if the number of countries endorsing this declaration is high, it will be an important message, a strong incentive for armed groups to implement its accompanying Guidelines.

9 Session IV: Ensuring Safe Schools – A Broader Engagement

9.1 H.E. Farooq Wardak, Former Minister of Education in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Continuation of education in conflict and re-establishing education post conflict. Summary of introduction.

Mr Wardak began his statement by expressing his heartfelt gratitude to the Norwegian Government and civil society actors involved for hosting this timely event on a matter of significant importance for the future of humanity. Education is far more than just one sector of society. It is health, security and prosperity – it is real development. It is a light in this world and in the world to come. Mr Wardak thanked those present for the opportunity to share some of his experience concerning education in both conflict and post-conflict situations. While other speakers had highlighted the importance of education and the safety of schools, Mr Wardak said he would present some of the strategies developed in Afghanistan that have proved helpful in protecting education from attack.

Mr Wardak has worked in the field of education in Afghanistan for several decades, both as the Minister of Education and as chief of staff to the

President of Afghanistan, as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, and as chief executive of successive elections. In the 1980s and 1990s he worked with NGOs to deliver educational services in the areas of the country where there was a lack of functioning and formal government influence. He has worked in areas controlled by the Afghan Government as well as in areas controlled by insurgents while promoting education and ensuring the operation of educational facilities. The work that has been done in Afghanistan to increase access to education has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of enrolled students, as well as an increase in the number of teachers, schools and other educational institutions. Mr Wardak shared six broad strategies that have proved effective in promoting and protecting education in Afghanistan.

The first strategy was to give a central place to community mobilisation, organisation, and empowerment. Communi-

ties that were well organised enabled schools to operate, students to attend school, men and women to become teachers, and ensured the provision of security to education. NGOs were important in this work, as they provided both learning materials and salaries for teachers. After 2002, the role of the communities was strengthened even further, and expanded to include the provision of alternative paths to education. This persuaded some insurgents to 'make peace with' education and consider schools as peace zones, and it facilitated the re-opening of schools that had been abandoned due to a lack of security. The expansion of the community-centred approach made it possible to establish single classroom community schools in areas that are difficult to reach. It facilitated the relocation of female teachers from urban centres to educate girls in disenfranchised areas where there was a lack of female teachers. Communities were able to take steps to reduce absenteeism among students and teachers alike. The role of communities in managing schools is currently being further refined to make communities the ultimate 'owner' of schools and education. When it is the community that 'owns' education, it is not easy for any party to a conflict to abandon schools, attack schools, occupy schools or use them as bases or barracks. Schools are safer when they belong to the community rather than to a belligerent party in an ongoing conflict.

The second strategy used to meet the various needs of the Afghan population and to encourage communities to increase their stake in education was to enhance cohesion between the formal educational system and various semi-

formal and informal forms of education. By combining formally approved education with informal social mechanisms that have existed for decades or even centuries within the community, the priorities of these communities were promoted and acknowledged. Under this strategy, there were innovative initiatives such as combining mosque-based and home-based education and accelerated learning programmes with formal education. Many communities perceived this as recognition of their own needs and priorities, and this made them increasingly committed to their ownership role in the context of education.

The third strategy was to focus on building the capacity of educational institutions, particularly at the sub-national level, in order to improve the management, quality and pace of service delivery. This process has included the decentralisation of educational management and the involvement of local communities in educational management. In order to strengthen the national educational institutions and enhance their performance, every government must work with their national and international partners to align external resources and national priorities more closely, and the national institutions must gradually take over key responsibilities relating to educational service delivery.

The fourth strategy was to increase synergy between various service delivery ministries, departments and organisations responsible for human resource development. By developing clusters of these entities, it has been possible to improve information-sharing across areas of responsibilities. The ministries

responsible for the development of human resources share information with the ministries responsible for anti-insurgency operations, and this has had a major impact both in terms of preventing schools from being used by the armed forces and the removal of armed forces from school premises.

The fifth strategy was to constantly review and adopt best practice from the region in order to learn from the experiences of others. This has for instance included open schooling and has helped raise the status of education by linking the community to schools and therefore enhancing the protection of schools. When schools become an integral part

of people's lives, in one way or another, people will do what they can to safeguard schools.

The sixth and final strategy was to establish partnerships between the public and private sector. On the one hand, this injected new momentum and improved the quality and sustainability of educational services. On the other hand, it enhanced the stability and sustainability of educational ownership. When the parties to a conflict see that schools are the property of the local communities and other stakeholders, not just the property of the government or their enemies, it is not as easy to occupy them.

9.2 Sikander Khan, Deputy Director Office of Emergency Programmes – UNICEF: Consequences of lost education due to conflict – today and for the future

There are 230 million children living in conflict situations around the world today.² There are also 58 million primary-school aged children who are out of school³. Thirty six percent of these out-of school children, an alarming 21 million, live in conflict-affected countries.⁴ Even higher numbers of adolescents are missing out on education in these countries. In short, we are letting war and armed conflict shut down our children's education. In Somalia alone 81 percent of primary-aged children are out of school.⁵

This is a very serious situation. If a child doesn't complete primary school, he or she will not go on to secondary school. Literally, it takes just the primary school years – around 7 years – to lose an

entire generation. Before the war, almost all of Syria's children were enrolled in primary school and literacy rates were at 95% for 15–24 year-olds.⁶ Four years into the conflict, almost three million children were no longer in school and Syria was estimated to have one of the lowest enrolment rates in the world. Enrolment in Aleppo was as low as 6%, while half of refugee children in neighbouring countries were not receiving any education.⁷

² UNICEF, 2015. An agenda for every child 2015.

³ UNICEF, 2015. The investment case for education and equity.

⁴ UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report. 2015.

⁵ ODI, 2015. Investment for education in emergencies.

⁶ Save the Children, 2015. The cost of war.

⁷ Idem.

The war in Syria is now in its 5th year. We are in serious danger of losing this generation, if we haven't already.

When we let conflicts disrupt education, two things happen. Firstly, a central and critical piece of the protective fabric in each child's life is removed. Where war exposes girls and boys to fear, isolation, uncertainty and violence, school can offer reassurance, hope, friendship, safety and a sense of normalcy. Without school the effects of war on children are very direct. Toxic stress (the kind of stress that children experience when they are exposed to violence or neglect on an ongoing basis) damages brain development permanently in very young children.⁸ We see children as young as 8 or 9 taking on adult roles within their families, as their parents struggle to cope, often resorting to flight or separation in order to survive and maintain care for children. We see all children, especially adolescents, demonstrating signs of anxiety and depression as their cognitive, emotional and social development is curtailed by the violence around them. This is an overwhelming reality amongst refugee and displaced populations around the world today.

The second thing that happens when education stops due to conflict is a dramatic escalation in the risks facing girls and boys of different ages. Girls who are not in school are more likely to be married before they reach adulthood. Adolescent boys and girls are at higher risk of joining armed groups or criminal gangs; and levels of exploitation and abuse, including trafficking and sexual violence also increase.

Safe schools, emergency education programmes and child friendly spaces not only deliver immediate support and reduce risks, but they also provide a structure to deliver other lifesaving interventions, such as food, water, sanitation and health services. School staff communicate key messages about safety, provide vital life skills and information about health and hygiene, and raise awareness of the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance.⁹ If children do not have access to schools, they are missing out on vital information that could save their lives or help save the lives of others.¹⁰

Furthermore, the evidence over the long term shows us that maintaining education, even in the midst of conflict is one of the single best things we can do to save lives. Higher levels of girls' education are associated with delayed childbirth, lower fertility rates, significantly higher prenatal care and lower child mortality. In fact, education of girls has such a strong effect on survival and wellbeing that research suggests half of the reduction in the mortality of children under 5 between 1970 and 2009 can be traced to increases in the average years of schooling for women of reproductive age.¹¹

So schools save lives. Or to say it another way, when schools close, children die.

⁸ UNICEF, 2014. Building better brains & better outcomes for children: New frontiers in early childhood development.

⁹ Education Cluster, 2012. Education: An essential component of humanitarian response.

¹⁰ Idem.

¹¹ ODI, 2015. Investment for education in emergencies.

This is a compelling thought for any humanitarian – or anyone else for that matter.¹²

But let us return to the idea of losing a whole generation. What happens when millions of children who have missed out on education grow up? These adults have reduced opportunities to progress in life and the lower rates of social capital across the board limit productivity. Save the Children estimates that the long-term impact on Syria's economy of 2.8 million Syrian children never returning to school could be as much as 5.4% of GDP, which equates to almost \$2.19bn.

We know that education is the most powerful strategy we have to break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage for individuals, families and countries. We know that it contributes to higher income and empowerment and decreased poverty levels. Improving the quality of learning contributes to economic growth. Studies show that each additional year of education is associated with an 18 per cent higher gross domestic product per capita.¹³ We know that education is the foundation of peaceful societies. We know the transformative power of education.

We also know what the opposite of that looks like. Protracted conflicts, political instability and intractable poverty are the dividends of letting education slide from our agenda. According to the 2015 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, wherever the level of educational inequality doubled, the probability of conflict also doubled.¹⁴ And where conflicts are protracted – and they almost always are – we see the last

educated generation fade into the distance, leaving a void of governance and service provision in which it is almost impossible to build on national capacity or nurture a stable, peaceable, democratic country. I'm sure that I am talking to the converted – we are all brought here by a common conviction that education is a non-negotiable human right – **and one which cannot wait**; on the contrary, **it is urgent** – the 50 million or so children I mentioned who are out of school needed to be back in school **yesterday**. But believe it or not, we do not represent the mainstream. There remain donors, humanitarians, politicians and others in positions of power who do not see the urgency of education, and in conflict zones across the world education remains deprioritized and severely underfunded. In fact, education is often the least funded sector of humanitarian response.

There are many reasons for this. The humanitarian landscape is a crowded one, fraught with dilemmas and trade-offs: is it more important to feed children, keep them safe from harm, or ensure that they have access to school? Of course it's all important, but resources are finite and too few. Humanitarians and donors are struggling to do the right thing. Let me therefore share two simple truths to help us navigate towards that right thing:

Firstly, parents and children in situations of conflict ask for education. They prioritize it. And they want it **now**.

¹² Save the Children, 2015. The cost of war.

¹³ UNICEF, 2015. The investment case for education and equity.

¹⁴ UNESCO, 2015. Education for all global monitoring report.

Parents describe that it is in the first three months of a crisis that children are particularly exposed to acute physical and psychosocial risks which can be offset by the restorative experience of going back to school. They tell us that when their children are in class this frees them up to secure other basic needs.¹⁵

The longer children are made to wait for education, the greater the risk to them and the greater the strain on the family. Shouldn't we be listening to what these families are telling us? This seems like a cornerstone in our accountability to affected populations. I have just come back from Iraq, where families told me what they most need is education and cash. So why aren't these the priorities for the humanitarian effort? And just what are we supposed to tell the parents and children that said that education was their priority need? That we decided otherwise?

Secondly, when we make sure that schools are safe, they protect children. (With us here today is His Excellency Farooq Wardak, whose expertise on this far exceeds mine). Following the experiences in Rwanda, Srebrenica and Sri Lanka amongst others, as a humanitarian community we have reaffirmed the centrality of protection. Operationally, this means that we are committed to not only providing immediate assistance, but also to building a protective environment wherever we can, building on local structures and capacities. It means supporting families' own efforts to keep out of harm's way and to secure their children's present and future, recognizing that with safety comes wellbeing, dignity and hope. We used to say that around 50% of any population affected by conflict or disaster were children –

nowadays we are seeing that as much as 70% of those displaced by war are girls and boys.¹⁶ So education is more pressing than ever – with such a powerful tool in our (otherwise rather depleted) protection toolbox, we would do well to use it at scale.

Let me close with a question. If, because of political failures your child stopped going to school, what would **you** do? As a parent, let me tell you that I'd be concerned if my children were out of school for even a week. I wouldn't let it go longer than that. If someone suggested that my children's schooling should wait until the war ended, I'd question their sanity – as well as the seriousness of their intentions. As every parent knows, even in extremis, we will do whatever it takes to safeguard our children's wellbeing, and no matter how little we have, we will always invest it in their future. Ziauddin Yousafzai, who is also with us here today, can testify to this more than any of us. And on a personal note, I am also from the Swat Valley. As a boy growing up in Swat, I always loved to go to school, I simply could not wait. If I were a child in Swat today, I would be afraid to go to school. Finally, to suggest that education can wait is irresponsible in the extreme. Every day of learning lost is very difficult to regain. We wouldn't allow it for our own children and we shouldn't allow it for any children. **Let's not let this happen on our watch.**

¹⁵ Norwegian Refugee Council and Save the Children, 2013. Hear it from the children.

¹⁶ UNHCR, 2014. South Sudan refugee emergency revised regional response plan.

9.3 Iris Muller, Legal Advisor International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC): Protection of education in armed conflict

Through its presence and humanitarian activities across the globe, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) regularly witnesses how education is affected in armed conflicts. The sometimes excessive use of force by armed forces or organized non-state armed groups, combined with the fact that hostilities often take place in urban areas, make educational facilities, students and teachers frequent casualties. Evidence suggests that education is not only inadvertently affected by armed conflicts, but access to education might sometimes also be intentionally impaired.

School buildings may be targeted directly, incidentally damaged, or occupied. Explosive weapons are occasionally stored in schools, which may jeopardise access to education in the future. It is to schools that parties to armed conflict sometimes go, in order to recruit children and use them in hostilities; or to rape them or subject them to other forms of sexual violence. As a result, parents may keep their children out of school and teachers may stop coming to work. Armed conflict can also lead to the closure of schools. When that happens, more young people will be denied the opportunity to develop essential skills, and subsequently, for example, become more vulnerable to unlawful recruitment. The effect of armed conflict on education is felt through the loss of teachers; the flight of students and staff; the destruction of buildings; and the generalized degradation of education systems. When

a school is attacked, or when access to education is otherwise impeded, the harm suffered by children, their families and communities is therefore profound and often long-lasting.

Under international humanitarian law, parties to armed conflict must at all times distinguish between military objectives on the one hand and civilian objects on the other. Only military objectives may be lawfully targeted. Schools are presumed to be civilian objects and protected as such against direct attack. However, this protection ceases when a school becomes a military objective, which, depending on the circumstances, may be the case when they are used as, for example, barracks or weapon depots.

If a school becomes a military objective, it loses protection against attack. The military use of schools therefore multiplies the risk of attacks on schools – even though any attack, of course, remains subject to other rules of international humanitarian law, such as the principles of proportionality and of precaution in attack.

There is no provision of international humanitarian law that specifically prohibits the military use of schools. However, such use must be assessed in light of the general provisions of international humanitarian law. In particular, parties to armed conflict must take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population and civilian objects under their control against the effects of attacks. Further-

more, children are accorded special protection under international humanitarian law, and there are a number of provisions that aim at guaranteeing education for children during armed conflict. In the ICRC's view, what is needed is therefore not new law or a change to existing law, but rather – as so often – a better implementation of the existing law.

At the same time, proposals on how to reduce – as feasible – the military use of educational facilities in practice can be useful to prevent that education facilities become military objectives and therefore liable to attack, that students and teachers are otherwise exposed to violence, and that education is interrupted by armed conflict. Over the past years, the ICRC has therefore followed with interest initiatives such as the development of the *Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict* and of the *Safe Schools Declaration*, the reason for today's Conference.

While not a member of the “Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack” and therefore also not involved in the process of reaching out to governments to encourage them to endorse the *Guidelines*, the ICRC supported the process of drafting the *Guidelines*, by contributing to the substance of the document. We consider that the *Guidelines* are not legally binding in themselves and that they also do not propose to change existing law. We understand them as intended to lead to a shift of behaviour in practice that may result in a reduction in the military use of schools and universities. It was on the basis of this understanding that we gave our

input to the *Guidelines*. We also perceive the *Safe Schools Declaration* in this sense.

The *Guidelines* and the *Safe Schools Declaration* must be read against the background of the existing international law on the subject matter they address, with all its details. It is that binding legal framework that determines the lawfulness of a particular operation under international law. However, we consider that the *Guidelines and Safe Schools Declaration* can provide relevant practical guidance for those involved in the planning and execution of military operations, in relation to decisions over the military use and targeting of institutions dedicated to education. We therefore also encourage our staff to consider using the *Guidelines* as a reference tool among others and have actively disseminated the *Guidelines* amongst our delegations.

To conclude, Mr/Ms Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Armed conflict imposes immense suffering on children. Much of this suffering could be prevented by increasing knowledge of and respect for the rules of international humanitarian law, and the ICRC calls on all parties to armed conflict, international and non-international, to respect and ensure respect for applicable international humanitarian law. If, in addition, the *Guidelines* and the *Safe Schools Declaration* succeed in their aim to limit the effect of armed conflict on students, teachers, educational facilities and education in practice, this is an outcome that, I am sure, we all can only welcome.

10 Session V: Addressing the Issue – Endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration

10.1 Bård Glad Pedersen, Norwegian State Secretary: Opening Words of Session V: Endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration

We have in front of us a concise and action-oriented declaration about a complex matter. At the same time it is a well-balanced and carefully drafted document; an outcome of a number of meetings and consultations in Geneva in the past couple of months.

I know how much work many of you have put into this process – to ensure that we now have a document on the table that is ready for endorsement.



Bård Glad Pedersen, Norwegian State Secretary, promised that Norway will continue to promote and disseminate the guidelines and encouraged states to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.

Let me use the opportunity to express our gratitude for the commitment shown by both Member States and other stakeholders. I would especially like to thank Professor Steven Haines who led the drafting of the guidelines. Before the floor is opened for statements, I would like to briefly take you through the content of the Declaration.

The first three paragraphs set the stage: They address challenges related to military use and attacks on institutions, personnel and students, and not least they highlight the multiple benefits of protecting education during armed conflicts. Let's not forget that - fundamentally - we are dealing with a range of essential issues here: Safe Schools has to do with human rights, it has to do with humanitarian assistance in terms of basic services and psycho-social support, and it has to do with prospects in the longer term for peace, stability and development.

The declaration then moves on in paragraphs 4 and 5. These paragraphs welcome initiatives by individual States, emphasizes the importance of the continuation of education in situations of conflict, and highlights the work of the UN Security Council on children in armed conflict, drawing attention also

to key UN Security Council resolutions in this regard.

Paragraph 6 introduces the *Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict*. It's noted here – and let me underline this point - that the guidelines are not legally binding and do *not* affect existing legal obligations, but are informed by good practice.

Paragraph 7 moves on by recognizing the importance of enforcing existing international law, including obligations to end impunity.

In the last paragraph – paragraph 8 – States endorse the *Guidelines*, affirm their commitment to work for safe schools, and agree to the following:

To use the Guidelines at a national level, and to bring them as appropriate into domestic and policy frameworks; to collect relevant data; to provide assistance to victims; to investigate allegations of violations and where appropriate to take action; to support 'conflict-sensitive' education; to seek to ensure the continuation of education and the re-establishment of educational facilities; to provide international cooperation and assistance where they can; to continue to support the work of the UN on these issues; and - finally - to meet on a regular basis to review progress.

Ladies and gentlemen, more than sixty states have been present at today's conference. By being here you have shown an interest and a commitment to our common goal of increasing protection of schools and education in

conflicts and crises. We must and will work together to uphold children's right to education.

I am extremely pleased that so many states have confirmed their endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration in advance. We will soon move to the list of speakers to hear more endorsement statements and confirmations.

Before doing so, let me repeat what my minister said this morning: Today is not the end of a process, it is the beginning. Today implementation begins. Some states have already started developing procedures and mechanisms to make use of the guidelines. And other states are still in process and will hopefully be able to endorse the Declaration and the guidelines shortly.

From Norway's side we will continue our efforts to promote and disseminate the guidelines, and we will look for and provide opportunities for states to endorse the declaration and discuss issues related to the implementation of the guidelines. In this we count on the assistance of all those present today, both states, civil society, the Red Cross movement and the UN.

Towards the end of the session we will read up the list of all states that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration, either in advance or during today's meeting. Should you be in doubt whether your state's endorsement has been registered, please contact one of my staff during the session. And, as you were informed earlier today, there will be a group photo for all states that have endorsed the Declaration.

10.2 Endorsement session

More than 20 states took the floor to endorse the Declaration. Other states endorsed the Declaration by signing a written form. A number of observer states took the floor and stated their intention to endorse the Declaration in the near future. In addition, UN organisations and NGOs stated their strong support for the Declaration.

As mentioned earlier in this report, 37 countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration during the Oslo Conference. A further 12 states have endorsed it since the Conference, bringing the current number of endorsements to 49. See page 5 for a full list. The Safe Schools Declaration is still open for endorsement.

11 Session VI: Closing Remarks

11.1 Argentina's closing remarks

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be here today being part of this remarkable journey.

When Norway approached us more than a year ago to join them in the efforts to find the way to better implement the Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict we did not hesitate for a minute. We wanted to be part of this process from day one.

Fortunately Argentina is not among those countries where schools suffer from military attack. Does it mean that we shouldn't get involved in this initiative to make schools safer? Quite the opposite, we believe that we all share the responsibility to protect the future. The process that comes to an end today

is an excellent example of close collaboration between states and civil society. The development of the Guidelines and the drafting of the Safe Schools Declaration are a prove that shows how far we can get when States and civil society work together for a good cause. We believed that we had to do something to protect education and we joined forces to send a strong political message to the world.

During the numerous sessions that we held in Geneva to seek consensus among states we were always careful in highlighting that the Guidelines are based on International Humanitarian Law that is already in force. They are not intended to create new legal obligations to the states and that was clearly stated in the declaration. However, what we need to say loud and clear is that schools

should be protected from attacks and they should never be used for military purposes. This is a cultural change and we are starting to make it in this historic day.

Yesterday and today we had the opportunity to hear many stories and testimonies about children that have lost not only their schools but also their families and friends who claim to go back to study as the only way to overcome their situation. Those are desperate stories but

11.2 Anita Bay Bundegaard, Director and UN representative of Save the Children in Geneva/GCPEA

Being the very last speaker it is inevitable repeating what has already been said. And there is particular one message that I as a representative of the GCPEA and Save the Children do not mind repeating: today is a truly historic day.

It has been firmly established today that education is not a luxury, it is a right and a need in times of war as much as in times of peace. The idea that education can and should continue during and despite conflict is not evident for many people, especially when compared to basic “life-saving services” such as medical assistance, shelter, food assistance, livelihoods. But over the past years there has been an increasing recognition that schools can be pivotal spaces to ensure safety, access to other services and to enable long term recovery.

The Guidelines and this Declaration have emerged after years of discussions,

at the same time they are inspiring. They prove that the ambition to study and the hunger for learning is stronger than fear.

Finally, I would like to thank all the countries who are endorsing the Guidelines today, especially those from my region, Latin America, that are present here today. We really appreciate your commitment and support. And I would like to make a final appeal to the rest of the international community to join us in this endeavour as soon as possible.

but also of research and documentation work, which have clearly and consistently shown us **evidence** of how important it is to take further steps to enhance protection of education. We have heard insightful presentations that highlighted all the evidence this morning. We do not lack evidence. What we need is political will and courage.

The uniqueness of the Safe Schools Declaration:

And the Safe Schools Declaration is a unique example of political will and courage. Indeed, it is unique in several ways: As political declarations go, this one is particularly strong, clear and concrete: the commitments are important if there is to be tangible change on the ground. For children and communities affected by conflict.

It is a rallying point: For human rights, humanitarian law, humanitarian assistance, protection and international

development: sectors that are too often disconnected in practice. For countries living at peace and countries affected by war: some will take immediate action to respond to and mitigate actual threats against education; others will take preventive measures in the event of war.

This is something that only a political text can do – and this Declaration does it brilliantly. It is a Declaration of political will – even courage. Such a thing is rare.

Looking forward:

What does the Safe Schools Declaration mean for human rights and humanitarian organizations working in conflict zones? It means that some of us can count on your support as we monitor the challenges and threats facing students and teachers in conflict zones and try to inform adequate response and prevention measures; It means that we can be able to count on your support to prioritize education during conflict; Some of us are demonstrating through our education programming that education can be delivered safely even in areas of conflict if communities are involved. With the Declaration and the Guidelines we now have a new concrete tool to use as a basis for a dialogue with armed actors to get schools vacated, to prevent recruitment of children, to prevent sexual violence.

Political commitment made by states here today will have an impact not only at national but also at global level: States that have endorsed the Declaration here today are all leading by example and equally helping set a new standard of practice that will ensure safe schools for all worldwide. You are making a political statement that there are

no double standards when it comes to protecting education in armed conflict; there is one standard and it should be the highest possible.

Many have said that we have only just started. It is true. That is not to say that coming to this point was easy – it was not – but the hardest part probably lies ahead of us: The implementation and use of the Guidelines. And I cannot but take the opportunity now that I have the floor on behalf of a number of civil society and UN organisations to make a firm promise: we will review the status of progress and hold all of you accountable for your commitments. But we can also make the promise that we will contribute to the implementation of the Guidelines. We cannot wait to start using them in our work in conflict situations, we badly and urgently need them. And we are ready to work with States that have not yet endorsed the Declaration.

The Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Brende this morning said that getting to Oslo is the result of a collective effort. And I would add close collaboration. Between civil society, the UN and States.

We have heard so many different voices speaking about the importance of protecting education and children. But we have not heard directly from the children themselves.

Therefore, I am going to ask you to recall how it was to be a child and having to go to school every day. I am sure that some of you – us – sometimes thought that we could do without it. That it would be a dream come true not having to go to school every morning. In chil-

dren's literature it is not unusual that the main character is not too fond of going to school. I grew up with the Swedish children's book about Pippi Longstocking whom I believe is the heroine of many children around the world. She only goes to school because she would otherwise miss out on the school holidays. But fiction is one thing. Reality another. Children living in the real world - whose reality is war, who cannot go to school because they have been attacked or are being used for military purposes - have a very different dream. We have asked children living in conflict what are their main concerns. And education comes out on top of their list. For many even before shelter and food. Why? What they tell us is that what is the purpose of surviving if you cannot live. They dream about going back to school. When you ask children deprived of their right and opportunity to be educated what they think about not going to school, they do not reply that they think it is wonderful to sleep in and be free to play and do what they feel like for the rest of the day. Instead they are worried. For them not

going to school is related to fear: about becoming "backward", forgetting what they have learned. Fear of the prospects without an education: of early marriages, pregnancy, and recruitment. Fear of having to face a future without being prepared for it.

I therefore do not hesitate to conclude that those States that have endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration today have made the dream of going to school closer to coming true for millions of children around the world. I would like to congratulate us all – and in particular to thank Norway and Argentina for the strong and committed leadership throughout the process.

I would like to echo the words of the deputy foreign minister of Norway, Bård Glad Pedersen who yesterday reminded us: the reward for all the work done up to this date is ... more work.

So, wherever you go, whatever relevant fora you go to, bring the Declaration and Guidelines with you.

12 The Safe Schools Declaration in English, French and Spanish

12.1 Safe Schools Declaration

The impact of armed conflict on education presents urgent humanitarian, development and wider social challenges. Worldwide, schools and universities have been bombed, shelled and burned, and children, students, teachers and academics have been killed, maimed, abducted or arbitrarily detained. Educational facilities have been used by parties to armed conflict as, inter alia, bases, barracks or detention centres. Such actions expose students and education personnel to harm, deny large numbers of children and students their right to education and so deprive communities of the foundations on which to build their future. In many countries, armed conflict continues to destroy not just school infrastructure, but the hopes and ambitions of a whole generation of children.

Attacks on education include violence against educational facilities, students and education personnel. Attacks, and threats of attack, can cause severe and long lasting harm to individuals and societies. Access to education may be undermined; the functioning of educational facilities may be blocked, or education personnel and students may stay away, fearing for their safety. Attacks on schools and universities have been used to promote intolerance and exclusion – to further gender discrimination, for example by preventing the

education of girls, to perpetuate conflict between certain communities, to restrict cultural diversity, and to deny academic freedom or the right of association. Where educational facilities are used for military purposes it can increase the risk of the recruitment and use of children by armed actors or may leave children and youth vulnerable to sexual abuse or exploitation. In particular, it may increase the likelihood that education institutions are attacked.

By contrast, education can help to protect children and youth from death, injury and exploitation; it can alleviate the psychological impact of armed conflict by offering routine and stability and can provide links to other vital services. Education that is 'conflict sensitive' avoids contributing to conflict and pursues a contribution to peace. Education is fundamental to development and to the full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms. We will do our utmost to see that places of education are places of safety.

We welcome initiatives by individual States to promote and protect the right to education and to facilitate the continuation of education in situations of armed conflict. Continuation of education can provide life-saving health information as well as advice on specific risks in societies facing armed conflict.

We commend the work of the United Nations Security Council on children and armed conflict and acknowledge the importance of the monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations against children in armed conflict. We emphasize the importance of Security Council resolution 1998 (2011), and 2143 (2014) which, inter alia, urges all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education and encourages Member States to consider concrete measures to deter the use of schools by armed forces and armed non-State groups in contravention of applicable international law.

We welcome the development of the *Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict*. The Guidelines are non-legally binding, voluntary guidelines that do not affect existing international law. They draw on existing good practice and aim to provide guidance that will further reduce the impact of armed conflict on education. We welcome efforts to disseminate these guidelines and to promote their implementation among armed forces, armed groups and other relevant actors.

We stress the importance, in all circumstances, of full respect for applicable international law, including the need to comply with the relevant obligations to end impunity.

Recognizing the right to education and the role of education in promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations; determined progressively to strengthen in practice the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and of children and youth in

particular; committed to working together towards safe schools for all; we endorse the *Guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict*, and will:

- Use the *Guidelines*, and bring them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate;
- Make every effort at a national level to collect reliable relevant data on attacks on educational facilities, on the victims of attacks, and on military use of schools and universities during armed conflict, including through existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms; to facilitate such data collection; and to provide assistance to victims, in a non-discriminatory manner;
- Investigate allegations of violations of applicable national and international law and, where appropriate, duly prosecute perpetrators;
- Develop, adopt and promote 'conflict-sensitive' approaches to education in international humanitarian and development programmes, and at a national level where relevant;
- Seek to ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict, support the re-establishment of educational facilities and, where in a position to do so, provide and facilitate international cooperation and assistance to programmes working to prevent or respond to attacks on education, including for the implementation of this declaration;
- Support the efforts of the UN Security Council on children and armed conflict, and of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed

Conflict and other relevant UN organs, entities and agencies; and

- Meet on a regular basis, inviting relevant international organisation

and civil society, so as to review the implementation of this declaration and the use of the guidelines.

12.2 Déclaration sur la sécurité dans les écoles

L'impact des conflits armés sur l'éducation engendre des défis humanitaires et de développement et des problèmes sociaux plus larges auxquels il est urgent de s'attaquer. Dans le monde entier, des écoles et des universités ont été bombardées, détruites ou brûlées, et des enfants, des étudiants, des enseignants et des universitaires ont été tués, mutilés, enlevés ou détenus de manière arbitraire. Des établissements d'enseignement ont été utilisés comme bases, comme casernes ou comme centres de détention par des parties aux conflits armés. Ces agissements exposent les étudiants et le personnel enseignant à des dangers, empêchent un grand nombre d'enfants et d'étudiants d'exercer leur droit à l'éducation et privent des communautés entières des bases nécessaires pour construire leur avenir. Dans de nombreux pays, les conflits armés continuent ainsi de détruire non seulement les infrastructures scolaires, mais aussi les espoirs et les ambitions de toute une génération d'enfants.

Les attaques contre l'éducation comprennent les actes de violence contre les établissements d'enseignement, les étudiants et le personnel enseignant. Les attaques, ainsi que les menaces

d'attaque, peuvent causer des préjudices graves et durables aux

individus et aux sociétés. L'accès à l'éducation peut être compromis, le fonctionnement des établissements d'enseignement peut être entravé, ou bien les enseignants et les élèves peuvent rester chez eux, craignant pour leur sécurité. Les attaques contre les écoles et les universités ont été utilisées pour promouvoir l'intolérance et l'exclusion – pour favoriser la discrimination fondée sur le sexe, en empêchant par exemple l'éducation des filles, pour perpétuer les conflits entre certaines communautés, pour limiter la diversité culturelle et pour refuser la liberté académique ou le droit d'association. L'utilisation d'établissements d'enseignement à des fins militaires peut accroître le risque d'enrôlement et d'emploi d'enfants par des acteurs armés ou exposer les enfants et les jeunes à des abus ou exploitations à caractère sexuel. Elle peut en particulier augmenter le risque d'attaques contre les institutions dédiées à l'éducation.

En revanche, l'éducation peut contribuer à protéger les enfants et les jeunes contre la mort, les dommages corporels et l'exploitation ; elle peut atténuer l'impact psychologique des conflits armés en offrant une routine et une stabilité et donner accès à d'autres services essentiels. Une éducation qui tient compte des conflits n'alimente pas le conflit et contribue à la paix. L'éduca-

tion est fondamentale au développement et à la pleine jouissance des droits de l'homme et des libertés. Nous ferons tout notre possible pour veiller à ce que les lieux d'éducation soient des lieux sûrs.

Nous saluons les initiatives prises par certains États pour promouvoir et protéger le droit à l'éducation et pour faciliter la continuité de l'éducation dans des situations de conflit armé. Lorsque la continuité de l'éducation est assurée, des informations vitales sur la santé ainsi que des conseils sur les risques inhérents aux sociétés en proie à un conflit armé peuvent être transmis.

Nous nous félicitons des travaux du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies sur le sort des enfants en temps de conflit armé et reconnaissons le rôle crucial du mécanisme de surveillance et de communication de l'information pour les violations graves commises contre les enfants dans des conflits armés. Nous soulignons l'importance des résolutions 1998 (2011) et 2143 (2014) du Conseil de sécurité qui, entre autres, demandent instamment à toutes les parties à des conflits armés de s'abstenir de toute action qui entraverait l'accès des enfants à l'éducation et encouragent les États Membres à envisager de prendre des mesures concrètes pour dissuader les forces armées et les groupes armés non étatiques d'utiliser les écoles en violation du droit international applicable.

Nous saluons l'élaboration des *Lignes directrices pour la protection des écoles et des universités contre l'utilisation militaire durant les conflits armés*. Ces Lignes directrices ne sont pas juridiquement contraignantes. Elles sont facultatives et n'affectent pas le droit

international en vigueur. Elles s'inspirent des bonnes pratiques existantes et fournissent des orientations destinées à réduire encore l'impact des conflits armés sur l'éducation. Nous saluons les efforts déployés pour diffuser ces lignes directrices aux forces armées, aux groupes armés et aux autres acteurs concernés et promouvoir leur mise en œuvre.

Nous rappelons l'importance, en toutes circonstances, du respect total du droit international applicable, et notamment la nécessité de se conformer aux obligations pertinentes en matière de lutte contre l'impunité.

Reconnaissant le droit à l'éducation et le rôle de l'éducation pour promouvoir la compréhension, la tolérance et l'amitié entre toutes les nations ; déterminés à renforcer progressivement et concrètement la protection des civils dans les conflits armés, et en particulier des enfants et des jeunes ; résolus à œuvrer ensemble pour assurer la sécurité dans toutes les écoles; nous approuvons les *Lignes directrices pour la protection des écoles et des universités contre l'utilisation militaire durant les conflits armés*, et :

- nous utiliserons les *Lignes directrices* et les intégrerons dans nos politiques nationales et nos cadres opérationnels, dans toute la mesure nécessaire et possible ;
- nous ferons tout notre possible au niveau national pour recueillir des données pertinentes fiables sur les attaques contre les établissements d'enseignement, sur les victimes de ces attaques, et sur l'utilisation militaire des écoles et des universités

- durant les conflits armés, notamment par les mécanismes existants de surveillance et de communication de l'information, pour faciliter cette collecte de données et pour apporter une assistance non-discriminatoire aux victimes ;
- nous enquêterons sur les allégations de violation du droit national et international en vigueur et, le cas échéant, poursuivrons les auteurs de manière appropriée ;
- nous élaborerons, adopterons et promouvoir, dans le cadre de programmes humanitaires et de développement et, le cas échéant, au niveau national, des approches dans le domaine de l'éducation qui tiennent compte des conflits ;
- nous essaierons d'assurer la continuité de l'éducation durant les conflits armés, soutiendrons le rétablissement des installations scolaires et

- universitaires et, si nous sommes en mesure de le faire, fournirons et faciliterons une coopération et une assistance internationales aux programmes destinés à prévenir les attaques contre l'éducation, ou à y riposter, notamment pour la mise en œuvre de cette déclaration ;
- nous soutiendrons les efforts du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU concernant le sort des enfants dans les conflits armés et du Représentant spécial du Secrétaire général pour le sort des enfants en temps de conflit armé ainsi que d'autres organismes, entités et institutions pertinents de l'ONU ;
- nous nous réunirons régulièrement, en invitant les organisations internationales concernées et la société civile, afin d'examiner la mise en œuvre de cette déclaration et l'utilisation des lignes directrices.

12.3 Declaración sobre Escuelas Seguras

El impacto de los conflictos armados sobre la educación plantea retos de emergencia humanitaria y desarrollo, así como también grandes desafíos sociales. En todo el mundo se han bombardeado e incendiado escuelas y universidades y los niños, los estudiantes y los profesores e investigadores han sido víctimas de asesinatos, mutilaciones, secuestros o detenciones arbitrarias. Las instalaciones educativas han sido usadas por los actores de los conflictos armados como bases, cuarteles o centros de detención, entre otras cosas. Tales acciones exponen a daños a los estudiantes y al personal docente, deniegan a gran número

de niños y estudiantes su derecho a la educación y privan así a las comunidades de unos cimientos sobre los que construir su futuro. En muchos países, los conflictos armados siguen destruyendo no sólo la infraestructura escolar, sino también las esperanzas y aspiraciones de toda una generación infantil.

Los ataques a la educación incluyen la violencia contra las instalaciones educativas, los estudiantes y el personal docente. Los ataques y las amenazas de ataque pueden causar daños graves y muy duraderos, a los individuos y a la sociedad. Ellos pueden socavar el acceso a la educación; bloquear el fun-

cionamiento de los centros educativos o generar el absentismo del personal docente y de los estudiantes, al temer por la propia seguridad. Los ataques a las escuelas y universidades han sido utilizados para promover la intolerancia y la exclusión. Por ejemplo, para fomentar la discriminación de género mediante la prohibición de la educación a las niñas, perpetuar el conflicto entre ciertas comunidades, restringir la diversidad cultural y negar la libertad académica o el derecho de asociación. Cuando se utilizan las instalaciones educativas con fines militares, puede aumentar el riesgo del reclutamiento y la utilización de niños por los actores del conflicto armado, o de hacer vulnerables a los niños y los jóvenes ante el abuso o la explotación sexual. Tal uso puede particularmente hacer más probable el ataque a las instalaciones educativas.

En contraste con lo anterior, la educación puede ayudar a proteger a los niños y los jóvenes de la muerte, las lesiones y la explotación; aliviar el impacto psicológico de los conflictos armados por ofrecer rutinas y estabilidad y, también, proporcionar enlaces con otros servicios de importancia vital. Una educación 'sensible al conflicto' evita contribuir a los conflictos y persigue hacer una aportación a la paz. La educación es fundamental para el desarrollo y pleno disfrute de los derechos humanos y las libertades fundamentales. Haremos todo lo posible por que las instalaciones educativas sean lugares seguros.

Acogemos con beneplácito las iniciativas de los distintos Estados en cuanto a promover y proteger el derecho a la educación y para facilitar la continuidad

de la educación en situaciones de conflicto armado. La continuidad de la educación puede proporcionar información sobre salud susceptible de salvar vidas, así como asesoramiento sobre los riesgos específicos que afectan a las sociedades en que se vive un conflicto armado.

Encomiamos la labor del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas relativa a los niños y los conflictos armados y reconocemos la importancia del mecanismo de supervisión y presentación de informes sobre las violaciones graves de los Derechos del Niño. Hacemos hincapié en la importancia de las Resoluciones 1998 (2011) y 2143 (2014) del Consejo de Seguridad, la cual, entre otras cosas, insta a las partes en conflictos armados a que se abstengan de toda medida que obstaculice el acceso de los niños a la educación y alienta a los Estados Miembros a considerar la adopción de medidas concretas para disuadir el uso de las escuelas por fuerzas armadas y grupos armados no estatales, infringiendo las normas internacionales vigentes.

Celebramos la elaboración de las *Directrices para Prevenir el Uso Militar de Escuelas y Universidades durante Conflictos Armados*. Las Directrices son de carácter voluntario y no vinculante y no afectan a la normativa internacional en vigor. Se basan en las buenas prácticas existentes y tienen por objeto proporcionar orientación para reducir aún más el impacto de los conflictos armados sobre la educación. Acogemos con agrado los esfuerzos por dar difusión a estas *Directrices* y promover su implementación entre las fuerzas

armadas, los grupos armados y otras partes relevantes.

Recalamos la importancia del pleno respeto, en todas las circunstancias, al derecho internacional aplicable, inclusive la necesidad de dar cumplimiento a las obligaciones pertinentes para poner fin a la impunidad.

Reconociendo el derecho a la educación y su papel en la promoción de la comprensión, la tolerancia y la amistad entre todas las naciones; decididos a reforzar progresivamente en la práctica la protección de la población civil en las situaciones de conflicto armado, en particular de los niños y los jóvenes; comprometidos con la labor común en pro de unas escuelas seguras para todos; apoyamos las *Directrices para Prevenir el Uso Militar de Escuelas y Universidades durante Conflictos Armados*, y vamos a:

- Utilizar las *Directrices*, e insertarlas dentro de la política y los marcos operativos nacionales en la medida de lo posible y apropiado;
- Hacer todo lo posible a nivel nacional para recoger datos fiables y relevantes sobre ataques a instalaciones educativas, las víctimas de los ataques y el uso militar de las escuelas y universidades en situaciones de conflicto armado, inclusive a través de los mecanismos de supervisión y presentación de informes existentes; facilitar la recopilación de dichos datos; y proporcionar asistencia a las víctimas, de manera no discriminatoria;
- Investigar las denuncias de infracciones de las normas nacionales e internacionales aplicables y, en su

caso, procesar como es debido a los perpetradores;

- Elaborar, aprobar y promover enfoques 'sensibles al conflicto' al abordar la educación en los programas internacionales de ayuda humanitaria y cooperación al desarrollo, y en el ámbito nacional, en su caso;
- Intentar garantizar la continuidad de la educación durante los conflictos armados, apoyar el restablecimiento de los servicios educativos y cuando se esté en posición de hacerlo, proveer y facilitar cooperación y asistencia internacional a programas dirigidos a prevenir o responder a ataques contra la educación, inclusive para la implementación de esta Declaración;
- Apoyar los esfuerzos del Consejo de Seguridad de la ONU sobre los niños y los conflictos armados y del Representante Especial del Secretario General para la cuestión de los niños y los conflictos armados y de otros órganos, entidades y agencias pertinentes de Naciones Unidas; y
- Celebrar reuniones periódicas, a las que se invitará a organizaciones internacionales relevantes y a la sociedad civil, con el fin de examinar la implementación de la presente Declaración y el uso de las *Directrices*.

13 Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military use during Armed Conflict

Parties to armed conflict are urged not to use schools and universities for any purpose in support of their military effort. While it is acknowledged that certain uses would not be contrary to the law of armed conflict, all parties should endeavour to avoid impinging on students' safety and education, using the following as a guide to responsible practice:

GUIDELINE 1:

Functioning schools and universities should not be used by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in any way in support of the military effort.

- (a) This principle extends to schools and universities that are temporarily closed outside normal class hours, during weekends and holidays, and during vacation periods.
- (b) Parties to armed conflict should neither use force nor offer incentives to education administrators to evacuate schools and universities in order that they can be made available for use in support of the military effort.

GUIDELINE 2:

Schools and universities that have been abandoned or evacuated because of the dangers presented by armed conflict should not be used by the fighting forces

of parties to armed conflict for any purpose in support of their military effort, except in extenuating circumstances when they are presented with no viable alternative, and only for as long as no choice is possible between such use of the school or university and another feasible method for obtaining a similar military advantage. Other buildings should be regarded as better options and used in preference to school and university buildings, even if they are not so conveniently placed or configured, except when such buildings are specially protected under International Humanitarian Law (e.g. hospitals), and keeping in mind that parties to armed conflict must always take all feasible precautions to protect all civilian objects from attack.

- (a) Any such use of abandoned or evacuated schools and universities should be for the minimum time necessary.
- (b) Abandoned or evacuated schools and universities that are used by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in support of the military effort should remain available to allow educational authorities to re-open them as soon as practicable after fighting forces have withdrawn from them, provided this would not risk endangering the security of students and staff.

- (c) Any traces or indication of militarisation or fortification should be completely removed following the withdrawal of fighting forces, with every effort made to put right as soon as possible any damage caused to the infrastructure of the institution. In particular, all weapons, munitions and unexploded ordnance or remnants of war should be cleared from the site.

GUIDELINE 3:

Schools and universities must never be destroyed as a measure intended to deprive the opposing parties to the armed conflict of the ability to use them in the future. Schools and universities – be they in session, closed for the day or for holidays, evacuated or abandoned – are ordinarily civilian objects.

GUIDELINE 4:

While the use of a school or university by the fighting forces of parties to armed conflict in support of their military effort may, depending on the circumstances, have the effect of turning it into a military objective subject to attack, parties to armed conflict should consider all feasible alternative measures before attacking them, including, unless circumstances do not permit, warning the enemy in advance that an attack will be forthcoming unless it ceases its use.

- (a) Prior to any attack on a school that has become a military objective, the parties to armed conflict should take into consideration the fact that children are entitled to special respect and protection. An additional important consideration is the

- potential long-term negative effect on a community's access to education posed by damage to or the destruction of a school.
- (b) The use of a school or university by the fighting forces of one party to a conflict in support of the military effort should not serve as justification for an opposing party that captures it to continue to use it in support of the military effort. As soon as feasible, any evidence or indication of militarisation or fortification should be removed and the facility returned to civilian authorities for the purpose of its educational function.

GUIDELINE 5:

The fighting forces of parties to armed conflict should not be employed to provide security for schools and universities, except when alternative means of providing essential security are not available. If possible, appropriately trained civilian personnel should be used to provide security for schools and universities. If necessary, consideration should also be given to evacuating children, students and staff to a safer location.

- (a) If fighting forces are engaged in security tasks related to schools and universities, their presence within the grounds or buildings should be avoided if at all possible in order to avoid compromising the establishment's civilian status and disrupting the learning environment.

GUIDELINE 6:

All parties to armed conflict should, as far as possible and as appropriate, incorporate these Guidelines into, for example, their doctrine, military manuals, rules of engagement, opera-

tional orders, and other means of dissemination, to encourage appropriate practice throughout the chain of command. Parties to armed conflict should determine the most appropriate method of doing this.



Anne Lindboe, the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children, highlighted how access to education is a fundamental human right for all children.

14 The Oslo Conference on Safe Schools: Protecting Education from Attack

PROGRAM

Thursday 28 May

16:00–18:00 Public Meeting. Protection of Children and Education in Conflict

Venue: Ingeniørenes Hus, Kronprinsens gate 17, Oslo

The meeting is organized by civil society and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

19:00 Welcome dinner

Venue: Hotel Continental, Stortingsgaten 24/26

Host: State Secretary Bård Glad Pedersen, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Conference dinner for participants

Friday 29 May

08:00 Registration for the Conference

09:00–14:00 Oslo Conference on Safe Schools: Protecting Education from Attack

Venue: Ingeniørenes Hus, Kronprinsens gate 17

09:00–09:45 Session I: Opening

Co-chairs: Norway (Director General Kjersti E. Andersen MFA) and Austria (Ambassador Thomas Hajnoczi)

- Mr. Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- Ine Eriksen Søreide, Minister of Defence, Norway
- George Warner, Minister of Education, The Republic of Liberia
- Ziauddin Yousafzai, UN Special Advisor on Global Education and Co-founder of the Malala Fund

09:45–10:15 Session II: A Growing Challenge – Immediate and Long-Term Effects of Attacks on Schools

Co-chairs: Norway (Director General Kjersti E. Andersen, MFA) and Nigeria (Peters Emuze, Minister)

Attacks on schools - the immediate consequences and global effects

- Jan Egeland, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council

Attacks on schools; the long-term effects on society

- Yvette Stevens, Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone in Geneva

10:15–10:45 Session III: The Military Use of Educational Facilities in Conflict

Co-chairs: Norway (Ambassador Steffen Kongstad) and Mozambique (Minister Plenipotentiary Chissano Jaime Valente)

Consequences of the military use of Schools - how states can use the guidelines

- Bede Sheppard, Deputy Director in the Children's Rights Division, Human Rights Watch/GCPEA

The Relevance of the guidelines for armed non-state actors

- Elisabeth Decrey-Warner, Executive President of Geneva Call

10:30–11:00 Session IV: Ensuring Safe Schools – a broader engagement

Co-chairs: Mozambique (Minister Plenipotentiary Chissano Jaime Valente) and Save the Children Norway (Director General Tove Wang)

Continuation of education in conflict and re-establishing education post conflict

- H.E Farooq Wardak, Former Minister of Education in the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Consequences of lost education due to conflict - today and for the future

- Sikander Khan, Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF

Protection of education in armed conflict

- Iris Mueller, Legal Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

11:00–11:30 Coffee Break

11:30–13:30 Session V: Addressing the issue - Endorsement of the Safe Schools Declaration

Co-chairs: Norway (State Secretary Bård Glad Pedersen and Ambassador Steffen Kongstad) and Argentina (Minister Plenipotentiary Julio César Mercado)

Endorsement of the declaration by states. International organisations and observers can state their support. Maximum 3 minutes per statement.

Endorsement may also be done in writing.

Please contact the endorsement desk at the Conference venue.

13:30 Session VI: Closing Remarks

- Argentina
- Anita Bay Bundegaard, Director and UN representative of Save the Children in Geneva/GCPEA

13:35 Group photo of the countries that have endorsed the Declaration

We ask all countries that have endorsed the Declaration to meet in the front of the Conference room with their country sign.

14:00 Informal lunch

Venue: Restaurant Havsmak, Henrik Ibsens gate 4, Oslo

Two minutes' walk from the Conference Venue



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