

Human Rights Council – 44th session

**ITEM 3 – Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary General
on Children and Armed Conflict**

**Joint Statement on the situation of children's human rights in Colombia delivered by
Defence for Children International (DCI)**

Madam President,

Defence for Children International (DCI) presents this joint statement with Plan International.

We welcome the Special Representative's report, highlighting the incidence of sexual violence against children in armed conflict, including the abuse of girls associated with armed groups in Colombia. Historically, these crimes have mostly affected girls, who constitute 84% of all victims of sexual violence. We strongly condemn last weeks' rape of an indigenous girl by Colombian military personnel, a heinous crime that must be investigated and prosecuted.

Despite the peace agreement with the FARC-EP, an armed conflict persists between Colombia and armed groups that include FARC dissidents. The weak implementation of this agreement has contributed to the continuity and aggravation of the maiming of children.

Moreover, of 276 incidents of armed conflict last year, 222 involved crimes committed against children, including killings, illegal recruitment, kidnappings, attacks on schools and hospitals and forced displacements. This year, more than 8.400 children have been affected by the armed conflict, and victims of illegal recruitment and use have increased by 113%.

COVID-19 has affected children's rights to health, education and food and has also increased financial difficulties, intrafamily violence and risks of children being illegally recruited. For these reasons, DCI calls on States to:

- Prioritise the protection of indigenous children;
- Adopt and implement key policies and political declarations for the protection of children, including the Safe Schools Declaration; and

- Continue monitoring children's rights in armed conflict to prevent violations and ensure accountability.

Thank you.

Co-signed by:

- Plan International

Supported by:

- COALICO - Coalition Against the Linking of Children to the Armed Conflict in Colombia
- GCPEA - Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
- Humanium