

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE ABUJA CONFERENCE

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY, GEOFFREY ONYEAMA
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

AT

**THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SAFE SCHOOLS
DECLARATION**

WITH THE THEME

**“MAKING COMMITMENTS A REALITY: THE SAFE SCHOOLS DECLARATION –
FROM OSLO TOWARDS THE ABUJA CONFERENCE”**

15TH JULY, 2021

The 4th International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration assembled delegates from Member States, International Organisations and National NGOs in Abuja, Nigeria from 25th – 27th October, 2021, to discuss ways to strengthen implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration; to ensure education for all by moving from 'commitment to practice'. The three-day international conference was structured around the following commitments which were the main broad strands on which the discussions were tailored:

- a) Using the *Guidelines* and bringing them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as appropriate;
- b) Continuing education during armed conflict, including by developing alternative learning models if necessary;
- c) Investigate allegations of violations of applicable National and International laws and where appropriate, duly prosecute perpetrators; and
- d) Providing assistance to survivors.

2. During the discussions and deliberations, good practices in implementing the commitments of the Safe Schools Declaration were peer-reviewed and highlighted, including military directives not to use schools for military purposes, legislation prohibiting peace keepers from using schools, and measures to deter non-state armed groups from using schools and targeting education structures. In addition, we heard about measures undertaken by countries to continue education during the COVID- 19 pandemic when schools were closed, and how these can and are being used to educate children out of school due to conflict. Also, we discussed ways through which safe schools could prevent other grave violations such as recruitment and sexual violence.

3. The experiences in the Sahel region were particularly spotlighted and innovative practice in the region held out as examples to build upon. Finally, we examined ways of ensuring justice for survivors, in terms of prosecuting perpetrators of attacks, deterring future attacks, and providing assistance to survivors through the legal system.

4. By having a better understanding of how the commitments in the Declaration are being implemented in endorsing states across the world, we have been inspired to adapt these approaches to our own contexts, to help us truly move from commitment to practice. And we have heard directly

from children themselves, in no uncertain terms, including through the demands in their manifesto.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. The recommendations from this conference abound and include:
 - Ensuring that child protection advisers are part of military and peacekeeping operations to strengthen protections and pre-empt violations against children
 - Increasing the funding for education in conflict-affected areas
 - Putting accountability mechanisms in place within military structures to ensure there are consequences for violations
 - Completing investigations and fair trials of perpetrators of attacks on education
 - Amending military doctrine to restrict the use of schools and universities by military forces; and
 - Advance planning by the military and security agencies to avoid use of schools and universities

These are just a few of the recommendations. Every state must strive to meet them.

6. We urge other states to make concrete commitments themselves to bring the lessons learned at this conference back home and to work towards building a society in which all children and young people can study and learn in safety and educators and academics can teach and conduct research without the threat of violence.

7. A full report of the outcome of the conference will be available in the next weeks setting out the outcomes of the Conference and cementing the promises made here in Abuja.

8. I thank you.