

**Permanent Mission of India
New York**

--

UNSC Open Debate on CAAC

**Strengthening the Prevention of and Protection of Education for Children Affected by
Armed Conflict: From Normative Commitments to Effective Implementation**

Statement by Ambassador Harish Parvathaneni, Permanent Representative
24 June 2026

Date: 24 June 2026

Madam President,

I extend India's sincere appreciation to Colombia for convening today's open debate, and to the briefers Ms. Vanessa Frazier, SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict, and Ms. Catherine Russel, Executive Director of UNICEF for their valuable insights and expertise.

2. We gather today to confront one of the most urgent imperatives before this Council: the protection of education for children living through the impossible circumstance of armed conflict. The Secretary-General's 2025 Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict presents alarming statistics — attacks on schools rose by a staggering 44 per cent in a single year. Nearly 473 million children — more than one in six globally — live in or are fleeing conflict zones, and more than 85 million among them have no access to education whatsoever. These figures are a damning verdict on humanity's collective failure to translate commitments into reality on the ground.

3. Madam President,

Schools are far more than places of learning. They provide the foundational basis for the cognitive, emotional and social development of children. To protect a child's education is, therefore, to protect a nation's future. It is with this conviction that India offers the following perspectives.

4. First, national governments bear the primary responsibility to uphold their obligations to protect and promote a child's rights. In India, the Right to Education is a fundamental right enshrined in our Constitution, guaranteeing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years. In order to ensure access to quality education to all, India launched DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing) — our national digital platform for school education. It has democratized access to quality learning through interactive content and AI-powered tools

across multiple languages. Our domestic commitment to ensure access to affordable and quality education also shapes our engagement on this issue internationally.

5. India leveraged digital technology as a vital enabler of access to education, especially in regions and during times with disrupted physical schooling such as during the Covid pandemic. Our experience has convinced us that access to digital learning can be the bridge that helps children access education during conflicts.

6. We believe that investment in education for those bearing the heaviest burden of war is an imperative. India has made sustained investments in facilitating education for refugees and displaced communities from across our neighbourhood, recognizing that continuity of learning is among the most powerful tools for resilience and recovery. We have also invested in rebuilding education infrastructure, including the construction of schools and vocational training centers, in different countries including our neighbourhood.

7. Finally, protection without accountability is incomplete. Those who target schools and children with impunity must be held to account.

8. Madam President,
Education is a right that should endure in times of conflict. It is the right whose fulfillment is among the most powerful contributions to lasting peace. India remains unwavering in its commitment to protecting children in armed conflict and to upholding their right to learn, to grow, and to realize their full potential.

Thank you.