

Public Statement

No minor is a weapon of war.

Bogotá, December 12th, 2024

The 37 organizations members of the Forum of Humanitarian NGOs of Colombia welcome and thank the **United Nations Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict** for visiting Colombia from December 9 to 13.

The Forum highlights the work that the Security Council is taking to monitor and provide recommendations to prevent and cope with the occurrence of the **six serious violations against children's rights in times of war**: the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and groups; the killing and maiming of children; attacks on schools and hospitals; rape and other sexual violence against children; and the denial of access to humanitarian aid to children.

The Forum and other platforms working on children's rights affected by the conflict expressed to the Security Council our alarm about the deterioration of the armed conflict in Colombia and its impact on children under 18 years. The Forum estimates that **between 2022 and 2023, at least 1,800 minors have been recruited in Colombia**. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has identified verified recruitment cases in the first nine months of 2024 that already exceed the figures for 2023.

The Forum calls on institutions to improve their capacity to **prevent, identify, assist, and protect** children and adolescents at risk of recruitment and recruitment. This implies that Colombia must implement an **effective system that goes beyond barriers and limitations between the different administrative levels**. Also, public policies should be able to adapt to the dynamism of recruitment and the use and utilization strategies used by armed groups.

We urge **non-state armed groups to immediately cease the recruitment of children under 18** years of age, as it is mandatory according to the International Humanitarian Law, which clearly and forcefully establishes that no child under 18 years of age should be linked to armed conflicts.

Under any circumstances, no minor may be instrumentalized as a weapon of war.

Humanitarian NGO Forum, Colombia