

**Opening Remarks by UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator ai Knut Ostby
Workshop on the 6 grave violations of children's rights for the Committee on the
Prevention of Underage Recruitment**

**03 December 2018
M Gallery Hotel, Nay Pyi Taw**

OPENING REMARKS

Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement U Soe Aung,
Deputy Attorney General U Win Myint,
Major General Khun Than Zaw Htoo,
Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population U Myo Aung,
Vice Adjutant General, Office of the Commander in Chief of Army
Representatives of Government Departments and members of the Committee on the
Prevention of Underage Recruitment
Mr Alec Wargo, from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on
Children and Armed Conflict,
Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting colleagues,
Workshop participants,

Good morning and Mingalar ba.

It gives me a great pleasure to express, on behalf of the Country Taskforce Co-Chairs, my most sincere thanks to the Government's Committee on the Prevention of Underage Recruitment for hosting this important training.

It demonstrates the commitment made at the Panglong conference in July to ensure protection of children's rights and eliminate all the six grave violations, as well as the commitment to protect children in the Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement.

I am very pleased to see the growing partnership between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Country Taskforce and the Government of Myanmar and in particular, the Prevention Committee.

I commend the Government for inviting the Office of the Special Representative to conduct this two-day workshop and your commitment to better appreciate/understand the issues at hand.

It is my hope that the training will be an opportunity to further strengthen this relationship and boost the capacities.

I understand that the objective of the workshop is to share knowledge on how to efficiently prevent all grave violations and enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

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The team of facilitators will make sure we will all learn from each other. They will conduct constructive discussions about experiences with prevention of grave violations of children's rights in other contexts and countries.

It is also my hope that the key takeaways from this workshop will be widely disseminated within the ministries that make up the Committee and the Tatmadaw. The Country Taskforce would be keen to support such a process.

Allow me please now to recognize the progress made by the Prevention Committee since the high-level meeting convened in July by his Excellency Lt General Sein Win, Union Minister of Defence.

The cordial and frank discussions from the high-level meeting led to concrete action towards completion of the Joint Action Plan.

I would also like to acknowledge again the release of 75 children and young people recruited as minors earlier this year as a key achievement.

From the Country Taskforce side, we took action to address the grievances expressed by the Committee at the high-level meeting.

We have succeeded in making a significant progress in several areas through building a frank relationship based on mutual trust.

As a matter of priority, the issue of age verification has yet to find a mutually agreed conclusion.

I believe that the proposals submitted by both sides are getting us closer to a solution keeping in mind, the best interest of children.

On the issue of battalion monitoring methodology, I was very pleased to hear from our technical team that our efforts to increase transparency and collaboration was matched by an unprecedented level of cooperation from the Tatmadaw during the monitoring mission in September. This is the kind of collaboration that will ensure sustained solutions to the issue being addressed.

While the findings of the mission have yet to be discussed, I trust that the concrete recommendations from the report can be acted upon in a joint effort. The Country Taskforce stands ready to provide its full support to the actions identified by the Committee.

I would also like to inform you that a Country Taskforce delegation visited UN Headquarters in New York a month ago at the request of the Special Representative. They met the Permanent Mission of Myanmar and other stakeholders.

After the mission, the Special Representative summarized the key remaining steps towards ending and preventing underage recruitment and use in a letter to his Excellency Lt General Sein Win on November 5th.

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I would like to take this opportunity to briefly go over some of these points:

1. Clearing the back-log of cases before the Prevention Committee should be prioritized, and the Special Representative has expressed her dedication to get to zero back-log before the close of the year. This would imply a speedy processing of the cases still under Tatmadaw review, including some for over 18 months, the submission of documents on the 49 special recruitment cases prior to the removal from the list, as well as a conclusion on the cases for which age verification is inconclusive, based on the benefit of the doubt principle highlighted in the Joint Action Plan.
2. The process of identification, release and reintegration of children from the Tatmadaw should be systematized in a sustainable manner. The whole process for any suspected minor should not take more than two months.
3. The issue of use of children by Tatmadaw was also highlighted, and I believe this training is a great opportunity to enhance mutual understanding of the issue as an initial step to tackle the practice.
4. Despite the progress and data shared on accountability for perpetrators, more can still be done to enable us to see the direct link between disciplinary action and recruitment and use cases. In addition, swift disciplinary action on the sole case of verified recruitment by Tatmadaw in 2018 will be expected.
5. Finally, the Special Representative urges the Government of Myanmar to set up an inter-ministerial committee to address the two additional violations (i.e. Killing and Maiming; Rape and Sexual Violence) that Tatmadaw has been listed for, along the lines of Under-age Recruitment Prevention Committee as soon as possible so that Country Taskforce can begin dialogue on action plans leading to compliance.

Excellencies, colleagues, friends,

Conflict has a devastating impact on children's well-being and their ability to exercise their rights.

I am pleased to open this workshop that will help us move forward the effort to eliminate the six grave violations against children's rights.

Once again, I sincerely thank you all for being here today.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to His Excellency Lt General Sein Win, Union Minister of Defence and His Excellency U Kyaw Tin, Union Minister of International Cooperation, for their leadership in making this training come to fruition.

Kyay zu tin ba de.

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