

**ICJ Oral Statement in the Clustered Interactive Dialogue with the Special
Representatives of the Secretary General for Violence against Children and for Children
and Armed Conflict**

CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE

7 March 2017

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) thanks both the Special Representatives for their reports.

We welcome the renewed commitment of States, via the Sustainable Development Goals (in particular SDG 5.2 and 5.3 and SDG 16.2 and 16.3), to eliminating violence against children and ensuring access to justice for everyone by 2030. However, as the Special Representative for Violence against Children's report noted, we must ensure that protecting children from violence is not simply an ideal but is realized in practice.

The ICJ is concerned about systemic problems where States agree in principle to protect children from violence but disagree on fundamental definitions of 'children' and 'violence'. We agree with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict's assessment that States must close any legal lacunae that fail to implement the almost universally accepted definition of 'child' as everyone below the age of 18. We ask that all forms of violence against children be condemned even where some violent practices, such as child marriage or female genital mutilation, were once considered culturally acceptable.

We welcome efforts undertaken to prevent violence against children and protect children in armed conflict to ensure their human rights are protected. However, rights protections are meaningless without accountability and so we would like to ask which measures should be put in place to eradicate impunity and ensure access to justice for children who have suffered violence and other wrongs in times of armed conflict and otherwise?

Thank you Mr President.

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