

Briefing on the Second International Conference on Safe Schools

16 March 2017 - Room VIII, 9:00-10:00, Palais des Nations

- Thank you very much Ambassador Brattskar for your introduction and let me thank Norway not only for the important role that your country has played in advocating for Safe Schools, but also for the help you have provided to Argentina in preparing for the upcoming Conference.
- I would like to start by reiterating to all the States present today the invitation to participate at the Second International Conference on Safe Schools, which will take place in Buenos Aires, on the 28th and 29th of March, just two weeks from now.
- You should have received in the last few months and weeks different notes and documents concerning the Conference. The official invitations from our Minister of Foreign Affairs were sent directly to your Ministries, but copies have also been sent through the Missions in Geneva, New York and the Argentine Embassies around the world.
- Furthermore, we have distributed the agenda of the Conference, the information note on the sponsorship programme that the Norwegian Ambassador alluded to, and a guide for participants, which includes some background information to better understand the process leading to the First and Second International Conferences on Safe Schools.
- For those of you who are not very familiar with the Safe Schools Declaration, I would like to complement what Ambassador Brattskar has said and add that this political document also includes commitments to improve reporting of attacks on education facilities; collect reliable data of these events; provide assistance to victims of attacks; investigate allegations of violations of applicable national and international law; prosecute perpetrators where appropriate; develop and promote “conflict sensitive” approaches to education; and support the work of the United Nations on the children and armed conflict agenda.
- In the back of the room you will find copies of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines to Protect Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict, which are the two documents that initiated our endeavours on this matter.
- For the Second International Conference, our focus will be on implementation. In that respect, we will seek the following objectives: (1) to draw attention on the issue of attacks on education, (2) to review the progress achieved since the

Declaration was adopted in 2015, (3) to share examples of good practice at the national level, and (4) to prepare for work ahead to ensure effective implementation of the commitments contained in the Declaration.

- Now, I would like to elaborate on the format and programme of the Conference. Each day of the Conference will be held in a different venue. The first day will be in the headquarters of our Ministry of Defense and the second day will be at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Both institutions have been collaborating on the preparations for the Conference.
- During the first day of the Conference, we will have an opening ceremony with remarks by our Minister of Defense, and the Vice Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Argentina and Norway. It will be followed by the first of seven panel discussions. Please note that if your State wants to make general statements on the subject of Safe Schools or about overall implementation of the Declaration and the Guidelines, the general debate after Panel 1 and the open discussion on Panel 2 will be the best occasions to do so. That being said, all of your inputs, questions and remarks on the topics of each individual panel will be most welcome.
- The topics of the panel discussions are as follows:
 - Panel 1: Attacks on education
 - Panel 2: Protecting schools and universities from military use
 - Panel 3: Working with armed non-state actors for the protection of education from attack
 - Panel 4: Monitoring and Reporting on attacks on education
 - Panel 5: Seeking accountability for attacks on education
 - Panel 6: Conflict-sensitive education policy and continuing education during armed conflict

AND

- Panel 7: Cooperation and international assistance to support the prevention of attacks against education
- We have invited as panellists, representatives from States that have important experiences to share on the different subjects, as well as representatives from civil society, intergovernmental organizations and academia. We have confirmations from countries of different regions of the world, and from organizations such as the ICRC, UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission, MINUSCA, Save the Children, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Geneva Call, Bring Back our

Girls, among others. We are very pleased to see such a varied roster of panellists and we are certain that this diversity will be reflected in the discussions and the outcomes of the Conference.

- Apart from the Panel discussions, I would also like to draw your attention to a brief segment on the first day, right after the lunchbreak, where representatives from the Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative will launch a toolkit to guide understanding and implementation of the Guidelines. Also, note that after the closing of the Conference, there will be a dedicated ceremony to highlight and celebrate all new endorsements to the Safe Schools Declaration, as well as a reception for all participants.
- So far, we have received confirmations of participation from more than 40 States and we expect this number to grow in the coming days. As for the composition of the delegations, we are encouraging mixed delegations, with representatives from the Foreign Affairs, Defense or Education Ministries. The level of participation is, of course the prerogative of every State. We know that some delegations will participate at the level of deputy Minister, while others will be headed by Directors, senior technical officers, Undersecretaries and even Ambassadors in Buenos Aires. We also know that some Geneva-based delegates are planning to travel to Argentina.
- Details of the sponsorship programme have already been mentioned by Ambassador Brattskar or are outlined in the information note. On that regard, I would just reiterate our appreciation for the generosity of the Norwegian Government to finance this and invite all eligible delegations to submit their request for sponsorship as soon as possible.
- In closing, I will just say that despite our focus on implementation for the Conference, we are still very committed to achieve universalization of the Safe Schools Declaration. I take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge our three most recent endorsing States, Slovakia, France and Canada, and invite all other States that have not yet done so, to join. Our idea has been and remains to be the promotion and development of a community of interest in which we can share and leverage examples and national experiences on protecting education from attack.
- I now open the floor for questions and comments.