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United Nations Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting

Safeguarding Education in Sudan: Investing in Peace, Recovery and Stability

7 August 2026 | 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Chamber

Convened by: Somalia

Cosponsors: the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia

Background

Since the outbreak of conflict in April 2023, Sudan has faced significant humanitarian, social and economic challenges, with profound consequences for civilians, particularly children. The UNHCR reports that there are more than 3.5 million refugees and over 6.5 million internally displaced persons, many of whom have been displaced multiple times.

Education has been among the sectors most significantly affected, with millions of children experiencing prolonged disruption to learning and reduced access to educational services. More than 17 million children have had their education severely disrupted, including approximately 8 million children who are currently out of learning. In Darfur alone, of the nearly 4 million school-age children, more than 3 million are currently out of learning, with girls particularly affected.

Educational infrastructure has suffered extensive damage. According to the Education Cluster, nearly half of Sudan's school buildings can no longer function as classrooms, while more than 7,000 schools are located in active conflict areas, increasing their risk of exposure to attacks on education and the military use of schools. Attacks on schools not only deny children access to education but also interrupt access to other essential civilian services, including healthcare, child protection and safe water. Education must remain neutral and be guided by the best interests of children. Families, communities and children themselves continue to highlight education as a central priority and demand. Education is lifesaving as well as life-changing.

The protection of education during armed conflict is supported by a well-established international legal and normative framework. International humanitarian law, including the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, as well as customary law, provides comprehensive protection for children and educational institutions during armed conflict. These protections are further reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Security Council resolution 1998 (2011), which recognizes attacks against schools and hospitals as grave violations against children. General Assembly resolution 64/290 affirms education as a fundamental right, even in emergencies. Perhaps most notably, the Safe Schools Declaration, endorsed by 123 States, represents a significant political promise to keep students, teachers and educational facilities safe from the effects of armed conflict. It is essential to translate political commitment into real protection for children and the educational system.

Context

The Security Council has consistently addressed the protection of children affected by armed conflict, the protection of civilians and attacks on essential civilian infrastructure through its Children and Armed Conflict (CAAC) and Protection of Civilians (POC) agendas. The Council has also recognized the impact of attacks on schools and the importance of ensuring children's continued access to education during armed conflict.

While international efforts on Sudan continue to focus on ending hostilities, protecting civilians, ensuring humanitarian access and advancing a political process, the conflict has also had profound effects on the country's education system. In 2026, the Secretary-General's Annual Report on CAAC, covering 2025, reported an over 57% increase in attacks against schools and protected personnel in Sudan from 2024 to 2025, resulting in greater disruptions to education and increasing vulnerabilities linked to recruitment and use, as well as other grave violations. Education remains closely linked to child protection, the resilience of national institutions and Sudan's long-term recovery.

The impact of the conflict extends beyond immediate learning loss. Children who were of primary school age when the conflict began are now approaching adolescence, having received little or no formal education. Likewise, many students who were preparing to complete secondary education have been unable to graduate or pursue higher education. The continued disruption of education risks creating long-term shortages in the skilled workforce needed to restore public institutions, rebuild essential services and support national recovery.

The conflict has also placed Sudan's national education system under increasing strain. Preserving an inclusive, nationally recognized and standardized education system remains essential to ensuring continuity of learning, the recognition of educational qualifications and equal access to future educational opportunities for Sudanese children, including those displaced within Sudan and those seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Maintaining nationally recognized examinations and certification is particularly important in enabling students to continue their education, regardless of their location.

Against this backdrop, the Arria-formula meeting will provide an opportunity for Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations, humanitarian and development partners, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to exchange perspectives on safeguarding education in Sudan. The discussion will consider practical approaches to protecting education during armed conflict, preserving the integrity of Sudan's national education system and supporting continued access to learning as part of broader efforts toward recovery and sustainable peace.

Objectives

The meeting will seek to:

- Examine the links between education, child protection, peace and security, and explore how safeguarding education can contribute to resilience, stability and sustainable peace in Sudan.
- Discuss practical measures to protect schools, students, teachers and educational personnel, and to ensure safe, inclusive and continuous access to education during the conflict.

- Explore ways to preserve Sudan's nationally recognized education system, including examinations and certifications, an important foundation for future recovery and national cohesion.
- Share experiences and good practices on how education can help prevent child rights violations, reduce children's vulnerability to recruitment and exploitation, and support post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding.

Expected Outcomes

The meeting is expected to:

- Raise awareness of the implications of continued education disruption in Sudan for child protection, recovery and sustainable peace.
- Provide a platform for Member States, United Nations entities, regional organizations, humanitarian and development partners, civil society and other relevant stakeholders to exchange experiences, lessons learned and practical recommendations.
- Promote greater cooperation among relevant stakeholders to strengthen the protection of education and support continued access to learning throughout the conflict.
- Generate practical recommendations to inform future efforts aimed at safeguarding education and supporting Sudan's long-term recovery and sustainable peace.

Guiding Questions

- How has the conflict affected children's access to safe and continuous education, and what are the wider implications for Sudan's future recovery and long-term stability?
- What practical measures can be taken to better protect schools, students, teachers and educational personnel while ensuring the continuity of Sudan's nationally recognized education system, including examinations and certification, during the conflict?
- How can education contribute to protecting children from recruitment and use by armed groups and other grave violations, while promoting resilience, social cohesion and sustainable peace? What role should the international community play in supporting these efforts?

Briefers:

- Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations
- Hannan Sulieman, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF
- Lisa Chung-Bender, Executive Director of Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack
- Civil society representative from Sudan (TBC)

Format

Statements by United Nations Security Council members, co-sponsors and other United Nations Member States, as time permits. Interventions are suggested to be limited to three (3) minutes.

To request further information or to subscribe to the list of speakers, please contact the Permanent Mission of Somalia to the United Nations at email somalia@unmission.gov.so and pc.somalia@gmail.com

The meeting will be held in all official United Nations languages and is intended to be webcast on UN WebTV