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***END THE WAR ON CHILDREN, SAYS BROWN, AS HE CALLS FOR 2017 CHILDREN'S NEW DEAL: GUARANTEED SAFE SCHOOLS, A NEW INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT FOR ATROCITIES AGAINST CHILDREN AND EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROSECUTION OF SCHOOL BOMBINGS**

***THERE MUST BE NO HIDING PLACE FOR VIOLATORS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, AS BROWN ADVOCATES NEW ENQUIRY INTO STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT ZONES**

***FROM MOSUL TO ALEPPO, IT IS OFTEN MORE DANGEROUS TO BE A CHILD ON THE STREETS THAN A SOLDIER ON THE FRONT LINE, SAYS BROWN**

Speaking at the United Nations, UN Special Envoy for Global Education Gordon Brown said:

“2017 must see an end to the war on children.

“Never since 1945 have so many children been subjected to such widespread violations of their human rights in conflict zones – from the deliberate targeting of schools and the sexual enslavement of children, to compulsory conscription into militias and the denial of the most basic right to education.

“We must in 2017 send a new year's message that there is no hiding place for war crimes against children and that every single child in the world should be able to go to school free of fear or violence.

“To this end, I am submitting to the UN Secretary General a plan to raise funds to guarantee every displaced and refugee child a safe school during 2017 and 2018, and pressing the German G20 to develop a comprehensive funding plan to deliver ‘education without borders’ for the 35 million children out-of-school in the Middle East and Africa.

“I am also calling for a high level enquiry to strengthen the current framework for the protection of children and hold perpetrators of rights violations to account. The enquiry will consist of:

- A monitoring panel to review the current scale and form of violations of children's rights in conflict, to ensure that from today the eyes of the world are firmly focused upon every town and village where violations of children's rights are taking place.
- A legal panel which will examine new laws, policies and mechanisms aimed at ending the war on children, including the potential for an International Criminal Court for Children with a wider mandate than the ICC to investigate atrocities against society's youngest and most vulnerable.

“As a matter of urgency, the European Court of Human Rights should investigate the Idlib school bombing and the International Criminal Court should act on its renewed commitment to prosecute war crimes against children.

“In the last twenty years we have seen genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansing in Srebrenica and crimes against humanity in Darfur. But 2016 will go down in history as the year in which atrocities against children became every day events and the perpetrators of violence against children went unpunished. Despite our promise of ‘never again’, we failed the children of conflict zones. The children holed up without any hope in the burned out ruins of Aleppo are an indictment of our failure.

“From Mosul where children cannot escape – to Aleppo where no child is safe, not even those in hospitals or schools – it is often more dangerous to be a child on the streets than a soldier on the front line.

“Country-by-country evidence shows systematic and continuous violations of international law:

- In Syria, where 100 schools have been attacked in just two years, there is now incontrovertible evidence of indiscriminate bombing of a kindergarten, school and college in Idlib by Syrian-Russia air strikes on October 26th, killing approximately 30 people, mostly children aged 6-15;
- In Libya, the International Criminal Court has just launched an enquiry into the trafficking and exploitation of children;
- In Yemen, over 1000 schools have been partially or fully destroyed, including one yesterday;
- In Iraq, ISIS is reportedly using children as human shields in the battle for Mosul; and
- In Nigeria, thousands of girls have been endlessly intimidated by Boko Haram to the point that they will not put their lives on the line to attend school.

“Now, 20 years on from Graça Machel’s path-breaking report to the UN on children in armed conflict – which shocked public opinion and galvanized action – it is time to do more to ensure that the promises made to children are kept. An enquiry should be set up to examine new laws, policies and mechanisms to strengthen the current framework for the protection of children and hold perpetrators of rights violations to account. As part of its remit, it should consider the case for establishing an International Criminal Court for Children, with a wider mandate than the ICC to investigate atrocities against society’s youngest and most vulnerable.

“We need not wait for the creation of an International Children’s Court to seek justice for the victims of the Idlib bombing. The airstrikes likely constitute a violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime – and a case should be brought before an international tribunal without delay.

“And with 30 million children now displaced from 40 global conflicts, not since 1945 have so many boys and girls been exposed to the threats of child labour, marriage and trafficking as schools – which should be safe havens – are now casually used as theatres of war and pupils – some as young as five – as instruments of war. For these 30 million, our assistance is limited to a begging bowl that is regularly passed round with education in emergency appeals amounting to less than 2 per cent of humanitarian aid. And with recent estimates suggesting the average time refugees are exiled from their country is 17 years, some children will spend all their childhood years without ever entering a classroom.

“We have to ask why, for those who are society’s most vulnerable and in need, we do the least and have no plans in place or prospect to make their lives better in 2017, or beyond. Quite simply, a solution to ameliorate the suffering of refugee children has eluded us since the 1940s.

“At this moment of greatest need, we should show the deepest ambition and find a funding formula that will allow guaranteed support for refugees – a chance for children to not simply have food and shelter but to attend school, unlock hope and develop their potential. This funding call is made all the more urgent as recent education in emergency appeals have yielded little action. In Nigeria, less than 10 per cent of pledges have been fulfilled – in war-torn DRC less than 5 per cent – and less than 1 per cent in Burkina Faso, Chad and the Central African Republic. The Education Cannot Wait Fund has been established and mobilized already over \$100 million for these children. But more must be done.

“As the recent report presented to the outgoing and incoming Secretaries-General by the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity shows, progress is possible. Consider World Bank President Jim Kim’s ambition to make the institution the bank for the international system. And so the Bank must take the lead and raise money in a new compact with the UN to ensure the safety and financing of displaced people.

“As the Commission found, the World Bank has the means. By raising their commitment to education to 15 per cent of lending from the current 10 per cent, and better managing the inflow of maturing 30-year loans and leveraging up this incoming capital, the bank can generate an additional \$20 billion of resources for education annually by 2030.

“This past Monday, December 12th, marked the 20th anniversary of the General Assembly mandate to better protect children impacted by conflict. Recent events make clear this commitment is one that must be renewed and updated to better respond to present day challenges. So while 2016 is in its twilight and trapped in the darkness of daily conflict, we must take steps today to ensure tomorrow – 2017 – becomes a dawn for children across the globe. A new year must hasten a new deal for children.

“I want to end by thanking Ban Ki-moon for his leadership of the United Nations and his consistent support of global education. His commitment to children has been second to none.”

~ ENDS ~

Editor’s Notes:

For further information on the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity, visit: www.educationcommission.org.

For more information on the Education Cannot Wait fund, visit: www.educationcannotwait.org

A full copy of the International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity’s report, “The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world,” can be found at: report.educationcommission.org

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