

Organization for Defending Victims of Violence

Item 3: Annual Debate on the Rights of the Child



Deadly Impact of War on Early Childhood Development

Mr. President, Distinguished Panelists

We echo all concerns about the catastrophic consequences of armed conflict on children, particularly those in critical stages of early development. Wars not only claim lives but interrupt the cognitive, emotional, and physical growth of young children, with lifelong repercussions. In conflict-affected regions such as Gaza, we observe alarming trends:

- Thousands of children under five have been suffering malnutrition, impairing brain development and physical growth.
- Almost all children exhibit symptoms of PTSD, such as anxiety, or speech regression due to exposure to violence, multiple displacement to unsafe places, and loss of caregivers, siblings and friends.
- Thousands of children under eight lack access to early-learning environments. Thousands of infants, toddlers and children under 5 are growing up in overcrowded camps or wandering from place to place, deprived of stable caregiving and the routine critical for their healthy development.
- The current conditions have created a “developmental bottleneck,” trapping children in cycles of vulnerability. Without immediate action and urgent intervention, an entire generation risks irreversible loss in learning, social skills, and health.

We urge the international community to:

- Use all capacities at hand to strengthen the fragile peace in Gaza.
- Prioritize funding for early childhood development (ECD) programs in the region.
- Integrate ECD into humanitarian response frameworks.

The window to safeguard these children’s futures is closing. Their development cannot wait for peace.