MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Report on Pre-Event Briefing on the Fourth International Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration

TEME

Making Commitments A Reality: Towards the Abuja Conference

📅: July 15th, 2021
📍: Rotunda, 2nd Floor, Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tafawa Balewa Building, Federal Secretariat, CBD Abuja
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<td>11:25 – 12:00</td>
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<td>Key outcomes of the Palma Conference to build on at the Abuja Conference; and Spain’s ongoing work to support implementation, through technical cooperation and training (5 minutes)</td>
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<td>An overview of the Abuja Conference, objectives, themes and modalities for participation (5 minutes)</td>
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<td>c. Ms Abiola Sanusi, Senior Policy &amp; Strategy Adviser, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack</td>
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<td>Key asks for the Abuja Conference and the practical impact of the Safe Schools Declaration in line with the Conference themes (5 minutes)</td>
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1.0 Executive Summary


This is a Rapporteur’s Report of the entire Briefing

The Briefing features keynotes, brief presentations by select discussants, country reviews, and interactive sessions, centered around the topic of the forthcoming Abuja Conference on the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) which is billed to hold in Abuja on October 25th-October 27th 2021.

Several resolutions and recommendations emanated from the Briefing with emphasis on previous outcomes from earlier conferences and studies such as:

- The need to prosecute violators of these safe declarations to ensure compliance and go beyond endorsement to accountability of the government.
- The need for involvement of communities in rehabilitation of schools in order to engender sustainability and reinforcement of ownership.
- The need for encouraging parents to visit the schools at least twice a year is key.
- Whether kids are locked out of schools or kidnapped, they usually require psychological care and it should be handled properly by sympathetic professionals.
- The need for teenage pregnancies resulting from kidnappings to not be allowed to hamper the desire of the girls to continue school.
- The need for holding governments accountable through use of mechanisms like the International Criminal court to help enforce implementation and to prevent impunity and future attacks.
- The imperative need for children’s voices to be heard and amplified at the forthcoming 2021 International Conference.
2.0 Background and Methodology

2.1 Background and objectives
- The one-day Briefing session centered on discussions around preparations for the forthcoming SSD 2021 Conference as well as guidelines and expected outcomes particularly from the standpoint of harnessing and encouraging local and international participation as well as amplifying children’s voices at SSD 2021. The Session had in attendance a total of participants most of whom were from member countries of SSD.
- The objectives of the Session were to strategize on practical approaches to synergy, collaborations, sharing of ideas and information as well as sharing of status reports from the hosts.

2.2 Methodology
- The Session’s methodology applied a participatory approach with the use of addresses, discussions, and interactive sessions. There were a couple of presentations/speeches with a few of the presenters making use of PowerPoint presentations to depict their submissions better.
- The Briefing made use of a single hall for the entire duration of the program and there were no breakout sessions.
3.0 Opening Session

3.1 Covid Protocols

- The Briefing commenced at 11:20am with a short review of the Covid-19 protocols by Mr. Biodun Oguniyi of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC). He requested the participants to adhere to the existing Covid protocols for the entirety of the program, including observing social distancing by eschewing unnecessary physical contact and maintaining seating distance; constant and proper use of facemasks; use of hand sanitizers; as well as taking advantage of the available emergency medical facilities in the event of any arising health crisis.

3.2 Preamble

- The moderator, Zerra Yemiwate, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed all attendees to the Briefing on behalf of the hosts and their sponsor, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNICEF. She recognized the presence of dignitaries like His Excellency, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama, the Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs; His Excellency Mr. Lein Knut, the Ambassador of Norway to Nigeria; His Excellency Mr. Marcelino Cabanas Ansorena, the Ambassador of Spain to Nigeria; Ms. Victoria Budic, Deputy Head of Mission, Republic of Argentina to Nigeria; Mr. Peter Hawkins, the UNICEF Country Representative; Members of Diplomatic Corps; and the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.

- The moderator requested attendees to rise for the National Anthem and thereafter gave a preamble that this year, Nigeria would be hosting the Safe Schools Declaration conference in the country’s Capital, Abuja in coalition with Spain and Norway. She noted that the SSD 2021 Conference was the fourth of its kind to be held worldwide. However, Nigeria had the privilege of being the first African country to host the SSD conference and it was hoped that the Briefing would help the organizers better chart a course towards fulfilling expectations and attaining a vastly successful event and reaching effective outcomes.
3.3 Welcome Address by His Excellency, Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama (Hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria)

- The Hon. Minister particularly welcomed all dignitaries and participants to the briefing and stated that Nigeria would be hosting the 4th International Conference on Safe Schools Declaration from 25th-27th October 2021 within the Federal Capital Territory of the nation.
- He emphasized that the safe schools Declaration and like-initiatives were imperative needed given the rise in attacks on schools and the need to protect students, teachers, educators, and even facilities.
- He commended the drivers of the SSD in the embodiment of the GCPEA for their efforts to stem the rise on attacks in schools through targeted activities.
- The Hon. Minister praised the enthusiasm and commitments of the governments of Spain, Argentina, and Norway. He noted in particular their unflagging interests in engendering Nigeria’s capacity-building efforts towards the undertaking.
- The Hon. Minister noted that given Spain’s most recent role in hosting the 3rd International Conference, Amb. Ansorena’s reflections during the Briefing’s anticipated discourse were expected to work as a valuable guide.
- The Hon. Minister noted that Nigeria is the first country on the African continent to host this conference and expressed the hope that the Hon. Min. of Education would shed more light on the efforts of the Nigeria government in the school system during his own contributions at the Briefing especially since the Ministry of Education had spear-headed the SSD activities in Nigeria. The Minister averred that the Buhari-led Government had been particularly supportive of the SSD activities in the nation.
- The Hon. Minister noted that banditry and other insecurity threats engendered fears of attacks in school children and their parents. He expressed the view that government was working tirelessly to lessen the scourge.
- The Hon. Minister recognized the very important role the UNICEF had played in making the pre-conference Briefing, convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a reality as well as their worldwide efforts towards education.
- The Hon. Minister enjoined all participants to enjoy the discussions in the various sessions and charged the audience to engage the discussants, gather information,
and help put the word out there.

- He noted that Nigeria would share its experiences and plans in curbing the challenge and expressed the country’s readiness to learn from other countries on practices geared towards this goal.
- The Hon. Minister expressed the hope that the conference would be a good success which would ultimately be a win for Nigeria and the Global Community.
- He declared the event open and wished all attendees fruitful deliberations.

3.4 Keynote Address by His Excellency, Mr. Lein Knut Eliv (Ambassador of Norway to Nigeria)

- The Ambassador appreciated all dignitaries and participants for the opportunity. He noted that GCPEA was a unique cohesion of states and organizations which had worked since inception to protect schools from attacks during conflict.
- The Hon. Ambassador revealed that he had been in attendance at the Oslo Conference and had then been appointed during the Syrian and Iraqi crisis. He noted that at the time there had been several efforts to ensure protection of schools and students during the crisis.
- The Hon. Ambassador expressed the view that the Declaration was one of the strongest and most effective tools for protection of children and stated that Nigeria’s efforts towards preparing for SSD 2021 were gladdening.
- The Hon. Ambassador noted that roles of educational structures were invaluable in communities and for development and for protection of children. He reported that Norway had strengthened ties with bodies like UNICEF and Save the Children and increased their financial and political support for education even in times of conflict. He further noted that protecting these institutions were key especially given the dramatic increase on attacks on schools in conflicts.
- The Hon. Ambassador further noted that at inception, people in conflict often tended not to recognize education as a priority in times of conflict hence the often encountered resistance. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) like UNICEF and UNESCO had however rung the alarm and thereafter came together through the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks to find practical ways to stem the unwanted tide with particular attention on military use of schools.
• He said the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attacks had developed a set of guidelines to strengthen the protection of education from attack and sought the support of the Norwegian and Argentinian governments, amongst others, as well as adoption of the guidelines.
• The Hon. Ambassador stated that in 2015 the declarations were launched in Oslo with about 37 nations being part of it. He noted that today, despite the recorded successes, schools were still vulnerable targets and were still being used for military purposes in conflict.
• Presently, 109 countries had endorsed the Safe Schools Declarations and adopted it and currently, it serves as a reference in Security Council Resolutions and discussions at the Human Rights Council and other places where protection is being discussed. It is also universally accepted and recognized even by States who are yet to adopt it.
• The Hon. Ambassador reminded the Briefing that Norway took up a seat as an elective member of the Security Council in 2021. He noted that the Working Group for children in armed conflict had attacks on schools as one of the six grave violations which the Secretary-General reports on to the Security Council and which the Working Group negotiates on.
• The Hon. Ambassador noted that there is a direct link between protection and education and children with access to education tended to do much better in conflicts.
• He commended the Nigerian government for their leaderships especially as a founding member of the Declaration. He noted that the support of the African Union was key and lauded the fact that the upcoming conference was to be hosted in Africa with an African perspective.
• The Hon. Ambassador noted that there was every need to move from endorsement to implementation and encouraged States which had not signed up to be part of the Declaration to do so.
• It was observed that there was eagerness for the launch of the Implementation Network in October which was expected to boost effectiveness and strengthen good practices in strengthening implementation. He noted the importance of local communities and NGOs in this measure.
• The Ambassador stressed the importance of listening to those most affected especially
the children though efforts were being made to include their voices in the Conference. 

- There was need to get the most out of the ongoing global awareness especially since Nigeria is a pioneer in this field.

- The Hon. Ambassador noted that the effect of the pandemic makes this conference a bit more different than before. He expressed optimism that the SSD 2021 conference would be global and interactive.

- He expressed the pride of Norway to be a co-host at this conference and reaffirmed the nation’s willingness to support the project as well as they could.

3.5 Video Interlude: Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA)

- A short video reel, sponsored by Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, was displayed on projectors for the audience which depicted the following facts among others as different people from different nations were interviewed:

  - Education was attacked globally more than 11,000 times in the past year alone and some kids never returned to schools thereafter.

  - Schools were converted into the detention centers.

  - Different children were interviewed in the video and they reported that they did not feel safe going to schools with armed men and dogs milling about.

  - Some interviewed teachers noted that children were increasingly depressed, staying home and dropping out of school.

  - An interviewee noted that schools were the venues where knowledge was shared and if schools were under attack, children would not get knowledge.

  - A young boy from Niger stated in the video that guns should not be stored in schools and children should not be used to attack people in the name of God (or religion).

  - The moderator thereafter handed over proceedings to Amb. Samson Itegboje of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria for the first segment of the Briefing.
4.0  Segment I: Forthcoming Abuja Conference

4.1  Introduction by Amb. Samson Itegboje (Director International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria)

- The Ambassador welcomed all attendees to the briefing and stated that attacks on students and teachers and schools as well as military use of education infrastructure was growing exponentially and nothing had been done to effectively stem the tide until the Norwegian intervention through the Safe Schools Declaration which had attained the status of an intercontinental political commitment.
- He noted that the declaration sought to protect students and teachers up to Tertiary levels from attacks.
- He noted that the very first SSD Conference held in 2015 in Norway; the second one held in 2017 in Argentina and the third was held in 2019 in Spain. The Ambassador noted that the 2021 Conference which was slated to hold in Nigeria was the first of its kind to so hold in Africa.
- He introduced the discussants for this segment in the persons of His Excellency Marcellino Cabanas Ansorena, the Ambassador of Spain to Nigeria and Ms. Abiola Sanusi of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack.
- He noted that the representative of the Ministry of Education was still being expected and yielded the floor to the Ambassador of Spain.

4.2  Presentation By His Excellency Marcellino Cabanas Ansorena (The Ambassador Of Spain To Nigeria)

- The Hon. Ambassador appreciated the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Education and the Nigerian Government as well as the representatives of the Spanish and Norwegian governments.
- The Hon. Ambassador lauded the chosen theme: Making Commitments a Reality.
- He stated that during the 3rd edition of the conference held in Spain, the issue of safe
schools had been roundly considered and there had been delegations from several nations and organizations including the United Nations.

- The Hon. Ambassador stated that gender-based violence had been identified as a key result in conflicts and noted that there was a pronounced target on women and girls by groups that oppose education of girls and they tend to use very gruesome methods to achieve their aim.

- He stated that it had however been noted that women were gaining access to high policy level positions which was key in conflict-driven countries which was good news.

- Another outcome of the Conference in Spain had been emphasis on the need for stake-holders, state actors, international organizations to work shoulder to shoulder and the need to bring those responsible for attacks to justice.

- Another outcome of the 2019 Conference had been on the need to improve monitoring of attacks on education because it was deemed that systemic monitoring of attacks on education in conflict areas could help stem the fluid. However due to the challenges in collection of data, it could prove problematic in some quarters but there had been considerations on how to bridge the gap in collecting information in order to help prevent attacks on education.

- He noted that what constitutes an attack on education is not universal which was why one of the aims was to reach a universal benchmark of definition.

- Also criminal accountability had been pushed for especially through the International Criminal Court. The Hon. Ambassador noted that there were efforts to guarantee compliance with international criminal laws although active efforts fall on each state to ensure the compliance within its territory.

- There is need for coordination between ministries of defense, ministries of justice, ministries of interior, ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of education and so on; as well as the need for cohesion of policies and legislations.

- It was observed that training is another key one and tangible steps would continue to be taken to ensure this. He noted that Spain had recently held one of such seminars and 20 countries had participated. He hoped that the conference in October would be a further step in the training process and stressed the fact that the universalization of the objectives remain fundamental.
• The Hon. Ambassador noted that more than 1,000 children have suffered in Northern Nigeria since the inception of 2021 and expressed regret and solidarity for their families and victims.

• He said Spain would join efforts to ensure translating commitments into tangible realities as preventing attacks comes with actions and strong commitments and capacity building. He wished for a successful Abuja conference and expressed gratitude to the audience.

• The anchor, Ambassador Samson Itegboje agreed that there was need to prosecute violators of these safe declarations to ensure compliance and go beyond endorsement to accountability of the government.

• He noted the collaboration efforts of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack with the Nigerian government and invited Ms. Abiola Sanusi for her presentation.

4.3 Presentation by Ms. Abiola Sanusi (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack).

• GCPEA was formed in 2010 by a network of NGOs and networks working in the emergency context of child protection. Currently GCPEA is co-chaired by Save the Children and Human Rights Watch.

• Ms. Sanusi noted that over 22,000 students and teachers were deliberately targeted in the video depicted. There had been 7,300 cases in which schools were burned, set on fire or looted globally.

• Ms. Sanusi noted that beyond immediate injuries, death and destruction, these attacks had devastating effects. She noted that there were generational gaps in education as a result in the long term which could of course negatively impact education and threaten prospects for peace and development.

• Ms. Sanusi noted that another concern arose from the Covid pandemic which had exposed how vacant schools were being used for military operations and this had been greatly highlighted in the SRSG’s latest children and armed conflict report.

• GCPEA has been working to make sure education continues during wars including by seeking international help and working to prevent militarization of schools during conflicts.
• Positive indicators of success had been witnessed in the past six years by the fact that over a dozen countries like Denmark, Switzerland, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and so on had revised their practices to reduce military use of schools during conflict including also revision of their military manuals.

• Ms. Sanusi highlighted the case of the Central African Republic wherein they had gone further to criminalize the occupation of schools as an attack on schools.

• Further achievements included an exclusive ban on military use of schools by the UN in its peace-keeping framework.

• The AU adopted the doctrine on peace operations, the Iraq Education cluster created a forum for monitoring and reporting on military use of schools, Ukraine and DRC had implemented public sensitive and peace-keeping operations. Mali had a national action plan which included capacity building and creative mobilization to guide implementation on ground as well as a draft law to guard against attacks which was hoped to be adopted. Ms. Sanusi noted that action plans and national accountability mechanisms enforce implementation.

• In Nigeria there is a draft law on Safety, Security, and Violence-free schools which is awaiting approval by the National Council on Education. The National Human Rights Commission was already undertaking workshops and trainings to monitor and report on such attacks on education. Safe school declarations manuals had been developed and the military, civil defense, and other paramilitary groups were already undergoing capacity building.

• Ms. Sanusi noted that accountability was also gaining ground given the conviction of three men by a Kenyan court for violations in this regard.

• Ms. Sanusi stated that ahead of the Abuja Conference, there was a strong request for non-endorsing states to consider implementing the declaration.

• She revealed that there were opportunities for countries to adopt the declaration by sending their requests to the Norwegian ministry of foreign affairs. She further stated that countries could announce their commitments at the upcoming General Assembly Debates in September or at the September Human Rights Council or the Abuja conference or the September 9th conference which is commemoration of the International
Day to Protect Education from Attacks.

- She urged NGOs to register their formal participation and also urged participants to look at the website of the conference. She urged countries which had endorsed to get on board and share examples of good practices before the event.
- Ms. Sanusi noted that the need to prevent attacks on education is critical and expressed the readiness of GCPEA to support efforts aimed at stemming attacks on education and to provide all necessary information.

4.4 COVID-19 Safety Protocols ahead of the 2021 Conference:
Dr Yahaya Disu (Head Risk Communication, of Nigerian Disease control representing DG NCDC Dr. Chikwe Ihekweazu)

- Dr. Disu noted that the NCDC’s strategic focus ahead of the 2021 Abuja Conference included risk evaluation, risk mitigation and risk communication.
- Dr. Disu reported risk evaluation included the epidemiological context for the event. He noted that Nigeria had a total of 168,915 confirmed cases had been reported as well as 2,125 deaths.
- He noted that the transmission scenario depicted that in October last year there had been the least number of cases which was why it was hoped that the same margin would play out at this event since it was also slated for October.
- He noted that the proposed conference venue, ECOWAS center, had been assessed earlier for an event for African Heads of States and had a seating capacity of 400 participants. However, at the forthcoming conference the NCDC had only approved a total number of 150 persons as physical attendees. He said local participants above 50 years of age were advised to connect virtually especially if they had underlying health conditions like hypertension or diabetes.
- He noted that the capacity of the medical personnel to manage and handle and isolate any cases was also very comforting.
- As regards risk mitigation, he noted that stakeholders’ communication and control mechanism was key. There were adoptions of existing protocols like point-of-entry, contact-tracing, and so on.
- He said a preparedness and response plan had been developed to ensure compliance
with global standards. Public health messages were being disseminated in languages and culturally appropriate usage of participants. He noted that isolation rooms were ready and the measure for enforcement of protocols was also in place.

- Post-event efforts would also include isolation rooms, separation and testing, monitoring and documenting impacts from the events, and response to occurrences of cases post-event as well as documenting and sharing lessons.

### 4.5 Interactive Session

**Q**

1. Princess Ekwi Ajideh, Anambra Broadcasting Service noted that the Minister of Foreign Affairs had said that Nigeria was mindful of insecurity challenges and were promising that soon students would go to school without fear of attacks. She noted that students had been recently abducted regularly from schools and demanded to know the measures which had been allegedly put in place.

**A**

The moderator stated that questions should be guided towards the forthcoming conference to avoid deviations.

**Contribution:** Patience Ekeoba, National Program officer of UN Women, representing Ms. Comfort Lamperty, emphasized that women and girls are disproportionately affected by attacks on schools and communities and said it was imperative that women and girls from communities were represented strongly at the conference.
2. A man opined that partnerships between government security agencies and host communities were key and wondered at the efforts to engender such partnerships.

Ms. Abiola noted that GCPEA works closely with the Ministry of Defence (MOD), and other securities agencies. She stated that the conference even had a unique session targeted at the security agencies. She further revealed that the MOD is part of Nigeria’s national organizing committee for the upcoming Conference.

3. Fibi Atinukure of Liberty Television noted that teachers and pupils in rural communities are not usually carried along in education and basic amenities like their urban counterparts. What measures were in place to address their unique state?

4. John Nwokocha of News Express Newspaper noted that he had followed the Safe Schools Declarations since 2015 and had been involved to the extent of making write-ups on the topic. He appreciated the Federal Government but noted that concerning the October event, there was need to know measures being taken to secure the schools. He further noted that the Norwegian Ambassador espoused their advanced results and wondered to what extent they had understood the Nigerian peculiarity in order to aid inculcation of that.
Ms. Sanusi confirmed that the invitations were already in the process of being sent out to the respective governments.

The High Commissioner of Rwanda to Nigeria wondered if the invitations had been sent to the respective governments ahead of the Conference.

Ave Garva of NHRC said children needed to understand and be part of the conference which was why child-appropriate language needed to be operated. Ms. Abiola reported that meaningful child participation is at the core of the conference. She stated that children from Borno state were expected to make a presentation that day and to participate fully.

Halima Iliya from the Ministry of Finance said there was need to have a synergy between ministries and stated that the Ministry of Finance had taken a step in that direction.
4.6 Video Interlude: Restoration of Hope Initiative (ROHI)

- The video showed kids playing in a school playground. The happy scene was rent apart in seconds as the sounds of gunshots began to rent the air and students and kids began to run helter-skelter. Two women were shown discussing the safe schools declaration and how government had signed it into law and they wondered why the attacks were still incessant. The video ended with a call for the implementation of the SSD across schools. The video helped spread awareness about the need for safe schools globally.
- The moderator recognized Mrs. Rose Peters, the Executive Director of ROHI, for their efforts.
5.0 Segment II: Key Messages and Progress in Implementing the Safe Schools Declaration

5.1 Presentation by Mr Zinurine Alghali (Chief Policy Development Unit, a representative of AU Commission from Addis)

- Mr. Zinurine Alghali, offered the warm regards of the AU to the gathering and noted that Africa in 2019 had the greatest number of children affected during conflict. He noted that such attacks affected their development and safety.
- Mr. Alghali said the AU had made efforts to have clear and bold policy directions for the AU to mainstream rights of children. He noted that thousands of kids are killed, abused, abducted or compelled into recruitment in armed conflict.
- The African Union calls for continuous denouncement of all efforts to attack school and insists that all operations should guarantee the social and cultural rights of children according to the African Charter.
- He noted that the Peace and Security Council adopted five decisions with very strong references to protection of kids in armed conflicts.
- He reported that 30 AU member states have endorsed same and there is increased awareness and popularity among the African states on the declaration including those in conflict. He lauded the growing consensus that such attacks on schools would no longer be tolerated on the Continent. He noted that the SSD would serve as a preventive measure and would ensure adherence by all stakeholders.
- In continental education strategy, AU condemns sexual violations and use of children in conflicts and high school dropout rate.
- AU has ensured the incorporation into several documents and policy processes of the guidelines which emphasize prohibition of attacks on schools and sexual exploitation of kids.
The specialized technical committee on education will ensure integration of these guidelines.

He noted that the Peace and Education Cluster had sponsorship from Save the Children and he reiterated the commitment of the AU to continue to ensure facilitation of these resolutions alongside regional communities and mechanisms.

5.2 Presentation by Mr. John Benjamin (Program Manager ROHI)

- Mr. Benjamin joined the session remotely and noted that since March 8, 2018 when the formal letter of endorsement of the SSD was signed by Nigeria through the Hon. Minister of Education H.E. Mallam Adamu, two action plans had been developed with an underlying goal of protection of schools, kids and teachers.
- Mr. Benjamin said there was the plan of action from 2021-2023. The prior one of 2018-2020 had touted legal and policy reforms, constitutional amendments, and so on which served as guides for the current action plan.
- Attacks on education were notably prevalent everywhere and children were also exposed to that as well as natural hazards. In the 2020 plan of action there had been a noted cohesion among partners. The 2021-2023 approached it from the lens of responsibilities of different organizations and communities.
- Mr. Benjamin noted that over 6,000 children were out of school in the wake of Covid which lent credence to the argument that other facts served to negatively impact the concept of safe schools for kids.
- Monitoring the action plan is a responsibility for all and there was need for collective approach for implementation to ensure that children were enrolled and safe in schools and teachers were also safe in the midst of doing their jobs. He noted that Covid had exacerbated the issue and thanked everyone.
- Ambassador Samson invited the UNICEF Country Rep for a brief speech on continuation of education in the North East of Nigeria.

5.3 Presentation by Mr. Peter Hawkins (UNICEF Country Representative)

- Mr. Hawkins thanked the Education Emergency Working Group for working on the SSD and also appreciated the Nigerian Government and other stakeholders and sponsors.
• He noted that the scourge on attacks on schools was a global issue but Nigeria needed to consider how learning might continue in spite of the threats.
• The Covid had also affected children all over the world.
• He said there was need to consider what the threat was, and where it was and the source of the threat. He invited the Briefing to consider the underlying issues that prevail to make insecurity have an impact on education.
• He noted that schools had closed in 2020 for about 4 or 5 months and resumed with strict protocols to make education as safe as possible in the wake of the pandemic.
• Mr. Hawkins noted that there was need to assess the risks and how to create a safe environment where kids could continue to learn because if schools were no longer available how could kids receive continuous learning during their early years.
• Mr. Hawkins shared a rare of hope glimpsed in the Nigerian situation in Maiduguri. He noted that in 2015 very few schools were open in Maiduguri. But these days a drive through the streets in the mornings would often be met with traffic jams occasioned by the large number of kids going to school. In spite of this happy development, he noted that there were unfortunately several other who could not go to school.
• Mr. Hawkins noted there was need for accelerated learning, digital learning, radio learning and so on to be introduced to help kids learn. He said learning materials were more available now and access was being created to digital platforms.
• Community engagement was also expected to help schools and communities learn to value each other. He noticed that when schools were rehabilitated with involvement of the communities, it was more sustainable because ownership was reinforced.
• Mr. Hawkins said encouraging parents to visit the schools at least twice a year was key. He said abuses like GBV was traumatic and life-defining. He said whether kids were locked out of schools or kidnapped, they usually required psychological care. He said teenage pregnancies resulting from kidnappings should not be allowed to hamper the desire of the girls to continue school.
• He stated that the support of the international community was geared towards ensuring that no children were left behind especially the girl child.
The moderator stated that due to lapse of time there would be no interactive session on this segment. Ambassador Samson stressed the need for the 4th Abuja Conference and quoted the words of Nelson Mandela which had stressed the importance of education.

Ms. Zerah Yemiwata invited Ms. Victoria Budic for the Closing Remarks.

Links to Media

- Video: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lu3WjNnfSsP-pETWZHqaW3frO2vGyjiv/view
- Pictures: https://wetransfer.com/downloads/f5f4e485a756624c427f59d967a8db-3f20210719141039/71291fa181fa43e26a5a35001c729dc420210719141107/2af61
- 4th International Conference on Safe Schools Declaration: http://ssdconference.education.gov.ng/
- MFA: https://www.foreignaffairs.gov.ng/
6.1 Ms. Victoria Budic (Deputy Head of Mission, Republic of Argentina to Nigeria)

- On behalf of the Ambassador of Argentina, she thanked everyone and recognized the works of GCPEA and the governments of Norway and Spain.
- She said there was an urgent need to protect schools from attacks in the face of the rise in insurgencies all over the world and the seeming depletion of resources to face them.
- She noted that by joining SSD, States made a commitment to implement the guidelines and protect schools from military use. She noted that States who had incorporated the guidelines also extended them to military training and domestic policy.
- Ms. Budic noted that when schools were used for military activities then the students stopped attending classes and were exposed to other dangers like violence, human trafficking, sexual abuse and forced recruitment.
- Ms. Budic said holding governments accountable through use of mechanisms like the International Criminal court would help enforce implementation and was crucial to prevent impunity and prevent future attacks and she expressed the view that the forthcoming conference would provide the governments with the opportunity to renew their commitments.
- Likewise the conference was expected to provide spaces for idea exchange in order to aid advancements in measures against attacks on education.
- She noted that Norway and Argentina had engaged in the protests nine years ago which had fortunately been adopted since then by several other nations.
- She opined that the complex international reality worsened by Covid19 had forced the world to deeper reflect on ways to prevent recurring attacks where avoidable.
- On behalf of Argentina she thanked Nigeria for organizing the conference and stated that Argentina had the honor of being one the co-hosts of SSD 2021.
- She expressed the hope that the conference would be a key global event to refocus attention on the fact of attacks on education globally.
The moderator invited the representative of NCDC to speak about Covid19 Protocols for the lunch break.

6.2 COVID-19 Protocols for Lunch

- The NCDC representative noted that a meal pass was handed over to ensure restrictions to the dining arena. He noted that lunch would be served on the ground floor and asked participants to use the stairs and not the lifts in order to better maintain social distance. He asked everyone to avoid handshakes and hugs during the meal and thanked all participants.
- Participants were also requested to maintain diagonal seating and also restrict conversations during the meal.
- The moderator invited the representative of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mobolaji Ogunduro, for a vote of thanks.

6.3 Vote of Thanks

- Ms. Ogunduro thanked the Honorable Ministers, Heads of Diplomatic Corps, Representatives of various governments, the press, the ushers and all stakeholders for their efforts in making the event a colorful one.
- The meeting came to an end at 1:46pm with the National Anthem with a total number of 117 Participants, comprising, Delegates, CSOs, Press and Ministry
Photo Gallery

H.E. Mr. Geoffrey Onyeama Minister of Foreign Affairs

H.E. Mr Lein Knut Elliv
Ms. Abiola Sanusi, making a presentation at the SSD Briefing

Ms. Abiola Sanusi, making a presentation at the SSD Briefing
Delegates during a photo session on the Red