

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**  
**18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement made by Julio H. M. Lucas, Representative of Angola to the United Nations*

Angola thanks the Malaysian presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate on an issue of critical importance, namely, the fate of children caught in the middle of armed conflicts and the suffering that they endure. The international community pledged to find solutions to this problem of extreme gravity. The adoption today of resolution 2225 (2015) is a further step in that direction. Children are supposed to lead their lives as children, surrounded by love and care, and not have their childhood stolen by war, abduction and abuse. We welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia in presiding over this debate. We also welcome the remarks by the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui. We also thank the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Yoka Brandt, and the Director of the Facilitation for Peace and Development, Ms. Eunice Apio. We were deeply touched by Ms. Apio's testimony on the despicable actions of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and its consequences.

We face daunting challenges in protecting millions of children in countries affected by armed conflict, including, just to mention the most notorious cases, the Central African Republic, Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, Gaza, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Children are exposed to the most egregious violations of their fundamental rights, among which is the denial of the most basic one — the right to life. Extreme violence has risen to unprecedented levels. Too often it targets children, prompting worldwide outrage. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/409) gives a tragic account of that reality worldwide.

Preventing the outbreak of conflicts is still the best way to protect children, but unfortunately the international community still lacks the appropriate tools for effective preventive action. Meanwhile, the protection of children in armed conflict is best achieved through a comprehensive strategy of protection and humanitarian response.

The increasing trend in the mass abductions of children is a matter of the utmost concern. Abduction is a precursor to other forms of violations of children's rights. Abducted children are used as messengers and porters, as spies, as human shields and suicide bombers. They are held as sexual slaves for ransom, retaliation and indoctrination by extremist groups for the commission of horrendous crimes.

Developing ways to prevent the abduction of children by armed groups would be the most effective strategy for reducing the number of child combatants under the yoke of terrorists. However, success in preventing such trends has been disappointing. In Iraq and Syria, over 1,000 girls and boys were abducted by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. In Nigeria, Boko Haram abducted hundreds of women and girls in major attacks in Chibok and across the country's northeast. The case of the LRA is the most notorious and abhorrent. Violence and hatred against children seems to be the only motivation of LRA actions. We condemn in the strongest terms the mass abduction of children by armed terrorist groups and call on affected Member States and the entire international community to do everything in their power to pursue the perpetrators and hold them accountable for such horrific crimes. We urge the immediate release of all abducted children and the provision of adequate support to permit them to rebuild their shattered lives and fulfil their potential. Appropriate measures to rehabilitate and reintegrate those children should be put in place by concerned States and by international community actors as a matter of priority. Angola is particularly committed to this issue. We have been affected by the phenomenon in the past but have been able to find acceptable solutions for the reintegration of former child soldiers.

We welcome the expansion of the listing criteria in resolution 1612 (2005) to include abduction as an additional reason for listing in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General and for the United Nations monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. That will ensure that those responsible for abductions are identified and held accountable, without using double standards, as the President rightly pointed out in his statement.

15-18380 29/96 18/06/2015 Children and armed conflict S/PV.7466 In that regard, resolution 2225 (2015), which was adopted today and which my delegation was honoured to sponsor, expanded the listing criteria, thereby strengthening the Council's response to grave violations of the rights of children, taking note of the fact that abduction is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and may amount to a war crime or a crime against humanity.

The report of the Secretary-General highlights the problem caused by the deprivation of liberty imposed on children as a result of their alleged association with extremist groups without due review to the legality of such detention. The situation of the children should be carefully considered, since many of them are in fact victims and should be treated as such. Additionally, Member States must ensure that trial procedures are consistent with international juvenile-justice standards and the principle of preserving the best interest of the child and their specific needs and vulnerabilities.

Currently we are witnessing an increasing trend of attacks against schools and hospitals. Military forces and non-State armed groups have turned schools into shelters, detention facilities, barracks and military bases. As a tactic of war and given their basic obscurantism and fundamentalist hostility to the idea of granting universal education to children, extremist groups target schools. That constitutes an egregious social abuse, as it deprives children of their basic right to education and endangers the safety and lives of students and teachers. Member States and the international community must do more to protect or help protect schools, students and teachers in situations of armed conflict and ensure that schools remain a safe place, while also respecting their civil-society character.

We recognize that United Nations peace operations play a vital role in the protection of children, the fulfilment of which requires adequate training, and we welcome the engagement and progress made by the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign in its first year of existence.

We further encourage the Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and to adopt and implement legal measures to prohibit and criminalize the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

We conclude by praising the Malaysian delegation for its commitment as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and its efforts to advance the protection of children caught up in the midst of war. We furthermore commend Malaysia for its efforts to advance the fight against the criminal scourge groups that abduct children and abuse and use them in committing the most abominable of crimes.

Once again, we thank the Malaysian presidency for providing this opportunity to discuss these very important and critical issues.