

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
18th June 2015, Security Council Chamber

Statement made by Ry Tui, Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations

Allow me to express my congratulations to Malaysia on assuming the presidency of the Council this month and to thank it for having organized this very important meeting. My delegation would also like to thank the Secretary-General for the preparation of the annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2015/409) and his tireless efforts in working to improve the situation of children worldwide.

Before I deliver my national statement, I should say that my delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

We share the concerns expressed by many delegations about the difficult situation that millions of children face as a result of armed conflicts, and we would like to emphasize the importance of the debate for children who are victims of non-State armed groups. Violence against children and attacks on their welfare are on the rise globally and are well documented. Abductions, rape, torture, slavery, attacks on schools and the use of children as combatants, suicide bombers and executioners cannot be tolerated by the international community.

Cambodia strongly condemns all forms of violence perpetrated against children. My delegation is deeply concerned about the increasing trend of abductions of children by non-State armed groups. The Secretary-General's report notes accurately that this practice serves as "a precursor to other violations, such as killing and maiming, recruitment and use, or sexual violence"; moreover, abduction is used as "a tactic to terrorize or target particular ethnic groups or religious communities" (S/2015/409, para. 6). The international community must devote close attention to that disturbing terrorist tactic, which is used to dehumanize, humiliate and subjugate entire populations, particularly women and children.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and a signatory to its 2000 Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Cambodia supports United Nations initiatives aimed at protecting children in conflict. The primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security rests with the United Nations, and we, as the international community, must assert the rule of law. We must strengthen existing legal instruments on the protection of children in armed conflict. To that end, we welcome the efforts of the Malaysian delegation to include abduction as an additional violation triggering inclusion of a party within the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict.

Children are the future; they are the future of our progress and our civilization's development. Children deserve to be raised in nurturing environments without experiencing the physical and psychological trauma of armed conflict.

In that light, I reiterate my delegation's longstanding position that in order to protect children from violence, slavery and the everyday horrors of war, we must address the deep-rooted causes of conflict. Conflict prevention is a prerequisite for sustainable peace and respect for human rights. Poverty, discrimination, lack of education, social exclusion and inequality only perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Preventing the use of children in armed conflict can be achieved only through the creation of adequate social, political and economic conditions worldwide. We must take careful note of that, because no sustainable development agenda can be successfully applied without first securing a safe and prosperous future for our children.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that the Royal Government of Cambodia is resolved to protect children and their rights in situations of armed conflict. We are committed to working with our global partners, States Members of the United Nations and United Nations agencies in our efforts to end the victimization of children by non-State armed groups. It is only by working together that we can ensure that future generations of children can live free and in peace.