

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

Statement by Barros Melet, Representative of Chile to the United Nations

(Spoke in Spanish): I thank the Malaysian presidency and Minister Dato Sri Anifah Aman for convening this open debate and commend Malaysia's excellent leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We value the Secretary-General's leadership in that area and the work of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, as well as UNICEF and other United Nations bodies, regional organizations and civil society.

We carefully followed Eunice Apio's valuable testimony, which calls upon us to act decisively to assist children who have been abducted in conflict situations from their homes, schools and refugee camps, mostly by non-State armed groups in the framework of their systematic campaigns of intimidation and reprisals against civilians.

Resolution 2225 (2015), which was adopted today, and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/409) are very much in accord with my country's concerns; we will therefore focus on certain aspects that, in the context of the concept note (S/2015/402, annex), deserve special attention.

Despite the progress achieved in the Secretary-General's "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign, which is focused on States, initiatives to achieve commitments by non-State actors and accountability must be strengthened. In that regard, the recommendations of the Secretary-General's recent report provide important guidance to States and the international community as a whole.

Furthermore, States must respond to threats to peace and security in accordance with international law, while ensuring mitigation measures to protect the children affected. Children must be treated primarily as victims, with their rehabilitation and reintegration forming the core of the efforts undertaken. The detention of children on the grounds of their association with armed groups during conflict must be monitored through the reports of the Secretary-General. Judicial actions against demobilized children 15-18380 **15/96 18/06/2015** Children and armed conflict **S/PV.7466** must fall within the jurisdiction of special courts, based on international standards of juvenile justice. Detention should be a measure of last resort and should take place only in special centres for minors, and children should never be placed among adult prisoners.

We vigorously condemn the abduction of children by any and all parties to conflict, as it is not only illegal under international law but a serious violation of the Geneva Conventions and possibly a crime against humanity.

The abduction of children in conflict is a long-standing issue and one of the six grave violations against children in armed conflict established by the Council. However, since 2014 that crime's visibility has increased in the wake of recent cases requiring solutions to that scourge, which can lead to other violations such as forced labour, sexual slavery, recruitment and cross-border trafficking in children. That is why we support the listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports of parties to conflict that are kidnapping children, so that they can be pressured to release their hostages and be brought to justice. Along the same lines, the Council's sanctions committees should include grave violations of the rights of children as an eligible criterion for the imposition of sanctions. Only joint, coordinated and complementary efforts will ensure the protection of fundamental rights and proper protection of the most vulnerable populations.

We also stress the importance of child protection advisers in political and peacekeeping missions with training in children's rights, and the six grave violations against children that were established by the Council, as well as prevention measures. Likewise, ceasefire agreements, peace processes and post-conflict agendas must address the issue of kidnapping children and their rehabilitation and reintegration.

The impact of armed conflict on education poses challenges in terms of major humanitarian emergencies and social and development challenges. The Council notes daily, throughout the world, bombings and burned schools, with children and their teachers as the ongoing victims of killings, mutilations, abductions and arbitrary detention. Schools are continually used by parties to armed conflict as bases, barracks or detention centres. We therefore urge parties to armed conflict to implement resolution 2143 (2014) and to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education during conflict. We encourage Member States to consider concrete steps to discourage the use of schools by armed forces and non-State armed groups, as such use violates existing international standards.

We believe that the implementation of the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, known as the Lucens Guidelines, supported by Chile through the Safe Schools Declaration of last May, will contribute to improved conduct and best practices leading to greater protection for schools and

universities in times of armed conflict and reducing their use during military operations, with a view to protecting children in any and all circumstances.

Lastly, Chile would like to reiterate its firm commitment to contributing actively to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence affecting boys and girls around the world and to continuing to work towards eradicating the six grave violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict.