

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
Wednesday, 16th June 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations

I warmly welcome you, Madam President, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico presiding over the Council today. I also thank you for the comprehensive observations that you have made. Allow me to extend to the delegation of Mexico our most sincere congratulations on its work under the leadership of Ambassador Heller as the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and on its efforts to prepare the draft presidential statement that we are going to adopt today.

Let me thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing, and the other briefers — Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Manju Gurung.

Children are faced with appalling forms of abuse and violence every day in different parts of the world. S/PV.6341 10-40745 19 They are reported to be forcibly abducted and recruited as militants. Children are also victims of sexual trafficking, and girls in particular face sexual violence. Many children do not have access to education or basic health care during armed conflicts. We must reverse that trend and protect children at all costs, and the Council plays an imperative role in that regard. The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) provides us with very useful information for ending all violations and abuses committed against children. We take note of his observations and support his recommendations. We welcome the attention focused on persistent violators.

Important progress has been made over the past year, and we welcome the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) and the expansion of the triggers for listing to include the killing and maiming of children, as well rape and other sexual violence. Human rights violations committed against children cannot and will not be tolerated. Therefore, we believe that the protection of children is part of the collective cultural values of humanity.

Our aim in the Council for the better protection of children is stronger child protection frameworks. We must continue our collective efforts to that end. Turkey also believes in the importance of investigating, prosecuting and punishing all those who commit grave violations against children. We would also like to emphasize our grave concern about the increased number of attacks on education facilities, schools and pupils. Since education is the future of new generations, the Security Council should address the problem in its future deliberations.

While working to achieve our goals, we believe that three points should always be kept in mind. First, States must be encouraged at every stage to cooperate with the Working Group. Secondly, the work of the Group should be expedited and facilitated in order to cover more situations. Thirdly, we should give priority to the implementation of United Nations documents first.

On that last point, Turkey strongly supports each United Nations instrument and initiative related to the rights of children. We show our dedication and sensitivity to the issue of violations against children by being party to every relevant United Nations instrument. Needless to say, these United Nations instruments have become a fundamental part of Turkey's legislation. We are party to various instruments promoting the rights of children outside the framework of the United Nations. Our first priority should be to recruit every country to support and ensure the implementation of all United Nations conventions and protocols.

Children comprise almost one-third of our population. They are our future. We have to unite for their future. We should act against persistent violators of their rights to free them from the devastating effects of armed conflicts. The Security Council should not refrain from taking the essential steps to stop violations against children and to fulfil our responsibility to protect our children.

Turkey is committed to contributing to all efforts in order to halt persistent perpetrators of crimes against children, and

we call all Member States to be active on the issue.