

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

*Statement made by Nguyen Phuong, Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations*

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 10 member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

I congratulate you, Madam President, on Malaysia's assumption of the Council presidency and its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is indeed a pleasure to see a fellow ASEAN member steering the work of the Council. We also commend Malaysia's initiative to hold this important debate on children and armed conflict. We are grateful to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative and the other briefers for their comprehensive statements and briefings.

Last year saw unprecedented challenges to the protection of tens of millions of children in countries affected by conflicts. Children continue to suffer the most, especially given the unparalleled rise of violent extremism. As the Secretary-General states in his report (S/2015/409), it is an affront to our humanity.

ASEAN is particularly alarmed by the rise in abduction as a tactic of war. In conflicts across regions, major armed terrorist groups are now increasingly employing the abduction of children as a means to terrorize and indoctrinate and, most worryingly, to sustain themselves. We therefore commend the Malaysian presidency for its efforts towards the Council's adoption of resolution 2225 (2015) today, to strengthen measures for protecting children in armed conflict, including steps to address the issue of the abduction of children. The resolution also stresses the importance of strengthening national capacities in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict.

ASEAN shares the view that a comprehensive approach is needed to protect children in armed conflict, particularly in addressing the issue of abduction.

While stressing the primary responsibility and authority of States, ASEAN once again emphasizes the need to address the root causes of the hardships that children must bear in situations of armed conflict. It is also equally important that the Council and the international community continue their efforts to address the impacts of armed conflict on children.

ASEAN believes that the inclusion of abduction as an additional criterion for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report could help strengthen mechanisms for monitoring violations against children.

ASEAN also believes that prudence must be exercised so as to avoid unnecessarily complicating issues on the ground, especially in situations not on the agenda of the Council. All listing efforts should be objective and comprehensive. They should be based on credible and impartial information, take into account the efforts made by Member States, and be in line with the responsibility and authority of States.

Furthermore, in implementing the mechanism and action plans already in place, it is important that all the relevant actors are properly informed and coordinated. Children's alleged associations with extremist groups should not be reason to deprive them of liberty. Parties concerned should also refrain from military actions if risks to children are associated with such actions.

The Council should also continue to take a cooperative approach and provide necessary assistance to relevant parties that are cooperating with the United Nations through the implementation of action plans to end grave violation against children in armed conflicts.

In our region, ASEAN has been stepping up efforts to tackle issues that children are faced with, at both the national and the regional levels, as well as in institutional and practical areas. In 2015, ASEAN's priority is to strengthen its regional mechanism in order to give effect to the high-level commitment to make progress on this issue. The ASEAN Commission for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Women and Children is now developing a regional plan of action for the implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Children, as adopted at the twenty-third ASEAN Summit in 2014, including through regional outreach activities. ASEAN has also consulted and cooperated closely with United Nations agencies and mechanisms, including UNICEF and the Secretary-General's Special Representatives on related issues.

Much remains to be done, yet there are grounds for optimism. It goes without saying that since the first time the Council substantively addressed the issue of children and armed conflict (see S/PRST/1998/18), the international community has made great strides in reducing the suffering that children have to bear in conflict situations. Awareness on this acute issue has been raised; institutions have been established; criteria put forth and initiatives launched and implemented.

ASEAN remains strongly committed to addressing issues that children are facing, especially in conflict situations. Let us work closely together to ensure a better future for children, to make sure that children are not soldiers and not among those who suffer, because children are our common future.