

**Children and Armed Conflict**  
**12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber**

***Statement by Mr. Rivard, Representative of Canada***

First, I would like to thank Germany for convening today's open debate and to commend their leadership in protecting children in conflict.

Let me also say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, an informal network of 38 interested Member States.

The Friends Group is pleased with the work undertaken by the Security Council in the past few years in progressively strengthening the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. We also commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her work to ensure that children experience the full protection of all human rights in situations related to armed conflict, and the dedicated work of UNICEF in this regard.

Members of the Friends Group have reliably called on the Security Council to further strengthen its protection framework and have consistently called for all six grave violations committed against children in armed conflict to be included among the listing criteria established by resolution 1612 (2005). The Friends Group has supported a progressive approach in this regard and therefore commends the Security Council for filling an important gap in the child protection framework by including attacks on schools and hospitals as the latest trigger through resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today.

For the Friends Group, a new trigger such as this includes in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports not only those parties to armed conflict who, in contravention of applicable international law, engage in attacks on schools and hospitals, but also those who engage in threats or attacks against schoolchildren, patients, and education or medical personnel. In addition, a new trigger such as this would include United Nations country-level task forces monitoring attacks on schools or hospitals; threats or attacks against schoolchildren, patients, and education or medical personnel; and military use of and other relevant disruptions to educational and medical facilities. The Friends Group is pleased to see these measures included in the resolution adopted today.

Although the Friends Group applauds the action taken by the Security Council so far in strengthening accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children, we call for three types of further decisive action against such perpetrators. First, we urge the Security Council to ensure that grave violations against children trigger the imposition of sanctions when mandates are established or renewed for relevant sanctions committees, as agreed in the presidential statement of 16 June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/10).

Secondly, we call on the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports actions taken by existing sanctions committees regarding such provisions, as well as proposals for additional steps to ensure perpetrators' accountability.

Thirdly, we remain concerned about the accountability gap, and call on national authorities and all concerned parties to take appropriate legal action against persistent perpetrators. The Friends Group also calls on the Security Council to take decisive action against all persistent perpetrators listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's reports and, in cases where there is no designated sanctions committee, to consider how to address that gap through proactive means.

Lastly, the Friends Group has stressed the importance of follow-up regarding the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations, as called for in resolution 1882 (2009). We call on all parties to conflicts, including non-State actors, to follow up and implement the recommendations of the Working Group.

In my capacity as representative of Canada, I would like to formally welcome the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250). This debate is an opportunity once again to bring to the Security Council's attention the seriousness of the acts of violence that continue to be perpetrated against children.

We firmly believe that today's adoption of a new resolution on children and armed conflict will highlight the gravity of the attacks being made on schools and hospitals. With this additional trigger, strong support on the part of the international community will be needed for the monitoring and reporting mechanism country teams to track attacks on schools and hospitals on a systematic and comprehensive basis. Canada believes that education is the strongest tool we can provide to children in order to improve their chances in the future. That is why one of Canada's signature projects focuses on increasing access to education in Kandahar by investing up to \$12 million in building, expanding and repairing 50 schools in selected districts of Kandahar province.

We are also pleased that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is actively seized of the issue of accountability. We therefore call on the Council and its relevant sanctions committees to impose sanctions more systematically so that perpetrators of grave violations against children may be held to account. As the Secretary-General has recommended, Canada urges the Council to take more vigorous and targeted measures against offenders who have been listed in the Secretary-General's annual report for at least five years for committing grave violations against children. Canada also calls on the Working Group, in accordance with its mandate, to hold urgent or informal meetings in order to ensure a speedier response to new situations where grave violations are being committed against children in armed conflicts.

Children's rights are a priority of Canada's foreign policy and international development aid. Canada will continue to play a strong role and to help contribute to concrete results both at the United Nations and on the ground in countries concerned.