

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2012,**  
**Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Guillermo E. Rishchynski, Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations*

Mr. President,

First, let me say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

The 38 member states of the Group of Friends, representing all five regional groups of the UN, reaffirm their support, in the strongest terms, for the work of the Security Council to ensure the full protection of children from the grave violations committed against them in armed conflict. Since the first resolution on this specific issue was adopted in 1999, the Council has established a unique and robust system of protection through no less than eight consensus resolutions and countless presidential statements.

The Friends Group welcomes the recent appointment of Leila Zerrougui as Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict, and looks forward to working closely with her and her office. The contributions of the Special Representative to the work of the Security Council are fundamental to the Council's work. We call on the Security Council to ensure that she regularly briefs the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict as well as the Security Council directly, including on emerging situations such as Libya, Syria, the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Mali.

The Friends Group also welcomes the Secretary General's recent annual report on children and armed conflict. Reporting on an annual basis ensures that the Security Council is seized of this matter and better able to protect children affected by conflict and hold perpetrators accountable. The Friends firmly believe that the Secretary General must continue to provide an annual report on children and armed conflict to the Council, including the two annexes therein which list those parties that recruit or use children, kill or maim them, commit rape or other forms of sexual violence against them, or engage in attacks on schools and hospitals. This listing of perpetrators, the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism established by Council Resolution 1612, the dialogues and resulting action plans, the efforts of the Special Representative, and the work of UNICEF, the Task Forces and various other partners in the field, form the well-established international framework to better protect the world's children caught in conflict.

Lastly, the Friends Group believes that the issue of persistent perpetrators is a fundamental challenge facing this protection framework. More than half of the parties listed by the Secretary General chronically violate children's rights, in other words, they have been listed for more than five years. The Friends urge the Council to ensure that grave violations against children trigger the imposition of sanctions.

In an international environment where persistent violators of the most serious crimes against children affected by conflict are not held to account, the Security Council must protect the framework for action it has established and strengthen it.

Mr. President,

Now I will speak in my national capacity.

This year's Secretary General's report continues to document grave violations and abuses being committed against girls and boys – including the killing and maiming of children, rape as a weapon of war, and attacks against schools and hospitals. These despicable actions must be stopped.

Canada remains deeply committed to the work of the Security Council on this issue. Since the establishment of the ground-breaking and comprehensive Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and the adoption last year of Resolution 1998, the data and evidence of grave violations against children has improved. As a result, more perpetrators have been held accountable, including with respect to attacks on schools and hospitals. Canada encourages the Council to continue to strengthen these existing mechanisms, abide by its obligations and address the remaining accountability gaps at the global and country levels.

The need for further action is evident when looking at the dire situation of children in Syria, a reality reflected in the annual report. Canada is deeply disturbed by reports of senseless killing, torture, sexual abuse, and the use of children as human shields in this country. We once again call on the Security Council and the international community to come together in opposition to such actions. Sadly, Syria is only one of the many examples of where this type of violence occurs.

We are also deeply concerned about the growing number of persistent perpetrators committing grave violations against children. 32 of the 52 parties have been listed in the Secretary General's report for more than five years. We must do more to hold both state and non-state actors accountable.

In this regard, we commend the Council's Sanctions Committees on Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Sudan for including grave violations against children as part of their sanctions criteria. We urgently call on the Security Council and its relevant Sanctions Committees to take tangible steps to systematically impose sanctions and targeted measures to hold perpetrators accountable for committing grave atrocities, such as the killing and rape of girls and boys.

Mr. President,

Canada welcomes the actions taken by many countries this year. This includes the signing of an action plan on the recruitment and use of children by the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. Similarly, Canada looks forward to the signing of an action plan by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and calls upon other states to follow. Action plans provide a structured approach and impetus to parties to conflict to release children and end the practice of their recruitment and use in a time bound manner. This impact is evident, for instance, in the progress made in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Uganda in the last several years, leading to the release and reintegration of thousands of children.