

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

Statement by Mr. Araud, Representative of France

I align myself with the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany for his initiative to convene the Security Council to consider the issue of children and armed conflict.

This morning the Council is showing that it is determined to ensure respect for the right to education and health in armed conflict. Attacks against schools and hospitals and their staff are prohibited under international humanitarian law. During conflicts they destroy infrastructure and wipe out the elite that are vital for any country. Following conflicts such attacks have a lasting impact on the country's reconstruction.

The Security Council is today sending a clear message to parties to conflicts who commit such attacks by deciding to act on the basis of information provided by the Secretariat. That is significant progress. It responds, first, to the increase in attacks against schools and hospitals and their staff that have been seen on the ground, as has been demonstrated by the situations in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. But it is also a response to the awareness among the international community that has followed the presentation of the UNESCO report, *The Hidden Crisis: armed conflict and education*, which showed that 28 million children were deprived of basic education in countries in conflict. That report also evidenced the contribution made by the World Health Organization.

In the absence of progress, we must not hesitate to implement robust and targeted sanctions. The Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is to consider this issue in order to present specific recommendations to the Council within a year. In the context of this exercise we emphasize two aspects.

First is improving the overall coherence of the sanctions systems architecture in order to enhance the credibility of the Security Council's actions.

Secondly, with respect to enhancing the links between the Working Group and the international criminal justice system, we welcome the contribution made by the International Criminal Court to combating impunity, as evidenced by the ongoing trial of Thomas Lubanga on charges of war crimes. We call on civil society and non-governmental organizations to continue to provide material for consideration by States.

We also pay tribute to the work of the Secretary-General and of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict. We endorse the analysis and the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. We commend the personal commitment of the Secretary-General to protecting children in armed conflict as well as the work of his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy. We share the goal of the United Nations of achieving a world without child soldiers within 25 years. That is an ambitious but realistic goal. It is estimated that there are 250,000 child soldiers worldwide, and UNICEF is contributing to the reintegration of approximately 10,000 of them each year. Major challenges remain in terms of addressing the broad-ranging issues of sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children. To facilitate the implementation of resolution 1882 (2009), we call on the Secretary-General to provide the necessary resources to the monitoring and reporting mechanism and for the dissemination of information, as well as to take into account the cross-border aspect of certain conflicts, as was done in the process of fighting against the Lord's Resistance Army.

We commend the signing of the action plans in Afghanistan and in Chad, and we call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma to complete their own such plans, in coordination with the United Nations.

With regard to the support provided by the Secretariat to the Working Group of the Security Council, we thank the Secretary-General for the administrative support, and we look forward to the continuation of country visits by the Working Group at the current pace, following those to Nepal in 2010 and to Afghanistan in 2011. We hope that such missions will be financed as new measures under the regular budget for 2012-2013, which will be adopted in the fall.

Together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and our partners in the steering committee, we will convene the fourth ministerial follow-up Forum on the Paris Commitments and the Paris Principles, to be held on the margins of the ministerial-level meeting of the General Assembly in September.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Peter Wittig, for his outstanding chairmanship of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.