

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

***Statement by Mr. Prozor, Permanent Representative to Israel***

Mr. Prozor (Israel): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your stewardship of the Security Council this month and your able guidance of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Allow me to begin on a personal note. I speak before this Council not only as the Permanent Representative of the State of Israel, but also as a father. I am deeply proud that I raised my three children — Lior, Tourer and Oren — in Jerusalem. However, my children grew up in a reality where abnormality had become the norm. From infancy, they saw that every educational institution had to be protected with an armed guard, from preschools to kindergartens to high schools. The international community cannot accept this abnormality as a normal way of life. No family, no child should live under those circumstances.

Children are the primary victims in armed conflict. They are its targets and, increasingly, its instruments. Thousands have been subjected to sexual exploitation, prostitution, rape and sexual violence. More than a quarter of a million minors are currently being exploited as child soldiers, recruited at such a young age that they are robbed of their schooling and their youth.

Israel assigns great importance to protecting children in armed conflict and is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Israel is proud to have co-sponsored today's resolution and commends Germany for initiating it.

We are encouraged by the progress that has been made on this issue, as is highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250). Thousands of children conscripted into armed groups have been released in conflict zones around the world. To that effect, the United Nations has signed new action plans over the past year in the Philippines, Afghanistan and Chad. We welcome those developments and call for the agreements to be implemented without delay. However, releasing those children is not enough. The international community must make special efforts to reintegrate them into society so that they can hope for a future outside of combat.

I would like to extend Israel's appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her significant role in carrying out these efforts. We sometimes find that her reports could benefit from a wider range of resources. However, we salute Special Representative Coomaraswamy's professionalism and dedication to protecting children in conflict around the world.

My statement would not be complete without reiterating the pressing need to protect children in the face of terrorism and extremism. While this is a global concern, the situation in our region provides a clear picture of this multifaceted challenge.

In the Middle East, terrorists continue to single out children in their attacks. My country was numb with horror last March when Palestinian terrorists brutally murdered five members of an Israeli family in Itamar as they slept in their home. The terrorists went from room to room, using knives to carry out their appalling crime. They killed both parents; they killed their two children, ages 4 and 11; and, in an act of unspeakable cruelty, they murdered the youngest member of the family, a three-month old baby girl.

That is just one of many attacks that terrorists have launched against Israeli children. Last April, Hamas deliberately targeted a yellow school bus in southern Israel. They struck the bus using an anti-tank missile, completely destroying it and killing a 16-year old boy. That attack underscores the daily reality facing children throughout much of southern Israel, where the threat of rocket fire is ever present. Since the beginning of the year, some 290 rockets and mortars have been fired into Israel — an average of nearly two attacks every single day. This alters the fabric of life. In the past six months, more than 100,000 Israeli children have been kept out of school on numerous occasions to avoid the danger of rockets.

There is no monopoly on the suffering caused by terrorism. All children in our region suffer. Hamas and other terrorist groups deploy minors as suicide bombers and recruit them to carry out attacks against Israeli civilians

and soldiers. They use children as human shields; they place children in harm's way by using schools, hospitals and civilian neighbourhoods as a base for their activity.

The Council has a responsibility to address the broader context in which children are used and abused in armed conflict. In schools, camps and mosques and through the media, generation after generation of children across the Middle East have been taught to hate, vilify and dehumanize Israelis and Jews. This This prevents them from becoming contributing members of a global, tolerant society. For the sake of those children and for the future of our region, the international community has a duty to end this culture of incitement. We need education that promotes peace instead of hate, tolerance instead of violence and mutual understanding instead of martyrdom.

The child victims of terrorism are real. Each one has a name and a family; each one has their own dreams and aspirations. The international community cannot accept the perpetuation or justification of terrorism in the Middle East or anywhere else. The next generation of children in our region will deserve a brighter future without conflict, without terror and without hate.