

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
Wednesday, 16th June 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Aitimova, Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan to the United Nations

At the outset I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mexico on its assumption of the Security Council presidency. I would also like to directly thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for her personal dedication to the issue of children and armed conflict and for arranging this open debate. Additionally, I would like to thank and commend the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Task Force on Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF for working to submit an inclusive and well-grounded report (S/2010/181) on the actual situation facing and involving children in areas of concern. The fact that the information contained in the report is disaggregated by country and type of violation gives us a clear picture of the magnitude of this horrific and all too common phenomenon.

Kazakhstan, as a State party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, fully supports the strengthening of multilateral commitments through the campaign launched by the Secretary-General to promote its universal ratification by 2012. It is crucial that all nations fully and legally embrace the Optional Protocol if we are to protect and uphold the right of all children to be children and to grow up in safer, healthier and friendlier environments.

Regrettably, a number of countries covered in the present report have not ratified the Optional Protocol, including some where a legal framework for child protection is most needed. Kazakhstan feels that this makes full implementation of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009), regarding the incorporation of tracking and the eradication of sexual violence into existing national action plans, of immediate and vital importance.

The report indicates undeniable progress in monitoring and preventing many violations and abuses against children in armed conflict, as well as some progress in holding those committing these hideous crimes against children accountable for their actions.

However, the conclusion that impunity for violators continues to prevail is indeed, as stated in the report, disturbing.

Based on the data presented, we can conclude that direct bilateral dialogue with armed groups and the implementation of concrete time-bound action plans by all parties to a conflict constitute an efficient and effective framework for significantly reducing the number of grave violations against children. Our delegation appreciates the political will of countries affected by conflict that have nominated local citizens to be responsible for facilitating the separation and demobilization of children, and those instances where child protection units have been established in armed groups. Such precedents have added value in the light of the lack of trained and qualified personnel responsible for child survival, demobilization and reintegration. It is evident that these precedents should become best practices for the United Nations and all parties to conflicts to follow.

Kazakhstan is deeply concerned that some countries have shown resistance to providing access for United Nations country teams to monitor and report on conditions in areas of conflict. This includes contact with non-State actors for the purpose of preparing action plans to stop the recruitment of children and other grave violations, including killing, maiming and rape. We call on all countries to grant unrestricted access to the United Nations to gather objective and reliable information, and to prepare critical action plans to protect children.

The report mentions the innovative domestic law in the United States, the Child Soldier Prevention Act, which restricts the provision of financing and any defence-related assistance to countries identified as recruiting or using child soldiers in violation of international humanitarian law. This national approach should be applauded and, where appropriate, replicated. The loss of military support and aid could serve as strong motivating factors for some to stop these disgraceful practices against children.

As a member of the UNICEF Executive Board, Kazakhstan fully supports the Fund's new mandate as co-lead in the struggle to end violence against children in situations of armed conflict. In these efforts, it is critical to focus on educating all sides in a conflict, as well members of peacekeeping units, on the rights of civilians, particularly children and women. National and international legislation should be strengthened in order to fill legal gaps and loopholes exploited by those violating these rights.

The increase of forced school closures and of schools being damaged or destroyed in attacks, fighting or explosions is of deep concern to our delegation. While targeting schools clearly puts children at direct risk of death and injury, it also results in their being deprived of education and, potentially, the loss of an entire generation. Such an outcome would be fertile ground for fanaticism and terrorism, and therefore represent a threat to international peace and security.

Kazakhstan suggests further prioritizing the protection of educational facilities from attack by any party and the provision of uninterrupted education for all children in post-conflict zones, where appropriate. My delegation also proposes the drafting of large-scale learning policies for countries affected by long-term armed conflicts. The goal of these proposals is to help today's children grow into a generation free from hatred and loathing based on race, culture or religion. By promoting dignity, tolerance and a merit-based approach, education is a cornerstone of efforts to eradicate deep-rooted stereotypes.