

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

Statement by Ms. Lucas, Representative of Luxembourg

I would like to fully associate myself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

Luxembourg warmly welcomes the convening of this open debate and the adoption of the new resolution on the issue of children in armed conflict (resolution 1998 (2011)). This demonstrates the continuing commitment of the Security Council to promote the protection of children, both in countries that are on its agenda and in other situations that are of concern to us all.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their tireless efforts in support of children. We encourage them to continue to strive to ensure that children are better protected and that violations against them are brought to our attention.

The roll of shame that is annexed to the Secretary-General's reports and, more generally, the Secretary-General's reports based on information gathered thanks to the monitoring and reporting mechanism are of vital importance in obliging us to face up to the brutal reality of children in time of armed conflict. The country visits by the Special Representative, the work of experts on the protection of children in field missions and the new practice of field visits by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict contribute considerably to greater awareness of violations against children in conflicts.

Initial tangible results can indeed be seen. More and more children are being released by armed forces or rebel groups in many conflict situations. However, additional efforts and resources will be necessary in order to have a greater impact on the ground.

In 2010, the Security Council, following consultations with the Special Representative, imposed for the first time sanctions against individuals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were responsible for serious violations against children. The Council will be able to build on that precedent in order to punish in the same way those who are responsible for serious violations against children in the context of other armed conflicts.

We call on the Security Council to continue to work to that end and at the same time to consider, as the Secretary-General has suggested, ways by which sanctions may be imposed in contexts where there are no Security Council sanctions committees.

From now on, parties to a conflict that attack schools or hospitals could find themselves on the list of shame contained in the report of the Secretary-General. We congratulate the Council for having thus enhanced the monitoring mechanism, and it is our hope that the Council's gradual approach will allow for the inclusion, in the not-too-distant future, of the two other categories of serious violations against children identified in resolution 1612 (2005). Ultimately, we must assign equal importance to all serious violations against children.

Allow me briefly to dwell on the issue of attacks against schools. As is clear from the report of the Secretary-General, we are witnessing on an increasingly frequent basis the destruction of schools and attacks on students and their teachers. In certain cases, girls' schools are specifically targeted. Insecurity prevents parents from sending their children to school for fear that their health or even life might be at risk.

This year, the Economic and Social Council is examining, at its substantive session now under way in Geneva, the issue of education for all. Synergies with our debate today are quite clear. In his speech before the Council on 5 July last, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jean Asselborn, emphasized the fact that "protection against violence is one of the key preconditions for enjoying the right to education". He welcomed the Security Council's initiative aimed at expanding the criteria for listing on the list of shame to cover attacks against schools and hospitals, thereby allowing for the imposition of sanctions on those responsible and contributing to the fight against the impunity that is far too common for these heinous crimes.

Minister Asselborn called on the international community to take additional measures to help the 28 million children who are deprived of education because of armed conflicts and who are subjected to rape, sexual violence, targeted attacks against their schools and other human rights violations. I wish to reiterate that appeal today.