

Children and Armed Conflict

12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Rodríguez, Permanent Representative of Peru

Mr. Rodríguez Arnillas (Peru) (spoke in Spanish): I welcome the convening of this open debate on an issue that my country deems of great importance: children and armed conflict. I should like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2011/250) on this issue, as well as Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for the information she provided in her capacity as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF.

The Security Council in recent years has adopted a series of resolutions that have provided the international community with a legislative framework for enabling progress to be made in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict and in the aftermath of conflict. The progress made in this respect has been the result of the growing concern about the issue as well as the political resolve of protagonists to take concrete action. The resolution adopted today by the Security Council represents a further step forward in the gradual process of protecting children in armed conflict.

However, the situation of children in armed conflict remains of concern. Hence, in the view of the delegation of Peru, it is imperative that we should redouble our efforts to put an end to the recruiting and use of children in armed conflict and take drastic measures to punish those who perpetrate sexual violence, maim or kill children in armed conflict. Impunity in such cases can in no way be tolerated by the international community.

In this report, the Secretary-General also referred with concern to the increasing number of attacks on schools and hospitals where children are among the principal civilian victims. My country therefore welcomes the important decision taken by the Security Council to allow the Secretary-General to include, annexed to his report, a list of those parties which in an armed conflict, in violation of international law, repeatedly attack schools and hospitals as well as those who repeatedly attack, or threaten to attack, those who are protected in connection with schools and hospitals. Peru therefore believes that the inclusion of this new criterion will contribute to providing greater and more comprehensive protection to children in times of armed conflict.

My delegation reiterates that it is important to continue to strengthen communication between the sanctions committees and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in order to make it possible to adopt measures or exchange information so as to provide greater protection to children or impose appropriate sanctions on those parties that commit serious violations against them. It is important for the sanctions committees to consider the possibility of including the situation of children in its mandates. In that respect, the progress made in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be viewed as a good precedent, as suggested by the Secretary-General in his report.

It is also important to continue to include in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and special political missions, as well as in peacebuilding missions, specific provisions with the clear and specific objective of protecting children.

My country believes that the Peacebuilding Commission has a fundamental role to play in supporting plans and programmes aimed at reintegrating children who are former combatants in the various spheres of economic and social life in the aftermath of a conflict. The support of the international community is therefore essential to support national endeavours to that end.

As my country has indicated on several occasions, crucial to addressing this problem and the issue of sexual violence against children in conflict is the possession of information that makes it possible to adopt preventive measures that allow for a rapid and effective response. It is necessary to continue to explore mechanisms that allow for a reliable exchange of information on acts of sexual violence, in order to take action to reduce and combat this scourge.

My delegation believes that this exchange of information must be substantively strengthened among United Nations agencies, the various Security Council committees and the Working Group on Children and Armed

Conflict. Of equal importance is capacity-building and awareness-raising of military personnel deployed in the field so that they can adequately respond to situations involving sexual violence.

The establishment of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is evidence of the growing commitment of the Security Council to protecting children in armed conflict. In that respect, it is important that the appropriate administrative and substantive support be provided so that it can carry out its functions effectively, including field visits, which are of great importance.

I wish also to acknowledge and commend the devoted and unflagging work carried out by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and the important work being done by UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant institutions.

Finally, there is a broad international legislative framework providing appropriate protection to children in times of both peace and armed conflict. Hence it is necessary to continue to urge the parties to fulfil their obligations and to enhance the mechanisms that promote that process.

We cannot waver in our efforts, allow impunity in such cases, or yield to circumstances. It is an undeniable and imperative duty of the international community to guarantee peace, development and a climate conducive to the enjoyment of human rights for future generations. Peru is firmly committed to that lofty objective.