

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, March 7th, 2014, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Laassel , Permanent Mission of Morocco to the United Nations

Madam President, my delegation is pleased to take part in this debate under your presidency, which confirms your commitment and ongoing efforts on this issue. I congratulate you for the adoption this morning of resolution 2143 (2014). I also would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Anthony Lake and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their statements.

Since 1999, the issue of the involvement of children in armed conflict has enjoyed the special attention of the Security Council. Despite the progress made, the international community continues to face major challenges related to the ongoing recruitment of children by certain parties to armed conflict, in violation of the most basic elements of human rights and international humanitarian law, including refugee law. The focus on women, boys and girls as vulnerable groups in times of armed conflict must remain at the very centre of the Council's concerns with a view to eliminating the worst forms of violence and exploitation against those groups, promote their rights and ensure respect for their human dignity.

The adoption by the Council of resolution 1612 (2005) on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict facilitated the establishment of a mechanism to monitor and report on grave violations committed against child soldiers. That mechanism has broadly contributed to collecting reliable information supporting the implementation of national action plans for the protection of children in armed conflict.

Other resolutions — including 1882 (2009) on sexual violence and children, 1998 (2011) on attacks against schools and hospitals, and 2068 (2012) on criminal liability for persistent perpetrators — are among those initiatives aimed at bolstering existing legal frameworks in terms of child protection. Through its ongoing commitment, the Security Council has also clearly highlighted the fact that the fight against the phenomenon is not only a moral and humanitarian imperative, but also a pillar of international peace and security.

Nevertheless, the international normative framework adopted to ensure the best possible protection of children in armed conflict, and the United Nations mechanisms established in that area, cannot guarantee the necessary protection without the essential political involvement of Member States to put an end to the scourge.

The stubborn nature of the recruitment of child soldiers is closely related to the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons, particularly by organized crime networks and due to weak border control cooperation and difficulties in implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Within the framework of its efforts, the Council should adopt a holistic approach to address the phenomenon of child recruitment in its military, security and social and humanitarian dimensions.

My delegation shares the view that the fight against child recruitment of soldiers includes conflict prevention while addressing such root causes as poverty, exclusion and social inequalities. In the framework of post-conflict situations, we must strive to ensure national reconciliation, respect for the rule of law and democracy, and conditions conducive to sustainable development.

National child protection strategies continue to depend on measures to build Government capacities and

on the availability of material, financial and human resources to ensure the sustainability of initiatives established under national action plans. They also require attention to international development indicators in the establishment of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes aimed at child victims of recruitment through national training and job-creation projects to offer young people improved prospects through re-education and training. In that respect, my delegation welcomes the growing number of action plans signed or in negotiation that reflect the merits of dialogue and cooperation. Those efforts should involve not only public authorities, but also non-governmental organizations, national human rights entities and civil society.

The Kingdom of Morocco commends the “Children, not soldiers” campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF, aimed at ending the recruitment of children in armed conflict by 2016 and supporting national initiatives in that area. Similarly, we welcome measures taken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to strengthen the education and training of military personnel involved in peacekeeping operations so as to enable them to protect children in situations of armed conflict.

My delegation hopes that the guidelines jointly set forth in 2009 by the DPKO and the Department of Field Support will help to guide activities of the United Nations system related to children in armed conflict and to support the mandates of child protection advisers in peacetime. The recruitment of children in armed conflict is a crime that must be denounced, condemned and punished. The efforts of the international community to end it will require specific, targeted, practical actions.