<u>**Children and Armed Conflict**</u>
12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Representative of United Kingdom

I would like to join other speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. We welcome the international attention that Germany has brought to this issue, both in its role as President of the Security Council and in its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We are grateful for the statement of commitment from the Secretary-General this morning and for the briefings from Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and from Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF. Let me express my particular appreciation for the work of Ms. Coomaraswamy. We are very grateful for her efforts to help children across the globe and for the leadership that she has brought to this dossier.

I would like to focus on three topics — ambition, practical action and the importance of addressing attacks on education.

First, our ambitions for this agenda must remain high. United Nations efforts to help children affected by armed conflict can, in many situations, work and work well. In the Sudan and Afghanistan, we look forward to the implementation of new action plans to release and reintegrate children recruited and caught up in fighting.

We can highlight specific results, such as the release of almost 3,000 children in Nepal in 2010 and the reintegration of 191 children in Chad this year. But there are also areas where progress has been much slower. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we need to generate far greater momentum to release child soldiers, including those associated with the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo. In Burma, the United Nations needs to be granted greater access to monitor and report on abuses against children, particularly in areas of ethnic conflict.

In the five years following the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), two-thirds of the world's child population were living in the 42 countries most affected by violence and conflict. In a series of resolutions, Member States have demonstrated the courage to tackle violations of children's rights globally. Resolution 1998 (2011), which we have adopted today, marks another important step forward, but it should not mark the end of our ambition.

Secondly, we should continue to focus our efforts on practical action. The preparation and implementation of country action plans remain the most effective tool for releasing children. It is here that we should focus much of our effort. Of course, we must carefully consider the context before deciding which actions to take. No two countries are the same, so the Working Group and country task forces must constantly be searching for new and innovative methods to make the maximum difference on the ground. We welcome the increased use of field visits, for example, which have been shown to be an effective tool in informing the decisions of the Working Group and bringing about increased local dialogue.

Thirdly, I welcome the focus of our new resolution on addressing attacks on schools and hospitals. Denying children access to education is in itself a violation of their human rights; it also robs them of the ability to understand and claim their wider rights. Safe schools can deliver life-saving advice in conflict zones. Attending school can keep children from more dangerous livelihoods. It can help prevent conflict in the longer term by reducing youth employment and ensuring that young people are not disenfranchised from society. We hope that this addition will strengthen our efforts to reduce attacks on children and improve their lives.

United Nations action on children and armed conflict works, and it works best when we are practically, not institutionally or theoretically, focused. That is why it is right to maintain and increase our ambition, including by expanding children and armed conflict work to cover the important topic of attacks on education, as we have done today.