

Security Council Open Debate on Children in Armed Conflict, June 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Mission of United Kingdom to the United Nations.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and other briefers for their valuable contributions this morning. I welcome the earlier presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg at today's debate.

The progress already made during Luxembourg's chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is encouraging. The United Kingdom welcomes the strong leadership shown by both Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and Ambassador Lucas on this work. We look forward to their continued efforts.

This debate is a reminder of why the Security Council's work is so important. The Secretary-General's report (S/2013/245) documents hideous violations — thousands of children killed and maimed by explosive weapons and continuous shelling, the systematic rape and torture of girls and boys and the forcible use of children as human shields. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General has demonstrated effective advocacy and active engagement to prevent those grave violations against children. I am grateful for her report and commend United Nations country task forces for producing reliable and evidence-based information on violations against children.

But a high level of ambition for the children- and-armed-conflict agenda must be sustained. The Special Representative's campaign, announced today, for no child to be associated with State armed forces in conflict by 2016 demonstrates such ambition. The United Kingdom fully supports that goal. In the past 12 months, action plans were signed with parties to conflict in Burma, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We expect, and look forward to, the signing of the additional action plans under negotiation. The expected adoption of today's draft presidential statement builds on that success by strengthening Council consensus to tackle persistent perpetrators.

I call on all of us to address three challenges in particular, namely, implementing the action plans, the reintegration of children and combating impunity.

We call on all parties to conflict that have not concluded action plans to do so immediately. But signing an action plan is only the first step. All parties to conflict must honour their commitments as quickly as possible. To support the implementation of such plans, the United Nations, international partners and Member States must address funding gaps and prioritize the deployment of senior child-protection advisers.

The ultimate tragedy is that of children who grow up to perpetuate the cycle of conflict as adults. Denied a childhood, a home and an education, children become trapped in a world of armed conflict. We can support the successful reintegration of those children into society by stopping the military use of schools and securing provisions to protect children in peace processes.

Finally, impunity for those who commit violations against children is unacceptable. Perpetrators should be in no doubt that their crimes will be investigated and that trials will follow, as demonstrated by the trials of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and Charles Taylor and the recent transfer of Bosco Ntaganda to the International Criminal Court (ICC). Cooperation between the Security Council and the ICC is critical to ensuring such accountability.

The future of children across the world depends upon the United Nations rising to these challenges. No child anywhere or at any time should needlessly be endangered or suffer in conflict. The draft presidential statement to be adopted today signals that determination.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The Council has before it the text of a draft statement by the President on behalf of the Council on the subject of today's meeting. I thank the Council members for their valuable contributions to the draft statement. In accordance with the understanding reached among members of the Council, I shall take it that the members of the Security Council agree to the draft statement, which will be issued as a document of the Security Council under S/PRST/2013/8.

It is so decided.

I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes, in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber. That way, we shall be able to conclude the debate before lunchtime.