

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

Statement by Mr. Al-Saadi, Representative of Yemen

At the outset, I wish to express my country's thanks and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict, a subject that is undoubtedly of major significance to my country and other Members of the United Nations. We express our appreciation to the Foreign Minister of the friendly State of Germany for presiding over the debate, and thank the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF, for their efforts and briefings.

The economic and political circumstances of Yemen, currently and for the past few years, are well known. My country believes, however, that children are the future on whom we are relying to build a modern State. The Republic of Yemen was therefore among the first countries to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in May 1991, as well as its two Optional Protocols. We provide periodic reports on the implementation of those instruments. We have taken steps to enact legislation to promote and protect the rights of children — for example, law 45 of 2002, on the rights of the child, and law 24 of 1992, on the care of minors.

The Republic of Yemen has not only signed international instruments and enacted domestic legislation to protect the rights of children, we have also set up institutional mechanisms to translate them into concrete actions. We have also established a Ministry of Human Rights and a Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood, as well as several national committees and networks on the protection and promotion of the rights of children. In particular, we have put in place the High National Committee, which is chaired by the Vice-President, similar other national technical committees to protect human rights under the auspices of the Ministry of Human Rights, as well as a technical committee to fight child trafficking. We have also forged a valuable partnership with UNICEF.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/250), with regard to which we wish to state the following.

First, we reaffirm our absolute commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of children in every respect.

Second, with regard to our commitment to prohibiting the conscription of children in armed conflict, all our national military legislation sets the minimum age for mandatory conscription into the armed forces at 18 years of age. Law 67 of 1991, concerning military and security forces, law 23 of 1990, on public reserves, and law 22 of 1990 are all in line with the Optional Protocol.

Third, we have cooperated with all international and civil society organizations to prohibit the conscription and involvement of children in armed conflict. We have also established numerous guidelines and published many manuals with regard to this issue.

Fourth, the Government has been compelled to shoulder its responsibility to combat the recent armed rebellion in Sa'ada province. The State of Yemen declared a ceasefire in February 2010, to which it has been committed ever since.

Fifth, an amnesty has been declared in order to pardon all detainees, including children who were conscripted by the rebels and Al-Houthi groups.

Sixth, the Government has undertaken many measures to provide assistance to all internally displaced persons and refugees, especially children.

Seventh, we would like to stress that, in spite of our country's special circumstances, great progress has been made since the listing of Yemen in last year's report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181). We therefore do not see any reason to include additional categories in the report's list.

Eighth, we would like to highlight the importance of the need to gather precise information with regard to the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

We would like to state that, in spite our country's special circumstances, we will make every effort to implement our international obligations and promote the rights of children. We hope that the international community will support us in our endeavours.