

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
Wednesday, 16th June 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Grau, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

I thank you, Sir, for organizing this open debate and welcome the presence this morning of your Secretary of Foreign Affairs. We also welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) and thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her invaluable work.

Switzerland appreciates the fact that the Secretary-General's report has broadened the criteria for including parties to armed conflict in its annexes, which now include not only those parties responsible for killing or maiming children, but also those responsible for rape or other forms of sexual violence against children. This is an important step. At the same time, more efforts are necessary to make these new provisions effective and to implement resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

I would like to comment on some of the report's recommendations. First, the 16 persistent violators must be the subject of the Security Council's strongest and most urgent action. The Council should also consider including provisions relating to the recruitment and illicit use of children in the mandates of all its sanctions committees. In this context, we welcome the precedent set by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, the capacities of the mechanism for monitoring and reporting information on the two additional violations must be strengthened. The relatively low reported incidence of sexual violence against children does not reflect the extent of that practice; rather, it demonstrates the challenge of collecting relevant information. Consequently, the documentation of incidents and trends should be improved and cooperation must be strengthened among entities working to implement the relevant mandates. In particular, gender advisers should have greater involvement with the monitoring and reporting mechanisms at the field level.

Thirdly, the Security Council should encourage concerned Member States to authorize contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure the effective protection of children. Such contact would have no impact on the legal status of non-State actors. Fourthly, since June 2009, peacekeeping mission policy has been to systematically include the protection of children affected by armed conflict in all stages of mission planning, design and implementation. In this context, Switzerland also supports the deployment of child protection advisers to relevant peacebuilding and political missions, as provided for under resolution 1882 (2009).

I wish to add the following comments to my remarks on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. Attacks on schools and hospitals are an unfortunate and persistent reality. There is a need to improve the monitoring and reporting of information in that respect. The Secretary-General should provide additional information on effective prevention and accountability strategies. The triggers of the monitoring and reporting mechanism could be expanded to include attacks on schools and hospitals. Furthermore, the Security Council should consider the issue of children and armed conflict more systematically, especially in its gender dimensions pursuant to resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) on women, peace and security.

Finally, Switzerland encourages the Security Council to open to non-member States the factual briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on country-specific situations.