

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
18th June 2015, Security Council Chamber

Statement made by Yoshifumi Okamura, Representative of Japan to the United Nations

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation for your leadership, Mr. President, in convening today's open debate. Let me also thank His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General; Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; and Ms. Eunice Apio, of Facilitation for Peace and Development, for their briefings.

Today, I would like to focus on three issues: the abduction of children, child soldiers and the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims.

First, with regard, abduction, I would like to draw the Security Council's attention to the disturbing, increasing trend of mass abductions of children. Last year, it was reported that 276 schoolgirls had been kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria. There were 153 Kurdish boys and 412 Yazidi children abducted by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), in Syria and Iraq. According to the Watch List on Children and Armed Conflict, at least 24,422 children were kidnapped between 2002 and 2013, of which 95.8 per cent were taken by non-State armed groups.

The international community, especially the Security Council, should take all the measures necessary to alleviate such cruel and inhumane actions by organizations like Boko Haram and ISIL. In that regard, we support and have sponsored the new resolution 2225 (2015), which was just adopted today. The addition of abductions as a trigger for the inclusion of parties in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report will make a difference. It is essential, however, that the relevant parties implement resolution 2225 (2015) through action plans and other mechanisms.

Moreover, Japan would like to pay tribute to the efforts made by all stakeholders in drafting the Lucens Guidelines. We welcome the fact that the international community's recognition of the issue of protecting schools and education is expanding. Japan will continue keeping an eye on the development of the discussion on the issue.

Secondly, Japan is commemorating the tenth anniversary of resolution 1612 (2005). Japan took in the adoption of the resolution as a member of the Council at the time. The resolution marked an important milestone, by establishing a monitoring and reporting mechanism on the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign further promotes the provisions set out in the resolution. Japan has repeatedly expressed its support to the campaign. The achievements made so far via the campaign are to be commended, including the delisting of Chad and the release of 400 child soldiers in Myanmar. In that context, Japan has provided support for child soldier victims through UNICEF. It is important to note that the goal of the campaign is to prevent and end the recruitment and use of children by national security forces by 2016. In order to achieve that ambitious goal, further enhancements and commitments are required. Japan will continue to look into furthering its contributions to support the campaign.

Lastly, the rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims deserves as much attention as the prevention of abduction and recruitment, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's current annual report (S/2015/409). The victims of child abduction and recruitment have been deprived of love and affection and remain aloof from a normal social life. In the worst cases, those children become fiends and deviants or mindless monsters, brainwashed and knowing nothing other than how to use a Kalashnikov. Those children may have no families or homes to return to. Even if they do make it back, they may not be accepted or may be unable to readapt to society. They have lost the opportunity to become members of society. Bringing such children back to a normal life should be an essential part of their rehabilitation process.

With that aim in mind, in the past fiscal year Japan provided a total of \$23 million in contributions for programmes to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers. Such programmes have been implemented in countries such as the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. For instance, in South Sudan, we supported efforts to reunite approximately 1,000 children with their families. That project also provided them with psychological care. In addition, medical care and counselling are being provided to women and children who have experienced sexual abuse.

We should not leave anyone behind — especially the children. When we are dealing with crimes that have been committed against children, preventing and rescuing children from such crimes is not sufficient. I reiterate the necessity

of also providing support to the victims for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. By doing so, they can return as fully committed members of society.