

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

Statement by Ambassador Espinosa Cantellano, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

With the Council's permission, I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico. I am grateful for this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of my country to the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law. Mexico today reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the full protection of civilians in armed conflicts, in particular women and children. '

Mexico is convinced that we have made substantive progress in the Security Council's treatment of the promotion and protection of children affected by armed conflict. The adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), which strengthens and broadens the United Nations mechanisms for protecting minors in cases of armed conflict, is an example of this progress.

In thanking Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for presenting the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), I note that this year the annexes to the report include the names not only of those who recruit or use children in armed conflict, but also of those who commit criminal acts against them. While these are important steps, there is still much to do if we truly want to spare children from being the principal victims of the spiral of violence generated by armed conflicts around the world.

In the past two decades alone, more than 2 million children in areas of armed conflict have died, another six million have been disabled, more than a quarter of a million young people have been exploited as child soldiers in different regions of the world, and thousands more have been victims of sexual exploitation, rape and prostitution.

These figures are heartbreaking, but they say very little about the personal and direct suffering of the children involved. That is why, very personally but also on behalf of Mexico and the Security Council, I should like to commend the courage and testimony of Manju Gurung, this former child soldier who has urged us to act decisively for children in situations of armed conflict.

Mexico also appeals to the Security Council to continue, within the framework of its competences, to address the repercussions of armed conflicts on children, and to promote concrete action to comply with the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My country vigorously defends the principle of the higher interests of children, and believes that we must step up our efforts as a community to provide broad and effective protection to children. Crimes committed against children cannot be stopped if their perpetrators remain unpunished. Serious violations of fundamental principles and norms of international humanitarian law are war crimes, and Member States have the primary obligation to investigate and prosecute those responsible for such violations. We support the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General that the Council consider stronger measures against those who persist in violating the rights of children in armed conflict.

Transparency and accountability in the protection of children in armed conflict have become crucial priorities. In cases where States have neither the capacity nor the willingness to prosecute those presumed responsible for these crimes, the International Criminal Court has the power to recognize those crimes that are stipulated in the Rome Statute.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Mexico has resolutely joined the campaign for ratification of the Protocols. We call upon States that have not already done so to ratify those and other instruments designed to ensure the greatest protection for those who today are affected by the scourge of war, exploitation and violence. Mexico will continue to guide the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed

Conflict inclusively and with determination and transparency until the end of its mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

We would like to focus on five aspects: first, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism to guarantee the provision of objective and verifiable information that will permit timely action by the United Nations system and follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group; secondly, promoting the implementation of action plans aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children and crimes perpetrated against them; thirdly, improving the impact of our decisions on the comprehensive protection of children, including open meetings for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to present her reports; fourthly, ensuring that our recommendations promote full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights by all parties to a conflict; and finally, supporting the establishment of comprehensive programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate children in the ranks of armed groups into their families and communities, as well as preventing new violations and abuses against them.

Close international cooperation on all these issues is crucial to providing comprehensive and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of children in situations of violence and armed conflict. This task requires the commitment of us all, as well as our coordinated efforts with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, United Nations agencies and programmes, and civil society organizations. Protecting the most vulnerable is not only an ethical imperative; today, protecting our children, who should never take any part in any armed conflict, is also protecting our nations, whose strengths, deepest values and hopes are embodied in those children. I thank the Council for its support in favour of a better world for the children of our planet. I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.