

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

Statement by Mr. Ebner, Representative of Austria

At the outset, I would like to thank the German presidency for convening this debate and for its excellent work in the Security Council in strengthening the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. I also wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy and her Office for their tireless efforts and important work. We appreciate the close cooperation between Ms. Coomaraswamy and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Margot Wallström.

Austria aligns itself with the statements made by the observer of the European Union, the representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Human Security Network and the representative of Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict.

Austria welcomes the adoption today of resolution 1998 (2011), which will strengthen the existing child protection framework by expanding the triggers of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict. The increase in attacks on schools and hospitals, including the specific targeting of girls, are deeply worrying and need to be clearly condemned. The further expansion of the triggers requires an increased monitoring and reporting capacity by the United Nations. Close cooperation among all child protection actors becomes even more important. We welcome the Council's resolve, as reaffirmed in today's resolution, to take action against those parties to conflict that persist in committing violations and abuses against children, including by the adoption of targeted measures.

Resolution 1998 (2011) provides a clear road map to ensure respect for Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. In that regard, we welcome the Council's intention to ensure that provisions pertaining to violations of applicable international law relating to the rights and protection of children are included as listing criteria for its sanctions regimes. The Sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provides a good model in that regard. We highly appreciate the exchange of information between the Committee and the Special Representative, which entailed concrete action.

We would like to encourage the Council to consider using all tools at its disposal, including the imposition of targeted measures, to take action against persistent perpetrators in country situations where no sanctions committee is in place. We agree with the Secretary-General that direct contact between United Nations country teams and non-State actors is important in order to prepare and implement action plans, and thereby ensure the effective protection of children.

Finally, we encourage the Council to continue to include child protection provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. We would like to highlight the importance of training for both military and civilian peacekeeping personnel. In that context, Austria warmly welcomes the Department of Peacekeeping Operations training initiative to promote child protection through comprehensive training, including by reviewing existing training materials.

Let me conclude by expressing my appreciation for the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict under the German chairmanship. Austria is pleased to hear about the Secretary-General's efforts to establish a working arrangement for the Secretariat, and encourages continued support for the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.