

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

Statement by Mr. Ragolini, Representative of Italy

I wish to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. I also would like to commend Germany's leadership role as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Let me express my deep appreciation to the Secretary-General, to his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and to the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake, for their commitment to defending and promoting the rights of children who fall victim to armed conflicts. In taking the floor, Italy endorses the statement to be delivered by the European Union. We also support the comments made by Canada on behalf of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, of which Italy is a member.

The protection of children's rights during armed conflicts is one of Italy's foreign policy priorities. We have consistently advocated greater commitment by the Security Council to address this scourge. We welcome the steady progress achieved in strengthening the protection framework. Resolution 1998 (2011), adopted today — which Italy is proud to have co-sponsored — confirms this trend. The decision to include attacks against schools and hospitals and attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons in relation to schools and hospitals as new listing criteria for the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports is indeed a vital step towards comprehensive protection of children from all grave violations.

Italy welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2011/250) and strongly endorses its recommendations. We join other delegations in calling on the Security Council to adopt more vigorous measures against persistent violators. Impunity can seriously undermine the credibility of the protection system we have created. Relevant sanctions committees must address this issue within their respective mandates. In cases where sanctions committees are not established, the Council should consider how to tackle the accountability gap.

Cooperation with the International Criminal Court is also key. Monitoring and ensuring adequate follow-up to the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is another important aspect.

We attach great importance to action plans. We welcome the recent signing of plans in Afghanistan, for example, and urge Governments to give concrete follow-up to their commitments.

The Child Protection Advisers of United Nations missions also perform essential duties. Adequate training in child protection is one of the core recommendations expressed in the Secretary-General's report. Italy is supporting an initiative by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and Save the Children, to develop a comprehensive and systematic training programme on child protection and child rights for all peacekeeping personnel. We hope that other donors will join us in supporting this strategic project.

I conclude by expressing our strong support for the United Nations campaign for the universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Important results have been achieved since its launching in 2010. We believe that universal ratification is an ambitious but realistic goal. It would reflect our determination to put an end to the worst violations of the rights of the child, which violations are also a major threat to the stability and welfare of our societies.