



# Security Council

Sixty-ninth year

Provisional

## 7259<sup>th</sup> meeting

Monday, 8 September 2014, 10 a.m.

New York

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*President:* Ms. Power/Mr. Dunn . . . . . (United States of America)

*Members:*

Argentina . . . . .	Mrs. Perceval
Australia . . . . .	Mr. Quinlan
Chad . . . . .	Mr. Bante
Chile . . . . .	Mr. Olguín Cigarroa
China . . . . .	Mr. Liu Jieyi
France . . . . .	Mr. Delattre
Jordan . . . . .	Mrs. Kawar
Lithuania . . . . .	Ms. Murmokaitė
Luxembourg . . . . .	Mr. Asselborn
Nigeria . . . . .	Mrs. Ogwu
Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Oh Joon
Russian Federation . . . . .	Mr. Zagaynov
Rwanda . . . . .	Mr. Nduhungirehe
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . . .	Sir Mark Lyall Grant

## Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

### **Expression of thanks to the outgoing President**

**The President:** As this is the first public meeting of the Security Council for the month of September 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to His Excellency Sir Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for his service as President of the Council for the month of August. I know that I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Lyall Grant and his great team for the terrific diplomatic skill with which they conducted the Council's business last month.

I should also like to extend, on behalf of the Council, a warm welcome to the new Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. François Delattre. We look forward to collaborating closely with him.

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **Children and armed conflict**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339)**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Estonia, Germany, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Somalia, Spain, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Yemen to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; Mr. Forest Whitaker, Special

Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation of UNESCO; and Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite His Excellency Mr. Ahmed Fathalla, Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2014/339, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

**Ms. Zerrougui:** I come to the Council today with a heavy heart for the children affected by armed conflict around the world. Although we continue to see progress in better protecting children, new crises are rapidly overshadowing these gains. Some of these crises are covered in the report before the Council (S/2014/339), while others have begun or intensified since the report was submitted. The Council has been briefed on Syria repeatedly, and the situation there remains grave for children. Members have also recently travelled to South Sudan and Somalia and witnessed for themselves the conditions there. Children in these and other conflicts are paying a high price.

The events that are unfolding in Iraq have led to increased grave violations committed by all parties to the conflict. I am appalled by the total disregard for human life shown by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) during its rapid expansion within Syria and from Syria into Iraq. The images that we see through media reporting of indiscriminate and brutal killings of civilians, including children, leave us speechless and horrified. Although the highly unstable security situation in the region slows our monitoring, we know that up to 700 children have been killed or maimed in Iraq since the beginning of the year, including in summary executions. I remain deeply concerned over recent reports of ISIL targeting minorities, including children and women, in the growing area under its control in Syria and Iraq. ISIL has tasked boys as young as 13 to carry weapons, guard strategic locations

or arrest civilians. Other children are used as suicide bombers.

Sadly, we have also received reports of militias allied to the Iraqi Government using children in the fight against ISIL, and the whereabouts of numerous children jailed on security charges by the Government are currently unknown following militias storming these facilities in July.

ISIL is not the only perpetrator of child rights violations; rather, it is part of a broader regional challenge that includes Boko Haram's expansion of its area of operation. Boko Haram has been listed this year for the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals, and the United Nations is currently setting up the monitoring and reporting mechanism to better gather and verify information concerning grave violations against children in northern Nigeria.

Targeted attacks on schools, students and teachers by Boko Haram led to the deaths of at least 100 schoolchildren and 70 teachers in 2013. Health workers, including polio vaccinators in the north-east, have also been targeted. The abduction of the girls from Chibok in April horrified the entire world. Over 200 girls are still in the hands of Boko Haram, and I call on the Government of Nigeria and its partners to take any and all measures to bring the girls back. We are now receiving reports that Boko Haram has recruited and used boys and girls as young as 12 years of age in its attacks, including in raids on schools. I am also worried by reports about grave violations perpetrated by armed elements allegedly associated with Government forces in northern Nigeria. I look forward to the Government's announced investigation into these incidents, as perpetrators, no matter who they are, must be held accountable for their acts.

I would be remiss if I did not address the horrific toll that the conflict in Gaza has taken on children. We have seen intense fighting that has far exceeded the casualties of the previous escalations in 2008-2009 and 2012, combined. I am horrified by the fact that, since the beginning of July, more than 500 Palestinian children have been killed and at least 3,106 injured or maimed by Israeli forces — two-thirds of them under the age of 12 and one-third have been permanently disabled. At least 244 schools, including 75 schools belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), have been shelled by Israel's armed forces, and one school was used as a military base by the Israel Defense Forces. As the

school year has started and 110,000 people remain displaced, many in school facilities, access to education for the children of Gaza is severely affected and will remain limited for the foreseeable future. To add to this tragedy, medical personnel were also killed during the shelling, and half of Gaza's hospitals were damaged, preventing children from obtaining urgent medical care.

There are victims on both sides, and I am equally disheartened by the killing of one Israeli child and the injury of six others since the beginning of July as a result of rockets fired by Hamas. The indiscriminate firing of rockets against civilian areas also resulted in the damage of three schools in Israel. In addition, the use of three vacant UNRWA schools by Palestinian armed groups as weapons stores in Gaza is unacceptable.

We cannot afford impunity in the face of such grave violations of international law, which in some cases may amount to war crimes. The events in Gaza must be thoroughly investigated and identified perpetrators from all parties to the conflict must be held accountable. I cannot stress enough the urgent need to work towards a lasting peace. A ceasefire is only a temporary measure, and we have been here before. The international community must put its weight behind addressing the root causes of this conflict. As the Secretary-General himself has said, we cannot afford to have another cycle of violence. People in the State of Palestine and Israel deserve a durable peace that respects the rights of all parties and places high value on the rights of the children.

Many other situations witnessed grave violations against children in 2013 and face similar challenges today. Instability and rising tensions in Libya, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan continue to threaten the well-being of the weakest and require our outmost efforts to protect them. The intensification of activities by armed groups gives rise to military responses that sometimes mirror the tactics of the groups being fought, including the use of methods of warfare with little or no respect for civilians. We must remind Governments, which are sometimes under extreme pressure, of their obligations under international humanitarian law in the conduct of operations and under international human rights law at all times.

The fight against impunity remains one of the key aspects of our efforts not only to react to but to prevent grave violations against children. We must

make better use of the tools at our disposal in ensuring that perpetrators face prosecution — by including them in sanctions regimes, by redoubling our efforts in enhancing national capacities in the judicial sector and by strengthening the framework of international justice, including referring perpetrators to the International Criminal Court.

To raise attention and address those harrowing challenges facing children in conflict, the Security Council has given my Office, the broader United Nations, concerned Governments and partners the tools to reduce violations or end them entirely. Chief among those tools are Security Council-mandated action plans with State and non-State parties that recruit and use children, kill or maim children, attack schools and hospitals or perpetrate sexual violence against children. Of course, the implementation of those action plans would not be possible without the efforts of all our partners, including UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs DPA and their child-protection advisers on the ground.

Six months ago, I launched the global campaign Children, Not Soldiers, jointly with UNICEF, to work towards the goal of no children in Government forces by the end of 2016. In that time, the campaign has received an almost overwhelming amount of support, first and foremost from the countries concerned and from the Security Council, which endorsed the campaign in resolution 2143 (2014), but also from regional organizations, non-governmental organization partners and Member States. I am particularly happy to welcome Forest Whitaker, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, who has joined our efforts under the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. I want to extend my gratitude to all.

The Government of Chad, with the full support of the United Nations, has already fulfilled all the requirements under its action plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children in its armed forces, and has been delisted from this year's report of the Secretary-General. In May, Yemen became the seventh country concerned by the campaign to sign an action plan with the United Nations. During my visit in June, South Sudan recommitted to the action plan signed in June 2012. Progress was also achieved in Somalia. During my recent visit, Somali authorities showed strong will to move forward on the implementation of the country's action plan. Important progress continues in

Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The vast majority of the parties listed are non-State actors. To date we have concluded an equal number of action plans with State and non-State actors. Non-State actors continue to approach my Office and our partners on the ground to conclude action plans to end violations against children. A recent example is the commitment to end child recruitment communicated to my Office and to the Council by the Free Syrian Army in Syria. Riek Machar of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition also signed a commitment with me in May. We are witnessing progress with non-State armed groups in Darfur, and I am hopeful that we will be able to conclude the compliance activities of our action plan with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines as soon as possible. I am encouraged by such progress. The Council's constant encouragement in that regard is a boon to our efforts.

I cannot overemphasize the importance for specific attention on the plight of child victims of armed conflict in peace processes and agreements. Children are the future of a society. Longstanding peace will never be achieved without giving children the means, skills and education to rebuild a society and institutions torn by armed conflict. Although the primordial aim of a cessation of hostilities must be a swift end to fighting — and children are often the first to profit — the more substantial stages of peace negotiations can be challenging when it comes to grave child-rights violations. We must do more to include special provisions in peace agreements for children affected by conflict.

Today's armed conflicts increasingly involve schools and health facilities in the direct line of fire. The Security Council recognizes that important aspect in its resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014). To implement the tools provided to us in those resolutions, I have jointly published the Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals, together with UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Health Organization. With that guidance, our field practitioners will be better equipped to monitor and report, engage in advocacy and work with parties to conflict to end and prevent attacks on schools and hospitals.

A key strategy of my mandate as Special Representative has been to deepen my engagement with regional organizations. My Office has a longstanding relationship and has developed a series of guidelines in



conjunction with the European Union. I have continued to actively engage with the African Union. I am happy to note that, in addition to the partnership agreement signed last year, the African Union has just announced the establishment of a special envoy on children and armed conflict. With the escalation of conflict and its impact on children across the Arab world, I have sought to strengthen ties with the League of Arab States, and we are developing a cooperation agreement to enhance our common work. My Office also continues to engage with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to further mainstream child-protection standards among the forces of its member States and partners.

No one in the Chamber today who has read the Secretary-General's report and heard of the latest developments in the conflicts before the Council can consider children as a "collateral" issue. Indeed, we now know that, in a large majority of conflicts around the world, children are targeted and used deliberately. Conflict confronts them in their homes, at school, in hospitals and when they seek to run away. That is why we, and the world with us, expect so much of the Security Council, and why the Council can, and must, place children at the centre of each and every peace and security action it takes — from peace agreements to mission mandates to accountability for crimes. I count on the Council. But, more important, the child victims around the world count on the Security Council.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Zerrougi for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

**Mr. Ladsous** (*spoke in French*): Once again this year, perhaps more than ever, the trend continues and the evidence is clear: children are among the first victims of armed conflict. Take for example the spiral of violence since December that has affected the Central African Republic and South Sudan, with a devastating impact on the population, especially children, that we are still to assess. More than 8,000 children in Central Africa are now in the hands of all sorts of armed groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which is raging in the south-east of the country. In South Sudan, we have witnessed a dramatic setback and an alarming increase in the recruitment of children by armed groups of all stripes. The continuing conflict in the heart of Darfur and the growing insecurity in northern Mali affect primarily women and children, who lack access to the necessary protection and assistance. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we continue to see

the kidnapping and recruitment of children by armed groups, as well as sexual violence.

Therefore, we at the Department of Peacekeeping Operations remain determined to continue our efforts to protect them, under the double arch of responsibility and partnership. Responsibility means setting an example by making children a priority. Partnership implies coordinating our efforts to maximize existing competencies and to draw on the competencies and resources of all parties. Partnerships and coordinated action with international child-protection partners, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and other international and non-governmental organizations, enable us to contribute to a comprehensive response to the plight of children. That response includes monitoring, reporting, humanitarian assistance, physical protection, political action and psychosocial services, as well as demobilization, community reintegration, education and employment.

Our partnerships with Member States, particularly with the troop- and police-contributing countries, allow the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to lead by example and to uphold the exemplary conduct and action of our troops, our police — both men and women — and our civilian colleagues. I will return to that point in a moment.

Most importantly, we have sought to create partnerships with States in which our peacekeeping operations are deployed in order to ensure that they fulfil their fundamental responsibility to protect children. Earlier this year, Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, in concert with UNICEF, made State responsibility a priority by launching the global Children, not Soldiers campaign. My Department will spare no effort to promote that campaign in the areas where we maintain a presence, and to support the Governments and security forces of Afghanistan, Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others, in order to ensure that there are no more child soldiers by 2016.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, where the Government has adopted an action plan to free children associated with its armed forces, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and United Nations partners are now supporting the establishment of joint technical working groups with provincial authorities. I would like to commend the

Government's efforts to promote that campaign on national radio and television. In South Sudan, the Ministry of Defence recently appointed some 20 new child protection officers to address the rise in child recruitment across the country. We recently contributed to their training programme in support of that positive initiative.

Beyond the campaign itself, Governments must also set an example by providing support for access, monitoring, assistance and involvement with armed groups. That remains a challenge, for example, in the Sudan or Mali, but the child protection advisers of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) have been able to establish contact with Minni Minawi of the Sudan Liberation Army and the Musa Hilal group, both of whom have issued orders this year prohibiting the recruitment and use of children in their ranks. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has initiated contact with certain parties known to have recruited child soldiers in northern Mali.

In negotiating peace agreements or ceasefires, States must also lead by example, making child-protection provisions a non-negotiable part of all agreements. To that end, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan is working closely with the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to integrate child-specific provisions in the ceasefire agreement in South Sudan. In Algiers, at this very moment, MINUSMA is sending the same message to the negotiating parties to make sure that they do likewise.

Robust action must also be launched against armed groups that are holding child soldiers. For instance, the joint rescue operation led by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO, which was launched on 7 August, has so far enabled 41 civilians, including 34 children, to be extracted from the hands of the rebel Allied Democratic Forces.

To successfully carry out such operations, our peacekeepers are required to show courage and uphold the highest standards of conduct and integrity. They need to understand the ways in which robust military action, which is indispensable for the protection of civilians, can be adapted to the specific needs of girls and boys. To that end, in April we completed the development of specialized child-protection training modules for soldiers. The modules explain how to interact with children while keeping their best interests

in mind. They also remind our peacekeepers of their responsibility to protect teachers and schools. Most importantly, they seek to leverage the presence and comparative advantage of our Blue Helmets by giving them the tools to understand how to report the most serious violations and how to support child-protection advisers in their contacts with armed actors, with particular concern for securing the release of children from their ranks.

After being piloted in Malaysia and Uruguay in 2013, the training modules have now been shared with all troop-contributing countries, and this year the Department of Peacekeeping Operations organized training courses for trainers from our largest troop-contributing countries, which were held in Austria and Sweden. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Member States that funded the development of the modules and hosted those courses. The project would not have been possible without their support.

The countries that sent military instructors to those courses need to generate appropriate follow-up in order to strengthen child-protection training for their troops. They must also appoint military child-protection officers to all units on the ground. They might also make sure that there is a higher percentage of female peacekeepers so as to facilitate our troops' interactions with girls who fall victim to conflicts. In order to complete our training curriculums, we have now begun to develop specialized modules for the United Nations police force, with a focus on capacity-building for host State police, as well as on wider judicial reform, correction systems, and juvenile justice issues.

Before concluding, I would like to say a word on the Central African Republic and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), since we are due to take over that mission from the African Union in under a week. I will obviously be there, and I would like to reassure the Security Council and partners that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is taking all necessary measures, as we do with all our missions, to minimize any risk that our peacekeepers might unwittingly inflict on the local populations. The United Nations human rights screening policy requires our troop- and police-contributing countries to certify that the women and men sent as peacekeepers have not, or are not alleged to have, committed past violations.

With respect to MINUSCA in particular, we have taken targeted measures that go well beyond the scope

of the screening policy so as to ensure that all our troops abide by the highest standards and do not include children in their ranks. Those measures include engagement with the Governments concerned, proactive human-rights screening of individual commanders by United Nations personnel and ongoing physical screening for under-aged personnel, as well as the sensitization and training of troops. For instance, a mobile training team has just returned from Bangui, where it had spent a month in Central Africa providing targeted training to all troops of the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic on United Nations standards, including conduct and discipline, the protection of civilians, human rights, protection of children, countering sexual violence and so forth. The team utilized our new modules on child protection, and another team in the near future will provide training on all these matters to additional troops currently being deployed.

Generally speaking, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations continues to work in close coordination with Special Representatives Zerrougui Bangura to ensure that all of our troop- and police-contributing countries are in compliance with international legal standards, including, needless to say, the relevant Security Council' resolutions.

Therefore, rest assured, Madam President, that these issues lie at the very heart of our mandates and that we are naturally focusing on them. Children — girls and boys — are trusting, but their trust is so easily betrayed. To earn it, we are required to show a high degree of responsibility. We must set an example. We must put an end to their suffering, and to do so we will need to continue to enhance our cooperation with all our partners.

The Council's continued support is therefore absolutely necessary to ensure that we are able to deploy child-protection advisers to all priority areas and to ensure that our Blue Helmets are motivated, equipped and trained to assume that mission. And that is all the more necessary now, as we have numerous challenges before us because of all the children who have our trust, and our mandate is to protect those children.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Ladsou for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Brandt.

**Ms. Brandt:** I offer special thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her determined efforts and those of

her Office to keep children in armed conflict safe; to the United States for organizing this open debate; to Luxembourg for chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict; and to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for our productive partnership on child protection.

It is indeed a terrible irony that in the twenty-fifth year of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a time when we should be celebrating global progress in children's welfare, we are witnessing so many atrocities against children. Efforts to keep children safe in armed conflicts are continuing, so there is some progress to report. But challenges and setbacks have taken a tragic toll on children.

Since our last open debate on the subject (see S/PV.7129), children in Iraq, Syria, South Sudan, Gaza and the Central African Republic have suffered indescribably; they have been recruited, used, orphaned and killed. They have witnessed massacres that no child should ever see, they have endured pain from which they should have been protected, and they have been brutalized. We have seen that too often, their schools, which should be safe havens, are not, as playgrounds become battlegrounds. Governments and non-State armed groups continue to use schools to store weapons, detain prisoners and house soldiers. Teachers and students are targeted. I am, of course, thinking especially of the more than 200 Nigerian schoolgirls abducted and still missing, and I join the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in emphasizing that we must bring them home. We must redouble our efforts to protect all children and schools from targeted attacks.

So UNICEF appreciates all the more the initiative by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack and its partners to advocate for schools as safe and protected spaces, including through the new Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, which outline actions Governments can take to end military use of schools. UNICEF therefore calls on all Member States to support and implement the Lucens Guidelines so that schools can remain places of learning and hope where children can build strong foundations for their futures and those of their families.

I should like to say a few words on the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, launched six months ago by Special Representative Zerrougui with UNICEF. We have seen some encouraging results since that time. For example,

Myanmar's armed forces recently released 91 children, and of course, we hope that that will be followed by the release of all other children identified through the ongoing age verification and reporting process. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is implementing its action plan and has released hundreds of children, and UNICEF will continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo's efforts to make its army child-free. As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned this morning, the armed forces of Chad have achieved their action plan and have been subsequently delisted, as noted in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339).

While we note such achievements, we also remain focused on the challenges and especially the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups. In the Central African Republic, the Sudan and South Sudan, among others, children continue to be mobilized, manning checkpoints, loading weapons, carrying guns and worse. In some places, however, a number of non-State armed groups are taking bold steps to end that heinous practice. In the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front convened a meeting with 30 of its commanders at which the group recommitted to protecting children. In Myanmar, the country task force has begun discussions with the Karen National Union, the Karenni National Progressive Party and the Kachin Independence Organization and hopes to engage other listed parties soon.

But we need to see more — more negotiations to release children held by these groups, more efforts to change attitudes about the role of children in conflict and more rehabilitation centres to help mend their hearts and their minds, so that they can continue their journeys towards better, more prosperous futures.

Thankfully, some children have begun that journey. Nanette, who was recruited by the Séléka rebels in the Central African Republic, said this to us:

“I was released from Séléka at the start of this year to a transit centre. I was disturbed when I arrived, very nervous and worried about my future. I cried and lived folded in on myself. But, with the support of the team, I have learnt to move on and build a life. I now live with my big sister and have begun a vocational training programme”.

Fortunately, Nanette is now healing, standing tall and reclaiming her future. Let us give more children like her that blessed opportunity.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Brandt for her briefing.

I now give floor to Mr. Whitaker.

**Mr. Whitaker:** I would like to thank the Security Council for receiving me today. As a humanist and as the UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, I am honoured by the opportunity to come to speak before the Council on such an important matter, and I am especially grateful to Ambassador Power for extending this invitation to me.

I just returned yesterday from South Sudan, training youth in transformative peace-building through my foundation. I was also in the country in June with Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict Leila Zerrougui and Irma Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, advocating for the protection and education of children affected by the conflict and working with individuals to help push the country towards peace.

For the past two years, I have gone in and out of South Sudan, working with my foundation, and I have watched and participated as the various temperaments and conflicts have manifested themselves. As I am sure the Council is aware, the situation in South Sudan remains dire. After meeting with generals, soldiers and civilians on the ground, I fear that there is no end to the violence in sight. About 100,000 individuals have sought shelter in the overcrowded civilians camps around the country. Nine months after the conflict started, most of them still do not feel that it is safe to go back home or even know if they have a home to return to. The city of Bentiu in the north is all but deserted, with houses burned to the ground, hospitals closed, and villages nearby destroyed.

What concerns me most are the conditions that so many children in South Sudan must endure. In the protection of civilians camp in Bentiu, some of the boys' and girls' hair is turning red from malnutrition. Throughout the country, hundreds of schools are empty, and some have been turned into military camps, as thousands of young people go without food and basic education. Perhaps worst of all, walking through the cities, I saw child soldiers wearing military uniforms and carrying guns.

I know that, to everyone in this Chamber, the idea of children living in military camps or fighting wars is unconscionable. It is inhuman in the strictest sense of the word: it robs its victims of a phase of their lives to which every human being is entitled. I also know that



the Security Council, Special Representative Zerrougui, UNICEF and the many individuals present here today have done a lot of important work to combat the use of child soldiers. The Security Council has given us tools to better protect children affected by conflict and to end and prevent the recruitment and the use of children.

The Children, Not Soldiers campaign has united the countries that are taking action to end such practices in their armies. Since the launch of the campaign, there have been several positive developments: Chad recently completed the requirements of its action plan, bringing down the number of countries involved to seven. Just a few weeks ago, Myanmar freed close to a hundred children.

My commitment to the Children, Not Soldiers campaign is rooted in my own experience growing up in South Los Angeles, knowing many children whose lives would be forever marred by gang violence. When I started working with child soldiers 10 years ago and heard their stories, I recognized the face of the trauma that comes from having lived in conflict as a child. This is a unique opportunity for me to make the statement that it is unacceptable for children to become agents of violence in any form.

What I want to talk about today is the work that remains to be done. Until I started working with child soldiers, I had not realized the depth of the problem nor the complexity of its resolution. To begin with, many different conflicts around the world engage child soldiers, and the reasons why those children become soldiers are often unique to each conflict. In Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army would kidnap children from their villages, forcing them to kill those they love. In some cultures, being a soldier is seen as a rite of passage, and many children join, thinking that they will have the honour of supporting their tribes. In South Sudan, some children are coerced, while others go to the military because they need food and shelter and cannot find it any other way.

Though children may become soldiers for a variety of reasons, the practice is singularly and universally unacceptable, and must be ended. But there is one common and stubborn challenge that arises whenever we attempt to liberate children serving in armed groups, and that is that reintegrating former child soldiers into their families and communities is a long, complex and resource-intensive process.

Supporting Governments in their efforts to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers is a paramount and

necessary first step, but we must also devote adequate resources to caring for these children once we bring them home from war. We may take a child out of an army, but unless we do more for him — help him re-enter society, enrol him in a good school or teach him a useful trade, we have not set him free. For so many of those children, war and violence are all that they have ever known, and if we do not take it upon ourselves to teach them something new, then they are just soldiers-in-waiting. And when another war breaks out, only five or ten years in the future, they will be the first ones recruited to go back to the battlefield.

We must act to prevent this. Not only because those children deserve the chance to live normal, healthy lives, but also because we have an opportunity to prevent future violence. If we can make such children emotionally whole again and restore a sense of normalcy to their lives, then they will want to put down their arms for good, and, instead of perpetuating a vicious cycle of violence, they will be able to help build a peaceful future for their country.

There was a former child soldier I met in Uganda. He and his parents had been captured by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA trained the boy as a soldier, and they forced his mother and father into labour service. When his parents could not work anymore, the boy looked on helplessly as the LRA executed them, right in front of him. One day, he saw an opportunity to escape. The boy ran from the camp, found a place to bury his uniform, his gun and his army gear, and wandered alone through the bush. He came upon a family. They took him in, they fed him. The boy told me that, in that moment, as he was sitting down to eat dinner with those strangers, he suddenly felt so afraid. Here he was, in that warm home with a normal family, and he had no idea how to behave, how to talk to them, how to eat like them. He left, found where he had buried his gear and his weapon; he dug it all up, and went back to the same LRA that had killed his parents.

This is not a parable; it is a true story about a real boy. But it encapsulates the struggle that thousands of other child soldiers just like him face. Child soldiers are trapped in a prison without walls. Even after their wars are over, many of them cannot go home, because they feel safer, more at home in an army camp than with a loving family. That leads to a vicious cycle of violence where, during today's wars, the seeds of tomorrow's battles are sown, because we have created a generation of soldiers-in-waiting, for whom war is more normal than peace.

That is true of girls I have met as well, many of whom were forced to commit unspeakable acts of violence, or were coerced into sexual slavery. I visited an internally displaced persons camp a few years ago and spoke with a girl who had been a child soldier and, because of that, was completely ostracized when she returned to civilization. It was a crowded camp, acres of mud huts all around, and not a soul would talk to her. “They say I am crazy,” she said, “and I may be, because I do things, and I do not know why. They say I am stupid, and I may be, because I do not know how to do the things that everyone else can do.”

I am not telling these stories to suggest that there is no hope for such children. On the contrary, I have been moved beyond words by the work that so many dedicated individuals have done for former child soldiers. In Gulu in Uganda, Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe has created a home for girls and women whose lives have been shattered by violence and sexual exploitation. She cares for them and teaches them. She makes them whole again. Okello Sam, a former child soldier himself, has opened a school where he educates and rehabilitates children who have been soldiers and victims of war. I have seen students at those schools transformed from soldiers back into children. And I have watched as they have grown up to be dynamic, intelligent, and hopeful young men and women who will be voices for peace and change in their communities and will help end the cycles of violence that have existed for so long in these regions.

More programmes of that kind and more support for existing ones are needed. UNICEF in particular works with hundreds of non-governmental organizations that provide services to former child soldiers and children affected by conflict. It is essential that the Council and the international community devote the resources needed to heal such children in the present and to make sure that they do not become soldiers again in the future. It is that same underlying philosophy — that we must educate and rehabilitate the victims of today’s violence to prevent tomorrow’s conflicts — that has been at the centre of the work that my foundation, the Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative, has carried out in Uganda, South Sudan, Mexico, and soon in other countries, too.

I have watched as old patterns of violence and discrimination have been broken. When we started our programme in South Sudan in 2012, we recruited youths from all of the region’s major ethnic groups. When the

fighting broke out last December, I was heart-broken to learn that so many of our youths were impacted by the conflict. But I was also incredibly proud when I read their reports and saw that they were using their training to reach across ethnic lines, to contact each other and to coordinate their efforts as they travelled around the country advocating for peace.

They have shown me the beauty of the spirit of the people of South Sudan. They give me hope, hope that even the most vicious cycles of violence, the most intractable conflicts can be stopped. I have seen the transformative power that peace and diversity education can have on young people. But for most children in war-torn regions, and especially for former child soldiers, those lessons do not come naturally. Rather, it is incumbent on all of us to muster the will and devote the resources to create safe environments for these children and former child soldiers so that they can receive those lessons and move forward with their lives.

Helping children rebuild their lives after such unfathomable traumas is central to the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. Reintegration is a part of each and every action plan signed by Governments with the United Nations. For the children living in those countries, the actions we have promised cannot come soon enough. By the end of 2016, we want to be able to tell children not only that they will grow up protected from recruitment and use by Government forces in conflict, but also that current child soldiers will be cared for when they are brought home.

The objective is ambitious, but not unrealistic. In the last two years, we have coalesced around this issue in unprecedented ways and have made important strides towards ending the use of child soldiers around the world. Countries that have long been among the most egregious violators are now showing a true will to reform. The Security Council and the international community must continue their support for such efforts without compromise or exception, and, just as important, we must provide the resources necessary to put in place and strengthen the programmes we need to truly rebuild these children’s lives.

It is impossible for us to comprehend the magnitude of a child soldier’s pain — how deep his wounds, how heavy her burden. How alone such children must feel when they return from the battlefield to a world they do not recognize. Unless we are there to meet them with open arms, open homes and open schools, their wars will never end, and neither will ours.

**The President:** I thank Mr. Whitaker for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Uwiringiyimana.

**Ms. Uwiringiyimana:** I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Sandra Uwiringiyimana. I am 20 years old, and I am from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My ancestors are from Rwanda; for many generations, my family lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where I was born. Still, many Congolese considered my people, the Banyamulenge, to be Rwandans because of the language we speak and the way we look.

We were born into war. These are some of my earliest memories. I remember seeing Congolese soldiers marching in the streets with the heads of the Banyamulenge on sticks. I remember spending nights in bushes, hiding from attacks. I got used to dropping out of school and fleeing every time a new war broke out. One day in 2004, my father showed up at school and said we had to leave immediately. We fled to Burundi. We were robbed and beaten before we could make it to the border. They took everything. We finally made it to a United Nations camp in Burundi called Gatumba, where we lived in a large tent with other families. I was about 10 years old.

We had been there for a few months when it happened. I remember it vividly. It is night time, and I am woken up by what sounds like popcorn popping. My mother is frantically telling me to wake up. I open my eyes and see fear in her face. Then I see my aunt next to her, blood running down her arm like a stream and gushing onto my leg. I start screaming, and my screams wake up my six-year-old sister. My mother tells us to be quiet and to find sheets to wrap around my aunt's arm. I try, but all I see is blood everywhere. My mother tells my older cousin to take my sister and me through a hole that has been ripped in the side of our tent. People are rushing to escape, but right after my cousin runs out, gunshots ring out. My mother pulls us back and shoves us under a thin mattress. We wait until it is quiet. Then we hear a voice saying, "Is there anyone there? We are here to help. Please come out." My mother shouts, "Are you really here to help?" They say they are the good guys. We come out and walk towards the door. My mother carries my two little cousins with my little sister on her back. My aunt is crawling.

Just then, I see two armed men in the doorway and something tells me there is danger. I start running in the other direction. Then the shooting starts. As I

look back, I see sparks going through my mother and everyone around her. I go back to my hiding place under the thin mattress. I shut my eyes and start to pray. Then I feel something hot drop on my leg. I open my eyes and the whole tent is on fire. Everything around me is melting. I throw off the mattress and start to run, but a man with a gun grabs me. He looks about 20 years old. I say, "Forgive me," and I do not know if I am speaking to him or to God. I lost my younger sister and many of my childhood friends that night. I am nothing. That is what he thought, this man who had just killed my family. He kicks me and releases his grip. To this day I will never know why he let me go. Then I am crying and running, as quick as I can. I stumble and fall, but I get up and keep running.

That is my story. I will tell it to anyone who will listen. Not because it is easy. Every time I tell it I am back in Gatumba, a 10-year-old burning in a tent. But as long as the criminal who admitted to leading that massacre continues to walk freely in the streets of Burundi, I have no choice. I must keep telling it until the international community proves that my words are worthy not only of empathy but also of accountability. Until leaders like those here and the countries they represent show me that my family and all others are not disposable. The only way to do that is by bringing people like Agathon Rwsa to justice. Only then will war criminals know that their crimes are wrong and will not go unpunished. Only then will millions of survivors like me hear loud and clear that our lives have value.

My life is very different now. In 2007, my family was resettled in the United States through a United Nations programme. I am studying at Houghton College. My older sisters and I have set up a foundation to help survivors like us, called Foundation of Hope. Resettlement is important. So is treatment for the horrors we have been through. The survivors' travelling exhibit that my brother and I photograph serves as a learning tool for many college communities, and, of course, as an aid to healing for myself and my family.

But healing and peace will not come until there is justice. Until there is justice, the comfortable new home and safe community I live in may as well be that tent in Gatumba. Until there is justice, the nightmares will never stop. The Security Council has the reports; it knows the criminals. Acknowledgement is not enough. It must take action.

**The President:** I would like to thank Sandra for a briefing that none of us will forget.

Before we proceed to statements, I would like to point out that we intend to continue the practice started last month during the United Kingdom presidency of using the flashing light on the collar of the speaker's microphone to signal when five minutes have elapsed. I strongly encourage both members and non-members of the Council to conclude their remarks as soon as possible after that light starts flashing. We will carry on this open debate right through lunch, as we have a very large number of speakers, again testifying to the interest and concern of all States Members of the United Nations.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

**Mr. Asselborn** (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you warmly, Madam, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict during your presidency of the Council.

I have to say that it is very difficult to speak after Sandra Uwiringiyimana's speech, a speech not only about atrocities but also about the hope that is possible when such children receive our help. I would also like to thank Ms. Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Ms. Brandt, the Deputy Executive Director General of UNICEF; and Mr. Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for their enlightening presentations. I would also like to take this occasion to thank Mr. Forest Whitaker, Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation of UNESCO, for his commitment to the cause of children affected by armed conflict and for his truly moving statement.

Six months ago almost to the day, we unanimously adopted a tenth resolution on children and armed conflict (resolution 2143 (2014)) during an open debate (see S/PV.7129) that I had the honour to preside over. However, despite the successive resolutions adopted by the Council and the progress they represent for the protection of children, children continue to pay a very heavy price in conflicts.

From Syria to the Central African Republic, from South Sudan to Afghanistan and from Gaza to Iraq, children are killed, maimed or, depending on the situation, abducted, sexually abused or recruited, both by Government forces and non-State actors. Schools and pupils continue to be the targets of deliberate attacks. School infrastructure is regularly looted or diverted from its primary purpose to be used for military purposes. Such acts deprive children, and the

communities whose future and hope they represent, of a fundamental right: the right to education. The ignorance that results from a lack of education fosters intolerance and perpetuates the cycle of poverty, thus feeding the violence. I hope the Security Council will continue to give this issue the attention it requires in the spirit of resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014).

The persistence of violations and abuses committed against children in conflict situations is a stark reminder that the progress we make should be measured not only by the improvements we bring to our normative framework — however important they may be — but also by how the Council implements its decisions in specific contexts. Whether in country-specific resolutions, peacekeeping operations' mandates, sanctions regimes or the conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Council must be consistent and concretely apply what it has committed to in its thematic resolutions. The Council's credibility is at stake here.

That is true also for the fight against impunity. Those who commit atrocities against children must be held accountable for their actions. In that respect, the Council must act in accordance with its prerogatives, including its ability to make referrals to the International Criminal Court.

As I have just stated, wherever conflicts rage, children in particular are affected. A conflict of untold violence has been decimating Syria for three and a half years now. Far from diminishing, the fighting continues unabated. The month of July 2014 has been the most deadly for the civilian population since the beginning of the conflict. Among the victims, there are now well over 10,000 children. Thousands more have been maimed and will remain scarred for life, physically and psychologically. Countless innocent children have lost their lives due to indiscriminate attacks on populated areas and indiscriminate bombardments by barrel bombs, the sole objective of which is to sow terror and despair among the civilian population. Others have fallen victim to deliberate attacks against their schools: 240 children have been killed or wounded in such attacks between April and June 2014 alone. That does not even include the children denied access to humanitarian aid and those detained and tortured by Government forces or even forced to fight in pro-Government armed groups, armed opposition groups and terrorist groups, first and foremost among which is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).



Reports of abuses committed against children by ISIL in territories under its control, whether in Syria or Iraq, are increasing. Recruitment, murder, rape, abductions and attacks against schools are common. As the Special Representative, Ms. Zerrougui, has just recalled in her statement, more than 500 children have been killed in Iraq since the beginning of the year. Close to 500 have also been killed during the most recent cycle of violence in the Gaza Strip during the summer. Leaving political considerations aside, one can only be outraged when the number of children killed during a military operation is as high as the number of combatants killed. It is simply beyond comprehension.

I could go on and list many other conflict situations and give many more examples of grave violations against children, such as the abuses committed by Boko Haram, which has rightfully been added to the list of shame. But I would like to conclude on a more optimistic note. Indeed, despite the reasons for concern — which, it is true, are many — the commitment of the international community as a whole has enabled progress to be made, which constitutes a real glimmer of hope, as Mr. Whitaker has just reminded us.

Thanks to the tireless awareness-raising efforts of the Special Representative, Governments continue to undertake commitments, in particular to end the recruitment and use of children in conflict. In Yemen, an action plan was signed by the Government on 14 May, thereby bringing to seven the number of Governments committed to ending the recruitment of children. That is an additional encouraging sign for the success of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign launched by the Special Representative and UNICEF. It comes on the heels of Chad's removal from the list contained in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339), following its Government's implementation of the action plan it had signed. Allow me to commend here the determined efforts of the Chadian authorities to that end.

In Myanmar, which the Council's Working Group visited last year, the armed forces have continued with the process of demobilization of children from their ranks, in line with their commitments. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the President has appointed his first Special Adviser for the fight against sexual violence and the recruitment of children. The regional organizations are also active and are mobilizing to improve the protection of children, as illustrated by the creation of a post of Special Envoy of the African Union for children in Africa.

In the introduction to her study on the impact of armed conflict on children, Graça Machel underlined that children are

“both our reason to struggle to eliminate the worst aspects of warfare, and our best hope for succeeding at it.”

That blend of idealism and pragmatism best characterizes the children and armed conflict agenda. I hope that the Council will be able to pursue its noble task of eliminating the worst aspects of conflicts and find practical solutions to end the violations and abuses committed against children.

**Mr. Bante** (Chad) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank you, Madam President, and to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the representative of Luxembourg. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation of UNESCO for their statements.

I take this opportunity to commend the efforts by the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and thank the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for their ongoing work to protect children.

We note with concern that armed conflicts continue to exacerbate the situation of children, which, as stated in the Secretary-General's report for 2013 (S/2014/339), has become more alarming. Indeed, the report gives an overview of the trends and new developments, in particular the explosion in the number of killings of children and physical attacks against them in several countries, in particular Afghanistan and Iraq, and serious and systemic attacks against them, such as in Syria, Gaza or Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2013, the recruitment of children by the parties to the conflict in Central African Republic became a common occurrence, and they are being used on a large scale and serious violations are being committed against them in South Sudan. The recent kidnappings of children in Nigeria are a new source of concern.

In this brief period, we have noted over 4,000 new cases of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in the countries under review. In a number of countries, children are the targets of serious abuse, including sexual violence, whose perpetrators very often remain unpunished, despite the legal provisions

of countries and international humanitarian law. Cases of hospitals and schools being bombed or used for military purposes are frequent in the majority of countries covered by the report. Furthermore, schools are increasingly among the primary targets of a number of armed groups, as is the case in Mali, Yemen, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Thailand. The intensification of conflicts and emergence of new conflicts in a number of places explains the increase in the number of abuses against children. All of that requires that new measures be taken and that consideration be given to the United Nations approaches and strategies to adapt them to the new contexts.

We note that progress was achieved in 2013 by a number of parties to conflict. While insufficient, that progress should be welcomed, especially when it concerns armed groups, which have a greater tendency to commit crimes against children. In that regard, we pay tribute to the active involvement of the United Nations, including that of the Secretary-General, with the support of the Security Council, through various decisions and initiatives. We would also like to commend the efforts undertaken by the various actors within the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and we encourage them and assure them of our continued support.

We should not lose sight of the fact that impunity is one of the main causes of the increase in violence against children. The report of the Secretary-General contains a number of recommendations for the strengthening of the protection of children. We support those recommendations and encourage the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, together with all players working for the protection of children, including the United Nations agencies and regional and subregional organizations. We support the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts and the Secretary-General for his initiatives to encourage dialogue with armed groups and we urge him to continue to work closely with regional and subregional organizations in those fields.

To substantially improve the situation of children, we believe that special focus should be placed on a cohesive policy for preventing those types of violations. Other measures could also be considered, including the strengthening by States of their criminal legislation to ensure that no grave violations are committed against children and to guarantee that individuals who have been recognized as guilty of such acts are punished.

New measures and strategies to protect schools, teachers and hospitals, which have recently been the primary target of certain armed groups, are worthy of special attention. Broad adherence by States to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol could yield improvements in this situation.

With respect to schools targeted by attacks based on cultural and identity grounds, new measures and strategies within the framework of the United Nations protection strategy need to be initiated and implemented. The Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which was launched in March, is aimed at putting an end to and preventing the recruitment and use of children in the national security forces of those countries by 2016. The campaign's objectives were approved this year in resolution 2143 (2014) and require the continued support of the Security Council and the commitment of the international community.

The important role being played by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Security Council's technical body, should be emphasized. We believe that the Group can continue to work with the different actors active in the field, as has taken place under the chairmanship of Ambassador Sylvie Lucas. In that way, it could further participate in the process of protecting children, given the new situations arising throughout the world, which require appropriate or urgent solutions.

In conclusion, we would again like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, as well as the UNICEF Office and our bilateral partners for their multiform support, which has enabled Chad to fulfil its action plan in less than two years and to ensure that it is no longer listed in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General covering the period from January to December 2013. We wish to underscore that the political will of the country's authorities has played a fundamental role in that process. Chad remains ready to share its experience, in particular at the regional and subregional levels, to strengthen the protection of children in armed conflicts.

**Sir Mark Lyall Grant** (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam President, for your kind words on the United Kingdom's presidency of the Security Council in August, and I wish you well for your stewardship of the Council in September. Thank you also for convening today's debate on children and armed conflict.

I want to recognize the presence of Foreign Minister Asselborn today. We commend Luxembourg's strong leadership and unwavering commitment to this issue during its time on the Council, including through the chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Let me also warmly thank all today's briefers for their inspiring and moving statements.

We have seen some progress on this dossier. This is largely a result of the dedication and active engagement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, as a tireless champion for children affected by conflict. Most recently, in May the Government of South Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition committed to ending grave violations against children and the Government of Yemen signed an action plan to end the recruitment and use of children. We also welcome the Special Representative's news that the Free Syrian Army has committed to ending the recruitment and use of children. Moreover, Ms. Zerrougui has driven the implementation of commitments through her effective advocacy, field visits and, in particular, by launching the Children, Not Soldiers campaign with UNICEF in March, aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016.

As others have noted, the completion of Chad's action plan has led to its delisting from the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339). We urge Chad to continue building on that success and to share its experience with other Governments. We also call on all parties — State and non-State — that have not yet concluded action plans to do so as a matter of priority, and we call on those that have signed, to honour their commitments in full.

Although the progress is welcome, the report of the Secretary-General and the moving evidence we have heard today from the five briefers highlight the horrifying scale of violations still being committed against children in new and intensifying crises across the world today. Given time constraints, I shall mention just two.

In Syria and the region, 5.5 million children are in need of education and more than half of them are out of school. We are facing a lost generation of Syrian children traumatized, displaced and without education. Their lives have been disrupted and their future potential wasted with the obvious future risk of alienation and radicalization. That is why the United

Kingdom is supporting UNICEF and others in Syria and the region to deliver the No Lost Generation initiative. That aims to increase support to education, to psychosocial programmes and protection for the children of Syria and to partners who are establishing child-friendly spaces for Syrian children to safely play and study.

The past year has seen an increasing trend of attacks against the military use of schools, as well as abductions and the detention of children. In Nigeria, today marks the 148th day since over 200 schoolgirls were abducted in Chibok. There were 57 who escaped, but 219 are still missing and none has so far been rescued. Those attacks are not only barbaric abuses of human rights. They deprive children of their right to education; they put an end to their innocence as they become hostages and instruments of conflict. Communities and families are torn apart by fear, trauma and loss.

As Sandra Uwiringiyimana so movingly pleaded, we must do more to fight against impunity for crimes committed against children. The International Criminal Court has an important contribution to make. When the Council visited the Hague last month, we called on the Court to hold perpetrators to account for all such egregious violations of international law. We urge the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to consider ways to increase pressure on persistent perpetrators of human rights violations and to put an end to impunity. We owe that, at least, to victims like Sandra and her family.

This debate is a reminder that children continue not only to be affected by conflict, but, much worse, are often specifically targeted, coerced and exploited during conflict. The United Kingdom remains committed to working to prevent these abhorrent violations, to ensure the implementation of action plans, and to tackle those who persist in committing violations against children. To provide the world's children with a safer future, we must spare no effort.

**Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria):** It has been established that, in conflict situations across the world, non-combatants, especially children, are often at the greatest risk. They risk being abducted, they risk being maimed, and they risk being killed. They are indoctrinated and recruited as child combatants. Their rights — notably, their right to education — are brazenly violated. The Council's debate today demonstrates remarkable leadership in drawing attention to and taking action on the children and armed conflict agenda. I want to thank all the

briefers for sharing their profound insights on the subject, and especially acknowledge the presence and participation of Foreign Minister Asselborn at this debate.

My delegation welcomes this opportunity to share its perspectives on children and armed conflict as they concern the activities of the infamous terrorist group Boko Haram, which has now been included as a party on the Secretary-General's list. Our nation has been particularly traumatized by the deplorable and inhuman acts of terror perpetrated by Boko Haram, particularly targeting schools. The Boko Haram ideology, which inherently opposes Western education, propels it to attack schools and educational institutions.

The Nigerian Government and the Nigerian people have condemned these heinous acts in the strongest terms and are united in the determination to put a firm stop to them. We acknowledge with appreciation the support of the United Nations and the international community in our fight against Boko Haram. We believe that these global partnerships are critical to our campaign to confront the Boko Haram insurgency. The Government has no higher priority than routing and defeating Boko Haram and rescuing the almost 220 schoolgirls kidnapped from Chibok. Our concern is not only to rescue the girls, but to bring them back alive and intact — all of them. We are extensively and effectively utilizing all resources at our disposal in this effort. Let there be no doubt that the Nigerian people have mustered the will and determination to succeed in this effort.

We recognize that a multi-track strategy represents the best chance of defeating Boko Haram. Accordingly, the Nigerian Government is implementing a comprehensive programme of assistance to support, protect and empower local communities, with a special focus on the most vulnerable parts of the country. The Safe Schools Initiative is one aspect of the programme. It is aimed at strengthening the security of educational facilities in states under emergency rule in order to keep our schoolchildren safe. Measures that are being taken under the Initiative include the construction of perimeter fences around schools and housing for teachers, improved community policing, the employment of school guards, and the installation of alarm systems and modern communication equipment. The federal Government is also working with state Governments, community leaders, teachers and parents to identify and remedy the vulnerabilities that put our children at risk.

The Safe Schools Initiative is a collective effort. The Government's spending has been matched by the private sector, and now totals over \$20 million. Our goal is to create a fund of \$100 million to support this programme, and we have already received pledges of support not only from the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, but also from the World Bank, the African Development Bank and other development partners.

Strident steps have been taken by the Government to address the salient dimensions of the socioeconomic factors that feed the insurgency. A community services programme has been instituted, and has already recruited 11,500 young people to participate in community development projects. Similarly, the Government is developing a comprehensive economic empowerment plan for the region under a presidential initiative for north-eastern Nigeria. This initiative is aimed at helping the region to productively harness its abundant resources. It is being pursued in partnership with state and local Governments in the north-east of Nigeria.

It is common knowledge that hatred is conceived in the minds of men, and ultimately hatched in terror and conflict. Our collective responsibility is to reverse this mindset for good and for peace. The Nigerian soft approach to countering violent extremism is premised on four streams, one of which is deradicalization. The deradicalization programme aims to integrate extremists and their families back into society through a number of activities, including prison interventions and vocational training.

Changing behaviour patterns is at the core of the deradicalization strategy. This stream seeks to understand the process of radicalization that Boko Haram adherents undertake, and to engage them mentally, psychologically and spiritually in a series of activities that are designed to transform the way that they think and the way that they behave. It is envisaged that, through this process, radicals will begin to realize that certain forms of behaviour are incompatible not only with their faith, but also with the society to which they belong.

The Nigerian Government and people remain unwavering in their determination to work tirelessly, in collaboration with all domestic stakeholders, our friends and partners, and the United Nations, the African Union, relevant multilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations to promote and to protect all aspects of



the well-being of children affected by this insurgency in the north-eastern part of our country.

**Mr. Quinlan** (Australia): I thank Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, UNICEF and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations for their indispensable efforts. I also thank Forest Whitaker, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation. We are all in debt to his commitment and empathy. We welcome, as always, the presence of Foreign Minister Asselborn. Luxembourg's leadership of the Working Group on what is — but should never be — a politically challenging issue has been exemplary. I also thank Sandra Uwiringiyimana. We are so fortunate that that young soldier let her go. The Council needs to hear such direct testimony, and we hope that others with Sandra's courage will continue to help keep the Council focused on why what we try to do here can mean so much to so many and why the cost of her own failures, whenever they occur, can be so high.

You have asked us to be brief, Madam President, so I will not repeated the details of the situation that has been outlined to us this morning. We all know that the situation of children in conflict throughout the world is dire and that children continue to suffer each of the six grave violations. There has been some progress, as people have noted, including the delisting of Chadian forces, the Somali Government's recommitment to making its army child-free, Yemen's action plan issued in May, Afghanistan's endorsement, finally, of a road map to implement its action plan, the recent commitment of the Free Syrian Army to end child recruitment and, in Australia's own region, Myanmar's continuing release of many child soldiers. Despite that progress, important though it is, much more must still be done, as has been indicated. I shall briefly highlight three key concerns.

First, the Children, Not Soldiers campaign will be instrumental. But we must also maintain our efforts to end recruitment and other grave violations by non-State actors, who make up the vast majority of listed parties. For example, we have seen good progress in the Philippines over recent months in the implementation of the action plan between the United Nations and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front — the only action plan currently in place with a non-State actor. My own country will continue to support UNICEF's efforts to help the Front implement the plan.

Secondly, we need to do more to protect schools, teachers and students during conflict. Attacks on

schools and their military use are depriving children of their basic right to schooling and endangering the lives and safety of students and teachers. Military forces and non-State armed groups have turned schools into barracks, detention facilities, torture centres and firing positions — not play grounds but battle grounds, as has been noted. Schools are also being used as shelters. An estimated half of the schools in the Kurdistan region of Iraq are being used to house displaced populations. We must ensure, urgently, that schools remain safe places for students and their teachers, before generations of children lose access to an education.

Finally, there is much more that we can do to end impunity for those responsible for violations against children during armed conflict. We strongly support the active efforts of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to end impunity through the investigation and prosecution of violations against children, which include the recent confirmation of charges against Congolese ex-militia leader Bosco Ntaganda for enlisting and conscripting children. The ICC's prominent focus on crimes committed against children will be important in deterring violations in future conflicts and situations of armed violence.

We also support efforts to address perpetrators of violations against children through targeted Security Council sanctions. Resolution 2134 (2014) establishes targeted sanctions and designates those in the Central African Republic responsible for recruiting or using children in armed conflict and those who attack schools and hospitals. That demonstrates the role that sanctions can play in denying perpetrators the means to continue violating child rights during conflict and sends a strong message that they will be held to account. We encourage Ms. Zerrougi to continue to brief the relevant Sanctions Committees to strengthen the effectiveness of those measures.

In conclusion, as we know only too well, the intensity of the conflicts that the world faces is currently dangerously increasing, as is the level of violence deliberately targeting civilians. As Ms. Zerrougi has just reminded us,

“in a large majority of conflicts throughout the world, children are targeted and used deliberately. Conflict confronts them in their homes, at school, in hospitals and when they seek to run away.”

Protection for those children is an intrinsic element of the Council's work. We have the tools, the mechanisms

and the legal framework. But, demonstrably, we have to do much more to ensure that they are put to better use. Again, as Ms. Zerrougi concluded, the child victims around the world count on us.

**Ms. Murmokaitė** (Lithuania): I wish to thank the United States presidency of the Security Council for holding this debate. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her tireless dedication in carrying out her work. I also thank all the other briefers for their valuable contributions.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union.

We must maintain focus on this issue because, for all the progress achieved on the legislative side, crimes continue to be committed against children in armed conflicts in different parts of the world, both by Government and non-Government forces.

Due to the widespread availability and proliferation of modern light weapons, children not even 10 years of age are forced to kill. In that respect, we cannot stress enough the importance of implementing resolution 2117 (2013), on small arms, including placing greater focus on how to help States to tighten control over arms.

As others have said, children are used to clear mines, manufacture and plant improvised explosive devices and sent to carry out suicide attacks. Forced displacement, sexual slavery, abductions and recruitment and the resulting enormous physical and psychological trauma shape the brutal reality for countless children in conflict zones.

Girls are particularly vulnerable, as they may be kidnapped into sexual slavery or forced to become child brides. Crimes against girls often go unreported, either because they are missed at the point of identification and release or because assistance programmes are actively avoided. Many of those girls will never benefit from rehabilitation and reintegration assistance. For that reason, we stress that special efforts are needed to take into account and meet the special needs of girls.

Child recruitment remains a particular and constant concern. Out of the 59 parties listed for grave violations against children in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339) eight are Government security forces and 51 are armed groups. We note the steps taken by the relevant Governments to address the

problem, and we strongly encourage all of them to live up to their commitments and seek tangible progress in implementing national action plans, so as to achieve the goals set out in the joint campaign Children, Not Soldiers.

While we welcome the recent delisting of Chad, the signing by Yemen of an action plan and the reconfirmation of commitment to end child recruitment by Afghanistan and South Sudan, we also urge the Sudan, the only remaining country among the eight listed, to sign without further delay an action plan aimed at stopping the recruitment of children.

Actions by various armed groups and non-State actors are of particular concern to my delegation. As others have mentioned, last April Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from a school in north-eastern Nigeria, following the destruction of a school in Borno in February, where nearly 60 children were killed or burned to death. In May the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria abducted more than 150 Kurdish boys returning from Aleppo after end-of-year exams. My delegation supports including the abduction of children as an additional trigger for the monitoring and reporting mechanism and in the name-and-shame listings contained in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General.

We must make sure that all the instruments at our disposal are well suited to tackle crimes against children and that they contain strong elements of dissuasion, deterrence, accountability and justice. Existing lessons learned, from the worst failures to the best practices, from the States concerned should serve as useful guidance. As Ms. Zerrougi has mentioned, the role of the relevant regional organizations should be further explored and utilized. All the tools available to the Council should be consistently employed, including the use of child recruitment and violence against children as sanctions-designation criteria, regular thematic briefings to the Council and the relevant Sanctions Committees by the Special Representative — as our Australian colleague suggested just a few minutes ago — and cooperation with the International Criminal Court and special tribunals, fact finding missions and commissions of inquiry.

Legal cases against perpetrators of child recruitment and violence against children are still too few and far between. We must redouble efforts to pursue justice and end impunity for crimes committed against children.

In that context, let me note my delegation's concern about the failure so far by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to adopt its conclusions on Syria, where more than 10,000 children have fallen victim to conflict-related killing, maiming, displacement and forced early marriage. Massive numbers of Syrian children are deprived of their right to education. We strongly urge all Council members to place the fate of Syrian children above all and to rally behind the relevant conclusions by the Working Group.

Earlier this year we adopted resolution 2143 (2014), with a key focus on the need to respect and protect schools from attacks and the use by armed forces or groups. The recent situation in Gaza reminded us once again of the huge gap between the letter of the resolution and its implementation.

It is deplorable that schools — the very places that should be safe havens for children — are subjected to attacks or are converted to military uses, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law. In fact, a recent study shows that since 2009 schools and universities have been used for military purposes in more than 30 countries: as barracks, detention centres, fighting positions, weapon-storage centres and so forth. Timely and accurate monitoring and reporting is crucial for responding to such attacks and for holding the perpetrators to account.

Lithuania strongly condemns any and all attacks on schools and reminds all parties to conflict of their obligation under international humanitarian law to respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in attack. We call on all States and non-State actors to abide by the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

In conclusion, let me convey my delegation's appreciation for the dedicated work carried out by Luxembourg, Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Let me assure our Luxembourgish colleagues and Special Representative Zerrougui of our full support and cooperation as they continue their vital work for the sake of thousands of conflict-affected children.

**Mrs. Kawar** (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank you, Madam President, for organizing this important meeting. I would also like to thank Ms. Lelia Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict,

for the work she continues to do on behalf of children in armed conflict. I would also like to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous and Ms. Yoka Brandt. I welcome Mr. Forest Whitaker. I had the pleasure of getting to know him two years ago when I was at UNESCO. I would also like to thank Sandra Uwiringiyimana for her moving statement, which reminds us of the importance of what we are doing here in New York. And I would like to welcome the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg and to express our appreciation for the role of Luxembourg and Ambassador Sylvie Lucas in placing the subject of children and armed conflict on the Council's agenda for debate.

We would like to align ourselves with the statements to be made on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the Human Security Network.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) notes numerous violations of the rights of the child in areas of armed conflict. Allow me to complete the picture on the situation in the Middle East.

Jordan is surrounded by countries in which children are mistreated. Over the past four years, the international community has seen Syrian children being killed, tortured, displaced, starved and captured by armed groups, and we have done nothing. The Security Council has not yet sent a strong enough message to the perpetrators of such crimes against humanity to ensure that they are held responsible and punished for their acts. In May, the situation should have been referred, pursuant to resolution 2143 (2014), to the International Criminal Court. That did not happen, which had the effect of encouraging those violations to spill over into Jordan. We believe that the Syrian crisis can be resolved only through a political solution that reflects the hopes of the Syrian people. Only through a peaceful settlement will we be able to bring the violence against civilians and children to an end. A political transition must be put in place. That is our view of the Syrian crisis.

With respect to the situation in Iraq, there has been continuing deterioration. Children continue to pay the steepest price for the war and the conflicts that have been raging there for years. The suffering of children has worsened owing to the practices of terrorist groups, among them the Islamic State. In that regard, Jordan calls on all sectors of Iraqi society to come together to denounce the marginalization of any group and create an inclusive Iraqi Government that responds to the needs of the Iraqi people. That would undermine the

influence of armed groups in the country and would enable the return of peace and stability to a country whose people deserve to enjoy the fruits of their abundant resources.

Concerning Palestine, for how much longer will Palestinian children be used as targets? Should Palestinian children be subjected to murder, attack and arbitrary detention? How much longer will we remain silent in the face of such suffering? Our silence must end. Otherwise, it will come as no surprise if those children turn out one day to be extremists. I wish in no way to justify extremism of any form, but it is the consequence of tyranny, violence, murder, oppression and the humiliation experienced by Palestinian children. Israel's latest war against Gaza was the most brutal violation committed against the Palestinian people and their children — an act of aggression that took the lives of 491 child victims, with an additional 3,000 wounded and thousands displaced. The 280,000 civilians who took refuge in schools, 95,000 of them in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, need psychological support. Unexploded ordnance in the areas of conflict pose a grave danger to children, as well as a violation of international law. All of that undermines the human rights of all Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, especially children.

The Secretary-General's report makes frequent mention of armed Islamist groups. I would like to point out that such groups have nothing to do with Islam. They have hijacked Islam and have killed, tortured, decapitated and attacked innocent people to sell oil — all in the name of Islam — but they have distorted that religion, which is one of tolerance.

In conclusion, our meeting reflects the political will of the Member States of the Security Council to protect children in situations of armed conflict. We stand ready to support the efforts of all countries and organizations that share that aim.

**Mr. Delattre** (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this debate. I also thank you for your kind words of welcome. It is an immense honour to represent France in this body and to begin with a debate on such a crucial subject. I would also like to thank the other speakers for their analysis and their poignant, moving testimony, I take this opportunity to congratulate Luxembourg once again for its outstanding work on children in armed conflict. The presence here today of Foreign Minister

Asselborn is further proof of his country's commitment to that cause.

Our efforts on behalf of children in areas of armed conflict have not flagged. The United Nations mechanism has already produced concrete results. Since its implementation, it has enabled tens of thousands of child soldiers to be demobilized each year. The Children, Not Soldiers campaign allows us to glimpse, a few years down the road, the possibility of a world in which no national army will be recruiting children.

The core of the mechanism is its action plans. This year, thanks to the implementation of one such plan, the national army of Chad was removed from the list for child recruitment. All told, the 20 or so action plans signed in agreement with Governments or armed groups represent a certain degree of progress in the efforts to protect children in conflicts. Those action plans should be implemented with all possible speed to insure the credibility of our actions. With that in mind, the United Nations should deploy all its available material and human resources.

The credibility of our efforts to liberate child soldiers also depends on our collective example. That is why France supports clarification of the rules governing participation in peacekeeping operations by national armies on the list for child recruitment. Moreover, the Secretary-General's human-rights screening policy and his zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and sexual violence must be fully implemented. Of course, the limitation on contact with individuals wanted by the International Criminal Court must be rigorously applied at all levels.

In too many armed conflicts, children are the first victims. In Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State has proven guilty of the worst types of attacks on children. That terrorist organization recruits children by the hundreds and trains them in training camps. The steps taken by the international community to put an end to the actions of that group should be continued and bolstered. It is for that reason that France will soon organize an international conference on security in Iraq.

In Syria, for more than three years now, the regime and its militias have not spared children. More than 10,000 children have been killed — a number that is probably well below what it really is. Schools are relentlessly bombarded; 3,000 of them have been destroyed. That denies an entire generation its right to education.



We commend the commitment of the coalition and the Supreme Military Council of the Free Syrian Army to prevent and put an end to the recruitment of children. We encourage Ms. Zerrougui to continue dialogue with a view towards the signing of an action plan.

In the Central African Republic, children are also victims of armed groups. Ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka still have among their ranks more than 6,000 children. The deployment of United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, as of 15 September, will allow for a more effective fight against those groups and their attacks on civilians. The operation has a strong mandate for the protection of children, and it must act quickly to implement it.

In its fight for the protection of children, the International Criminal Court (ICC) plays an important and essential role. The sentencing in 2012 of Thomas Lubanga and the transfer to the ICC last year of Mr. Bosco Ntaganda served to send a clear and strong signal as to the criminal consequences of child recruitment, which is considered to be a war crime. We are in favour of strengthening dialogue with the Court. Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda spoke before the Working Group, and we could now invite her to speak before the Council on this issue.

I should conclude by renewing our call upon all States to endorse the Paris Principles and commitments, which are complementary to the actions of the Security Council. They provide a robust framework for the international community in its efforts to protect children in armed conflict. France will be firmly committed to that fight. It is part of our moral and political responsibility to do so. It is at the centre of the universal conscience that we share in the United Nations.

**Mr. Zagaynov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the United States delegation for its initiative to convene today's meeting. We also would like to thank all the invited briefers for their assessment of the situation on the protection of children in armed conflict and their commitment to that objective. We would like especially to express our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Zerrougui, for her untiring work for the well-being of children in situations of armed conflict.

Crimes against children and their suffering in conflict situations always especially shock and shake

us. Equal attention must be paid to all six categories of grave violations against children in armed conflicts, namely, the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence, killing and maiming, kidnapping, attacks on schools and hospitals, and a refusal by parties to conflict to afford access by humanitarian organizations to children. It is just such a comprehensive approach that is enshrined in resolution 1612 (2005) and the successive Security Council documents on the issue.

In that way, the parameters for the functioning of monitoring and accountability mechanisms have been determined, as well as the actions of the thematic Security Council Working Group. Their work must focus on situations of armed conflict on the Security Council agenda, as such situations are most urgent in their scale and nature. Clearly, children require assistance, and not only in times of conflict. Their protection can be most effectively upheld by the international community if it abides strictly by the existing mechanisms for the division of labour within the United Nations system through the consistent and targeted work of each of its entities in its own field.

In her briefing, Ms. Zerrougui in detail noted the suffering of children in various parts of the world that have been engulfed in conflict. We are extremely concerned about the situation of children in yet another region, namely, south-eastern Ukraine. Children there find themselves in a pressing, dire humanitarian situation as a result of large-scale military actions launched by the country's authorities in that region — including aerial artillery strikes on residential houses and other civilian facilities. The call to put an end to the blood-letting has gone unheeded by Kyiv for much too long now.

According to data from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), beginning in mid-April, at the very least 23 children have been killed and 38 injured in the country as a result of the destruction of 200 schools and the absence of basic security. The school year in Donetsk and Luhansk has in effect been disrupted. Extreme pressure has been predicted on the educational system of other regions. A great many educational establishments and accommodations have been allocated to internally displaced persons. No less than 20 hospitals in Donbass are no longer functioning. Another 17 have been destroyed or seriously damaged.

A serious lack of physicians and medical personnel is being felt. Especially alarming is the fate of children

who require immediate medical assistance — injured children, insulin-dependent children, children who suffer from cancer and other serious illnesses, as well as disabled children — in the combat zone in south-eastern Ukraine. According to various sources, over 1,000 children have been orphaned. Unfortunately, although Russia's human rights defenders have stated the Russian side's readiness to rapidly welcome those sick children from Donetsk and Luhansk for treatment, children requiring special medical assistance have not received any response from Kyiv. We hold on to the hope that, in the light of the recent agreements achieved, renewed outbreaks of military activity in those long-suffering regions will be avoided. However, the children there and the children who have left population centres that have been overtaken by conflict continue to cry out for heightened attention and care.

We have carefully considered the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) on children and armed conflict. We are concerned about the increase in the number of parties in conflict that allow serious crimes against children to occur — the annex to the report lists 59. Despite the fact that some have been on the list of violators for more than five years, there still is no effective approach on how to redress the situation. We believe that clear procedures and criteria are needed for the listing and delisting of parties to conflicts from the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report.

The work of that mechanism must be as objective and as transparent as possible. The Council provided the relevant instructions in resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2068 (2012). The parameters for selecting information to be used in the preparation of the report is of great importance. A balanced assessment on the basis of verified reliable data is a guarantee of the accuracy and appropriateness of recommendations made, as well as a guarantee of their practical implementation for the forging of mutually respectful dialogue with interested Governments.

**Mr. Oh Joon** (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea appreciates the initiative of the United States delegation in convening today's debate on this important topic. We also thank Special Representative Zerrougui, Under Secretary-General Ladsous, Deputy Executive Director Brandt, Special Envoy Whitaker and Sandra Uwiringiyimana for their participation and for sharing their experiences. We also welcome Foreign Minister Asselborn of Luxembourg.

As we speak in the Council today, millions of children are trapped in armed conflicts all over the world. Children in Syria are facing a dire situation where they are killed, injured and displaced. Equally horrible violations against children are taking place in many areas, including Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Palestine and South Sudan. With the changing character and tactics of armed conflicts, children are facing even more serious threats. The deliberate targeting of schools, the military use of schools and children being used to carry explosive devices are just some of the despicable examples. Given those situations, allow me to outline some areas where we could make greater efforts.

First, more concrete and time-bound action plans are necessary to protect children from the impacts of armed conflicts. Despite increasing international efforts to prohibit the recruitment of children as combatants, non-State groups still constitute the large majority of perpetrators. Different strategies of engagement, as well as the identification of specific incentives, are required based on lessons learned from previous cases.

Secondly, we need to offer greater support in addressing the special needs of girls in conflict situations. As demonstrated by the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria and elsewhere, girls are under constant threat of sexual violence and other forms of abuse in conflict situations. They are often deprived of education rights, raped and forced into marriage, which has a lasting, detrimental impacts on their physical and mental health. They are even rejected by their own communities because of their association with rebel groups, and are often bypassed in reintegration programmes.

Thirdly, to protect children from being used as combatants, it is critically important that armed groups be kept from acquiring arms and weapons. The illicit trade in small arms and weapons results in death, injuries and maiming of children in armed conflicts. The Arms Trade Treaty, adopted by the General Assembly in April 2013, is a significant instrument for arms control. It stipulates that exporting State parties shall take into account the risk of covered arms being used to commit acts of violence against children.

Lastly, we support vigorous measures to address persistent perpetrators, who continue to commit violations against children year after year, which

demonstrates the failure of justice. If we are serious about protecting children we should ensure accountability for those perpetrators. Ending impunity is vital not only for enhancing justice, but also for deterring potential perpetrators. National legislations and judicial systems should be empowered to protect and to prosecute such crimes. International tribunals and Security Council sanctions regimes should also play greater roles in that regard.

**Mr. Olgún Cigarroa** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the United States for convening this open debate and we thank Foreign Minister Asselborn of Luxembourg for his country's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Important recommendations have emerged from its work. We also thank the guest briefers and, in particular, we thank Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana, whose childhood marked by conflict should inspire us to continue working on this agenda.

My delegation associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Austria on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which my country is part.

Graça Machel once recalled that there were clear moral and overwhelming reasons to protect all children in armed conflict. The fact that children are so shamefully abused is an indication that we have barely begun to fulfil our obligations to protect them.

The changing nature of conflicts, indiscriminate attacks against civilian areas and the increase and persistence of the killing, maiming and detention of children; the recruitment and use of children; the sexual violence of which they are victims; attacks on the schools and hospitals; and the actions of extremist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, Jabhat Al-Nusra and Boko Haram call us to live up our responsibilities. The situations in the Gaza Strip, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic and South Sudan serve to highlight that such actions continue to be perpetrated.

We therefore support the initiatives of the Secretary-General and the recommendations set out in his annual report (S/2014/339). We underscore the work of his Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, UNICEF and other actors within the United Nations system, including the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. We also appreciate the efforts of civil society in this

realm, and we acknowledge the important support that Forest Whitaker continues to provide.

We welcome the fact that eight of the Governments listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report have signed action plans or have made a commitment to putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by their security forces. We hope that those commitments will be accompanied by benchmarks and deadlines for their rapid implementation and sustainable implementation.

We also acknowledge the progress achieved by nine non-State armed groups in the releasing of children and in the publication of commitments to protect, including the prohibition of recruitment. In addition, the Secretary-General recommends the adoption of binding concrete measures to prevent the use of schools by armed forces and non-State armed groups in violation of applicable international law. In that regard, we urge the implementation of the guidance note on resolution 1998 (2011) and resolution 2143 (2014) through strategies and plans of action to protect children and their teachers, including establishing measures for follow-up. Adequate training on child-protection issues for must also be provided for civilian peacekeeping personnel before deployment and during a mission.

States have the primary responsibility to end impunity and to prosecute and punish those responsible for egregious crimes perpetrated against children. Should States not have the ability or will to try those who are allegedly responsible, it should be up to the International Criminal Court to try those crimes set forth in the Rome Statute.

Our country is aware that for there to be justice, there must be a preservation of evidence. To that end, there must be capacity training for United Nations and peacekeeping personnel regarding the preservation of evidence in crimes committed against children.

Chile strongly condemns all acts of sexual violence committed against children and the perpetration of those practices that seek to use children as sex slaves. We would like to express the need for continued awareness-raising for all parties to conflicts to eradicate those unacceptable practices.

We appreciate the recommendations made by the Panels of Experts of the Sanctions Committees, as well as the informal briefings of the various committees that

include the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. As our country has been proposing, we hope that resolutions on new committees, or the renewal of mandates, can duly address the matter of children in armed conflict.

In conclusion, I think that nothing we do here today will allow us to forget the horror, abuse and death that Sandra has shared with us. However, we offer her full solidarity, and we hope that the work of the Council, as well as the work of the Secretary-General and the United Nations system, can mitigate, to some degree, the abuse that exists.

**Mrs. Perceval** (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the United States for having organized and convened this debate. At the same time, I should also like to express appreciation for the dedicated work and leadership of Ambassador Lucas in her time at the helm of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We should also especially like to thank Ms. Zerrougui, Mr. Whitaker and Ms. Uwiringiyimana for their briefings.

In August 15 years had passed since the adoption of resolution 1261 (1999). It was the first resolution addressing children in armed conflict, and, as with resolution 1612 (2005) and the recently adopted resolution 2143 (2014), Argentina supported these efforts in each of the three occasions as a member of the Council. My country firmly supports the work of the Security Council with the goal halting serious human rights violations of children in armed conflict. We demonstrated that commitment when we became one of the first States to ratify the 2002 Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Like the rest of the international community, Argentina is very aware of the devastating effects that armed conflicts have on children through indiscriminate attacks in civilian areas and direct attacks on civilians themselves — whether with explosive devices, aerial bombardments or the tactics of terror — which produce intolerable numbers of victims among children. We are all aware of the serious effects of the use of long-range explosive weapons in densely populated areas, of which the recent escalation of the violence between Israel and Palestine is a clear and tragic example. Schools, hospitals, mosques and protected civilian

sites, including United Nations facilities, have been damaged or completely destroyed. Entire families and hundreds and hundreds of children have been crushed beneath the rubble of buildings demolished by bombing of residential areas. Whether intended or not, collateral damage or not, such distinctions blur when bombs are capable of destroying whole buildings in densely populated areas, with results that can only mean the deaths of human beings. Argentina urges that the use of such weapons in such areas be banned and to ensure that their use is considered a war crime or a crime against humanity, and that those responsible be brought to justice.

The escalation of the crisis in Syria, with an intensification of hostilities that during the reporting period led to serious violations of children's human rights and a worsening humanitarian crisis, is another grave situation that requires the international community's urgent attention. We regret that the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has still been unable to act on the report's conclusions on Syria (S/2014/339), and we call for increased efforts here in the Security Council to reach the consensus needed to achieve that. We urge just as strongly that the Council listen to what Argentina has been saying since it became a member — as has the Secretary-General — which is that supplying arms to every party to the conflict must stop.

That is why it is not enough for us to be aware of what is happening; we must act if we are to bring about change. We want to change the disgusting behaviour of inflicting violence on children, whether in times of peace or war and armed conflict. We must fight to end impunity for those who commit serious crimes against children, particularly sexual crimes. The Secretary-General's report covers much of this and indicates that such crimes must be brought to justice. As we know, children in armed conflict are victims of sexual violence, in different ways. Sexual violence is used to torture, wound, extract information, humiliate and intimidate and as punishment for acts, real or imagined, by children or their families, in order to destroy the dignity of individuals, families, and communities. The rape of girls is used to inflict dishonour. Today, girls in some armed conflicts are raped on the basis of terrible beliefs. There are people who believe that raping a young girl can give protection from or provide a cure for HIV infection. We have seen how the loss of family members can result in an increase in early or forced or



early marriage, at the same time reinforcing the idea that this protects girls. Children are recruited by armed groups and by particular States' forces for particular purposes, whether military, for support or for sexual slavery.

We say, enough of this. We in the Security Council must fight impunity. We in the Council acknowledge the important efforts of Special Representative Zerrougui, of UNICEF and of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, in working to end the recruitment of children by security forces and Governments in situations of armed conflict, which must happen before the end of 2016. We welcome the eight Governments in the Secretary-General's report that have joined the campaign in order to declare that, ethically and politically, we must have children, not soldiers.

Lastly, we agree with the report's conclusion that we must pay attention to non-State actors and incorporate them into the plan for children and armed conflict. We must find new ways to hold a dialogue with armed groups. We welcome such efforts, as well as the growing number of statements by such groups on preventing the recruitment of children. We condemn the attacks on schools and hospitals. As everyone has done, we condemn the use of schools for military purposes. It is a violation of international law when educational institutions become targets, since it endangers children, teachers and staff and jeopardizes the future of all humankind. Argentina is committed to upholding the principles designed to protect schools and universities from being used for military purposes in armed conflicts.

Madam President, you know how much I respect you for your defence of human rights. For that reason, I call on you to help us in the Security Council. We need children, not soldiers. When the Council says, again and again, that we must address the underlying causes of conflicts, when it says over and over again that military solutions are not solutions, that the only true solutions are non-military, we cannot just say those words. We must believe them, live them and act on them. We must say no to weapons and violence.

I would also like to say to Sandra that we have previously heard the Pakistani girl Malala speak here. She told the Council that more violence and more weapons were not the answer. That was what she said. A child, a teacher, a book, a pencil — that can change the world. That is the peace that Argentina believes in.

**Mr. Liu Jieyi (China)** (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation welcomes the initiative of the United States in holding today's meeting. I would also like to thank Special Representative Zerrougui, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and the representatives of UNICEF and UNESCO for their briefings. China also listened carefully to the statement made by the victim of armed conflict.

Providing a safe environment for children to grow up in requires joint efforts on the part of national Governments and the international community. In recent years the international community has made tremendous strides in working to protect children and safeguard their basic rights, with positive results. However, in too many areas of conflict, children, as the most vulnerable group of all, are still the first to suffer the effects of war and conflict. China opposes and condemns violations of children's rights in armed conflict, and supports the initiatives in the United Nations and the Security Council aimed at protecting children in such conflicts. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, the key to protecting children in armed conflict is preventing and resolving such conflicts. Since it bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council should focus serious attention on preventing, curbing and resolving armed conflicts, thus eliminating the basic source of harm to children. Other United Nations agencies should leverage their own comparative advantages and work in synergy so as to provide comprehensive protection to children in armed conflict. We welcome the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, jointly launched by the Secretary-General and UNICEF, and are happy to see the positive results it has achieved. We hope that the countries concerned will take action in terms of formulating and implementing action plans so as to achieve the goal of completely eliminating the phenomenon of child soldiers.

Secondly, national Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of children. Therefore, the international community should provide space to national Governments to play a leading role, value and support their efforts and help them in their capacity-building. At the same time, it is important to mobilize donors to address the financing difficulties in implementing the programmes for the protection of children. The Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should strengthen its dialogue and

communication with the Governments concerned and be willing to listen to their views so as to win their trust and cooperation.

Thirdly, all parties to the conflict must cease their acts of violence against children, effectively respect relevant international law and obligations and protect and respect children's rights in accordance with the relevant Council resolutions. The international community and regional organizations, in their endeavour to protect children, must not overlook the acts of violence against children perpetrated by armed groups and non-State actors. In particular, the harm done to children and the attacks against schools carried out by extremist terrorists must receive the highest attention from the parties concerned, and efforts must be undertaken to resolutely fight that phenomenon.

Fourthly, protecting children in armed conflict requires that the international community adopt an integrated strategy and create enabling security and social environments for children. In their efforts to promote post-conflict reconstruction and design peacebuilding strategies, the international community should place priority on children's return to their families, society and school and help those children affected by conflict resume a normal life.

We encourage UNICEF and the World Bank to each play their respective role and work jointly to enhance the capacity of national Governments in protecting children. At the same time, it is important to support national Governments in their efforts to eliminate poverty, make education available to all and promote sustainable development.

Addressing the issue of children and armed conflict requires not only efforts by the Council, but also that United Nations agencies and regional organizations strengthen their coordination and cooperation and play an even greater role in preventing children from being sucked into conflict. China is ready to work with the parties concerned in order to comprehensively improve the situation of children in armed conflict and to ensure that children be spared the pain and suffering brought about by war and conflict.

**Mr. Nduhungirehe** (Rwanda): I thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate. I commend Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her tireless efforts in executing her mandate and for her insightful briefing today. I also thank Mr. Hervé

Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; and Mr. Forest Whitaker, Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation of UNESCO, for their respective briefings and remarks.

I pay special tribute to Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana for sharing her tragic story, which, unfortunately, has been the story of the Great Lakes region for the past 20 years. Ms. Uwiringiyimana's call for the international community to go beyond acknowledgment of the Gatumba massacre and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice deserves our undivided attention. As she requested, we must take action for the nightmares to stop. Indeed, the Gatumba massacre she survived 10 years ago and the mass atrocities committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and other armed forces and militias on the ground, mainly against the Rwandophone community, are consequences of the proliferation of the same genocidal ideology that nearly destroyed my country, Rwanda, 20 years ago.

The situation of children in armed conflict has a particular resonance for Rwandans. In 1994, children were killed and maimed for being born Tutsi. Others were recruited into the Interahamwe militias, for which they committed atrocities. That is not to mention the children who were victims of bombings, including of schools, hospitals and churches. Unfortunately, 20 years later, children continue to bear the brunt of increasing conflicts, as regularly reported by the Secretary-General in his reports on children and armed conflict. Violations and abuses against children have even taken a barbaric turn, as evidenced by the use of chemical weapons against children in Syria, the mass rapes of children and mothers in Minova, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the abduction and enslavement of young girls by Boko Haram, the Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organizations.

Children, like every human being, should have the right to life, but children should also have the right to childhood and education. They should not be recruited to kill or deprived of joy and innocence. Rather, they should be enrolled in schools to be educated, succeed and contribute to a better world. In that regard, Rwanda is concerned at the increasing targeting of schools and hospitals in armed conflicts and the utilization of those facilities for military purposes. We are also alarmed by the continued use of child soldiers by armed groups, including terrorist organizations.

More alarming, however, is the fact that a number of Government security forces remain on the list contained in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports for violations against children. We therefore reiterate our unreserved support to the United Nations global Children, Not Soldiers campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by the end of 2016. We endorse, in that respect, the call by the Secretary-General to all concerned States to continue with determined and tangible steps to finalize the development and implementation of related action plans.

We recognize the primary role of national Governments in protecting their citizens, including children. We are convinced that the responsibility to protect, as enshrined in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (General Assembly resolution 60/1) and as reaffirmed by resolution 2150 (2014), starts with our collective resolve to protect our children. It is important that the international community, in particular the United Nations, increase support to States for providing protection and relief to children affected by armed conflict. In that regard, the Rights Up Front initiative, the deployment of high-ranking child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and the inclusion of child rights and protection in training programmes for peacekeepers are all important initiatives that will enable us to live up to our responsibility to protect children.

The United Nations system, through the work of the Security Council and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, has demonstrated its continued commitment to advancing the protection of children agenda. Nevertheless, the plight of innocent children who remain victims demands that we reflect on why effective implementation remains a challenge. We therefore need to redouble our efforts and find ways to avoid children paying the heaviest price for the wars that adults choose to fight.

In that regard, the United Nations system must be consistent in its protection agenda and ensure that persistent perpetrators, such as the FDLR, which is a genocidal movement subject to United Nations sanctions and listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General reports on the subject since 2002, are not allowed to continue recruiting, killing and maiming civilians, particularly women and children, with virtual impunity. In the same vein, the United Nations

should ensure the strict implementation of a policy that prohibits the United Nations from collaborating with entities listed in those annexes, including the United Nations mandated missions, until the Secretary-General certifies the full implementation of their action plan to end and prevent violations against children.

While we strive to improve accountability for grave violations committed against children in conflict situations, attention should also be given to ensuring that resolute support and cooperation are provided to States in strengthening the rule of law. Therefore, the United Nations should build on existing frameworks and continue to cooperate with Governments and regional organizations in order to find sustainable solutions to the protection of children. In the same spirit, it is also imperative to tackle the structural causes that lead to conflicts and the recruitment of children by armed groups, while improving living conditions and providing alternatives for children, particularly through education.

To conclude, I wish to acknowledge the participation in this debate of Mr. Jean Asselborn, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg. I take this opportunity to commend his country, through Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, for its dedication to the cause of children and armed conflict, including through its effective leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005).

**The President:** I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui, Special Envoy Whitaker, Deputy Executive Director Brandt, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, Foreign Minister Asselborn and Sandra Uwiringiyimana for speaking with us today and for their tireless efforts on behalf of the world's children.

We have heard a lot of statistics measuring the massive scale of this problem. They include 3 million kids out of school in Syria and 9,000 children recruited to fight in South Sudan. Many of my colleagues have rightly spoken to the enduring big-picture problems we have to address, such as sexual violence and attacks on schools. Amid so many numbers and issues, it is easy to forget that we are talking about a lot of individual children — boys, girls and infants who suffer these deplorable injustices. As the last speaker among the Council members, I should like to tell three stories in

the hope of reminding us that, no matter how hard we are working to protect children, we have to work harder.

An 18-year old woman from Mosul, in northern Iraq, relayed in a whisper what happened after she was abducted by armed men from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The fighters took her to a village called Kocho, where they separated the men and boys over 12 from the women, girls and younger boys. This young woman, just 18, was forced to watch as the fighters massacred the men and older boys. Then her captors took her back to Mosul, where she said she was held with more than 300 Yazidi girls and women. They were locked up, two or three to a room. Every day, the routine was the same; they were told to shower, and then the men came to rape them. The young woman had managed to hide a cell phone before the fighters abducted her, and she called a family member from captivity to tell her story. That was on 20 August, just a few weeks ago. It is the last news we have of this young woman.

Matthew, aged 16, was in math class in January in Bentiu, South Sudan, when rebel fighters raided his school. Matthew is an ethnic Nuer, as are most inhabitants of his village. The armed men told Matthew, one of some 300 students there, that the students were being taken away to fight against the Government, led by the rival Dinka group. Matthew did not want to fight, but he was told that his family would be killed if he refused. He gave in, and was taken for military training. He learned how to march, find cover and shoot. One night when he was sent to gather firewood, he fled and eventually reached a United Nations camp, where he told his story to Al-Jazeera. He is afraid that fighters will catch him if he leaves the United Nations site. "If they find me, they will kill me", he says.

Abu Ibrahim lost his wife and four of his children when the Syrian regime struck his home in Ghouta with a barrel bomb in April 2013. His only surviving child — a 10-year-old boy — nearly died from shrapnel wounds in his leg, head and chest. For eight months, a desperate Abu Ibrahim carried his son from city to city in Syria seeking medical help. In January, he finally made it to Amman, where his son was treated. When I met Abu Ibrahim in a refugee camp in June, his son's physical wounds were healing, but the boy was still deeply traumatized. He had not been to school in over a year.

These are just three of the 23 places covered by the report on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339),

where children have been the victims of violence. There are many places — Pakistan, Palestine and Israel, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan and so many other countries. What is happening to the 18-year-old girl and other Yazidi captives in Iraq, to Matthew in South Sudan and to Abu Ibrahim's children is part of a disturbing pattern.

First, we are seeing the continuing rise of extremist groups that are openly hostile to children's rights, and particularly the rights of girls. Girls captured by groups like Boko Haram and ISIL are being sold into markets, given to fighters as so-called brides or kept as sex slaves. Secondly, as others have noted, we have a repeat offender problem. Thirty-one of the 59 armed groups listed in the report have been named in the report for the past five years and 11 of those persistent perpetrators have been named in every single report issued by the Secretary-General since the Office of the Special Representative began issuing reports in 2002.

We have to do better in protecting kids. One key step is condemning in a single, unified voice those abuses. Resolution 7129 (2014), which was adopted by the Council in March and condemns military use of schools, is one example. The only battles fought in schools should be battles over ideas. We also need to try to work with all groups — State and non-State — to set concrete, time-bound action plans to root out those practices. That can be especially challenging with non-State groups, but in 2013, nine non-State groups issued public statements or command orders prohibiting the use of child soldiers. Last month, the Free Syrian Army sent a letter to the Council announcing it had banned the use of child soldiers and pledging to punish child recruiters.

As the persistent perpetrator problem makes clear, global campaigns, action plans and trainings will not do it alone. As Sandra told us today so movingly, perpetrators have to be held accountable. Groups that fail to change their behaviour must be hit where it hurts. The United Nations can apply that pressure, of course. So can individual countries. In 2008, the United States passed the Child Soldier Prevention Act, which limits United States military assistance to Governments that recruit or use child soldiers.

Chad provides an example of how multilateral pressure can bring about real change. Last year, a chorus of actors pressed Chad to address its child soldier problem in the run-up to re-hatting its peacekeepers for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated



Stabilization Mission in Mali. Chad responded by setting up child-protection units in its military, conducting age verification reviews of its troops with the United Nations and signing a presidential decree making 18 the minimum recruitment age, among other steps. As a result, Chad was taken off the list of abusive parties in the Secretary-General's annual report. Now, that does not mean that our work is finished, but real progress has been made. Governments can change, and when they do, so do the lives of kids.

We were all so moved today by Sandra's story. She is a child, as she described it, born into war. She is a girl driven from her school and her home, who witnessed her relatives gunned down in cold blood in a refuge that they thought was safe. But the most defining part of Sandra's story is not the trembling, 10-year-old girl who said that what she feared was her last prayer at the barrel of a gun. The defining feature is the young woman who, with tremendous strength and determination, addressed the United Nations today. A young woman who spoke not of revenge, but of justice. A young woman who has already done so much to assist children recovering from experiences like hers and dedicated herself to changing the world so fewer children endure such horrors.

To see Sandra today is to see the potential of all the children out there whose destinies hang in the balance in today's conflicts. There are so many of them — Sandras held captive in Nigeria, Sandras suffering through humanitarian blockades in Syria and Sandras fleeing massacres in the Central African Republic. They are children who, like Sandra, have a world to change. We must do more to ensure that they can.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Masood Khan** (Pakistan): We thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict. We also appreciate the insightful briefings given today by various briefers, and commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui's determined efforts to protect the rights of the children trapped in conflicts.

The statistics on the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts are chilling. The United Nations has documented more than 4,000 cases in 2013. But the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) says that thousands more children are believed to have

been recruited and used. What is more, impunity for grave and consistent violations of children's rights is rampant. Children continue to be killed, maimed, abducted and subjected to sexual violence. Wars and conflicts leave deep psychotraumatic scars on their tender minds. Pakistan condemns the recruitment and use of children in conflicts. We call on all parties to the conflict — States and non-State armed groups — to stop forthwith violations of children's rights and prevent their recurrence.

In the past 15 years, because of the Council's resolute efforts and the Secretary-General's effective outreach, significant progress has been made in protecting children's rights. The theme of children and armed conflict has been mainstreamed into the Council's work so effectively that it is now cited as a good example of proficiency. Comprehensive norms and standards have been developed. The commendable work done by the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the regular monitoring, reporting, listing of the parties, and action plans have all helped. Thousands of children have been demobilized, rehabilitated and reintegrated into societies. And yet, the scourge continues.

Pakistan supports the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, launched by the Special Representative and UNICEF to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by 2016. Progress through that innovative campaign is assured because of its emphasis on priority activities, road maps, benchmarks, deadlines and a review, as well as the active participation of listed States. The donor community should step forward at this point to fill the funding gaps.

As you said in your remarks, Madam President, persistent perpetrators of violence against children must be identified and brought to justice through national judicial systems and, where applicable, through the use of international justice mechanisms. To that end, investigative and prosecutorial capacities should be strengthened at all levels.

We endorse the Secretary-General's key message. The ultimate goal is to ensure that no child is ever, anywhere associated with parties to conflict. In that context, we welcome the dialogue with non-State armed groups that has led to public statements and command orders to prohibit the recruitment and use of children. The United Nations advocacy strategy should include ways to convince the commanders and ideologues of armed groups not to indoctrinate children to participate

in conflicts. In the meantime, attacks on schools and hospitals should cease, and schools should never be allowed to be used for military purposes. That should also be made part of military planning and training. The protection of children should also be made an integral part of peace negotiations and agreements.

Peacekeeping missions have an important role to play in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. It is therefore essential that peacekeeping missions receive the necessary training and requisite resources to effectively perform that critical task. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries, Pakistan welcomes the recommendations on specific operational predeployment and in-mission training of peacekeeping troops.

Pakistan supports the mandate of the Special Representative, which is adequate to dealing with situations of armed conflict. We want to strengthen the political consensus around it, but the mandate does not need accretion. We firmly believe that the legal parameters of the mandate established by the resolutions 1261 (1999), 1612 (2005) and 1379 (2001) must be respected. Our singular focus should remain on child soldiers and the protection of children in armed conflict. In that context, we want to state for the record that the references to Pakistan in the Secretary-General's report of 15 May (S/2014/339) are not within the purview of the established mandate on children and armed conflict. We hope that this principle will be kept in mind when future reports are being prepared.

Finally, we call on the Council and the Working Group to pronounce themselves on the plight of the children of Gaza.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Çevik (Turkey):** I would like to thank the United States presidency for organizing this important debate, as well as the briefers for their insightful comments and remarks.

The developments in the legal and normative framework on children and armed conflict; the strong attention devoted to the issue in the Security Council, exemplified by the adoption of important resolutions, such as resolution 2143 (2014); and the increased momentum achieved by ground-breaking campaigns such as Children, Not Soldiers have led to significant developments on the ground.

Yet, significant challenges remain. The latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339) highlights the despicable ways in which the rights of children continue to be violated, as well as the severe effects that conflicts have on children. With the changing nature of conflicts; kidnappings, torture and sexual violence against children; attacks on schools and hospitals; limited access to even the most basic humanitarian needs; and wide-scale displacement have become the realities of war.

One heartbreaking example is the situation in Syria, which lies right across our border. According to UNICEF statistics, over 5 million children in Syria need essential humanitarian support, an estimated 3 million have been displaced, and over 1 million are out of school, while schools are destroyed, damaged or used for other purposes. Last month's report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry points to the grave crimes that continue to be committed against the children of Syria, such as their killing, maiming and injury, as well as their recruitment and use in hostilities. Nearby in Gaza, children are experiencing difficulties starting their new school year as educational facilities have been destroyed or damaged or are being used for shelter by the displaced. Last but not least, the Islamic State in Iraq and Sham for gruesome violations against children in Iraq and Syria.

A strong display of global political will and joint action is our most crucial tool. United Nations and other missions provide essential assistance to children, as well as monitoring and reporting functions that facilitate better planning, protection and response. They should be supported.

Another way forward is the integration of child protection provisions in negotiations and ceasefire and peace agreements. It is also essential to provide mediators in these situations with sufficient expertise on child protection. Mainstreaming principles related to children and armed conflict into peacekeeping mandates is another way forward.

Finally, the increased number and scope of conflicts heightens the importance of cooperation and coordination between United Nations, regional countries and organizations, troop-contributing countries and other relevant actors in crisis areas. Regional and subregional organizations in particular can contribute to the protection of civilians and child protection.

While focusing on new threats and challenges, we must not lose sight of the initial goal of mobilizing efforts to end the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. The Security Council must continue to apply pressure on persistent perpetrators, including through sanctions if necessary. Preventive measures, such as the establishment of legal frameworks and age-verification mechanisms, especially birth registration, are of particular importance. On the other hand, international organizations and non-governmental organizations should refrain from concluding any kind of documents, including deeds of commitment, with terrorist organizations, which can easily abuse this situation to legitimize their existence and acts.

In concluding my words, I would like to voice our strong readiness to extend our full support to international and regional efforts related to child protection and child soldiers. I would particularly like to commend the valuable efforts of the United Nations, and express our heartfelt gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and her hard-working team.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

**Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia):** I thank you very much, Sir, for convening this very important open debate. I also thank the Foreign Minister of Luxembourg and the group of friends of this cause.

*(spoke in Spanish)*

I wish to express my appreciation for the very moving words spoken by the briefers, including Mr. Whitaker, Sandra Uwiringiyimana and Ms. Brandt. I say that because we are experiencing a time of great upheaval owing to a state of conflict that impacts international peace, security and stability.

I would like to say that, having listened to Ms. Zerrougi this morning and having read the discouraging report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339), I have nothing but gratitude and admiration for her work. In the case of my country, Colombia, her efforts have provided genuine and effective support to face up to this problem.

Although the situation in Columbia is not on the Security Council's agenda, we have been mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General. It is clear that the internal conflict in Colombia has affected our citizens.

And, as the Special Representative has correctly pointed out, the conflict has impacted children through actions that Colombia's Government and society resolutely reject. Therefore, since August 2012, we have been working on a general agreement on an end to the conflict and the building of stable and lasting peace. In the course of conversations at the dialogue table in Havana, the Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia are discussing the fifth point of the agenda on victims, including special provisions in peace agreements with regard to children affected by the conflict, as Ms. Zerrougi pointed out in her briefing.

For us there are no victims more important than others. But we especially aim to avoid that women, which according to our constitutional court have suffered a disproportionate brunt, as well as boys, girls and adolescents in Colombia continue to suffer the severity of the conflict. On the contrary, we aim to ensure that the next generation can grow and flourish as individuals and citizens for the first time living in an atmosphere of peace. And we are not confining ourselves to political rhetoric. As we have said here in previous debates, the Government of President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón has succeeded in passing a law through Congress concerning victims and property resitution. That marks significant progress on the right track. The law was a historic milestone for Colombia, in that it set up a process for reparations — in fact, it began before the agreements were even signed. We are prepared to share with everyone the drawbacks, successes and difficulties as we learn from our experience on the ground.

In the period covered by the report of the Secretary-General, with a view to opening up space to educate populations at risk on issues relating to anti-personnel mines and preventing recruitment and sexual violence against children, we have put in place a genuinely innovative national system to provide care and comprehensive recovery. That mechanism allows for evaluating the victim-recovery process not just in the urban areas of our country, but also in rural parts of Colombia — which is more difficult — where we daily continue to face the confrontation.

The relationship that Colombia has established with the United Nations system in the course of many years, including its agencies, has been one of cooperation and support during even the most difficult moments of the conflict that we want to leave behind, without failing to take on the lessons learned. My task, therefore, is

to build up a harmonious and stable relationship of mutual respect with the system through which it can be possible to improve conditions on the ground so that Colombia — having signed a peace agreement and implemented the principles set out in the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which we resolutely support— is never again included in the Secretary-General's report on this issue. Our commitment is indisputable. It is clear that there is much left to do and that for us in Colombia there is always room for improvement. But we have the tools at our disposal, as well as the clear political will, to work with the boys and girls of our country. That is their right, as well as our responsibility.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mr. Patriota (Brazil):** I thank the President for convening this debate on an important matter. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Herve Ladsous, Ms. Yoka Brandt and Mr. Forest Whitaker for their enlightening briefings. I am also grateful for the touching briefing by Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana, which deserves our particular appreciation. Let me also acknowledge the commitment in this regard of Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

Brazil reiterates its support for the initiative of the Office of the Special Representative to launch the Children, Not Soldiers campaign.

Protecting children from the scourge of war is not just a legal requirement or a humanitarian obligation. It is, above all, a universal moral imperative — a powerful call that should unite humankind in an effort to build a better and more hopeful tomorrow.

Over the years, the Security Council has enhanced its institutional framework on children and armed conflict, including instruments such as the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group. That positive trend continues, as confirmed by the recent release of a Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals, as per resolution 1998 (2011). We are confident that this document will strengthen awareness and promote dialogue with concerned parties in order to prevent attacks on educational and health institutions.

When examining the 23 cases currently under the mandate of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, we should not lose sight of the

essential distinction between situations of armed conflict, on the one hand, and those related to domestic law enforcement, on the other, which are two very different categories, each posing specific political and legal challenges.

For situations of armed conflict that fall within the purview of the Security Council, international humanitarian law is clear on the responsibility of all the parties to protect civilians, including children. Both children of war and child soldiers are particularly vulnerable groups and, as such, need to be afforded specific protection. Furthermore, efforts should always be focused on promoting diplomatic initiatives aimed at ceasing hostilities and fostering sustainable peace, so as to minimize the impact of conflicts on civilians in general. Accountability must also be upheld. The International Criminal Court has a role to play not only in the investigation and prosecution of individuals accused of serious crimes under the Rome Statute, but also in providing reparation to victims.

In situations of law enforcement where there is no armed conflict, and where therefore international humanitarian law does not apply, our priority should be to afford protection to children and other vulnerable groups in accordance with the even higher standards established by international human rights law. That matter deals directly with domestic laws of States, and therefore falls outside the mandate of the Security Council. Our actions should be guided by the various instruments and mechanisms already created to protect and promote human rights.

As the annual report of the Secretary-General highlights (S/2014/339), armed conflicts around the world still affect children in a disproportionate way. While some situations have improved, the overall picture remains dire.

Protracted hostilities in Syria have left countless numbers of children vulnerable to forced displacement, military recruitment, illegal detention and other abuses. Brazil has contributed to the No Lost Generation strategy launched by the United Nations to support Syrian children by expanding their access to education and psycho-social support, strengthening social cohesion and promoting peacebuilding efforts.

In Iraq, hundreds of minors are killed every year and innumerable others have had their childhood disrupted by a spiral of violence whose origin can be traced to 2003. That trend will doubtlessly be exacerbated by



the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other extremist groups.

The recent conflict in Gaza, where an estimated 500 Palestinian children lost their lives and another 3,000 were injured due to the disproportionate use of force by the occupying Power, is yet another grim reminder of the unacceptable toll paid by innocent civilians in the State of Palestine. As a member of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hanan Ashrawi noted last week at the United Nations that

“All children of Gaza are suffering, are in a state of trauma. And it is not post-traumatic stress; it is an ongoing trauma.”

The international community should consider how social and economic circumstances may impact the safety and welfare of children in armed conflict. While it would be erroneous to believe in an automatic chain of causality between poverty and violence, promoting access to education, social inclusion, food security and a healthy environment could lessen the risk of abuses against children in many circumstances.

We are concerned by the contradiction between the international consensus on the need to promote the protection and the welfare of children, especially those affected by armed conflict, and the regrettable fact that developed countries seem to continuously work to reduce the United Nations budget for development activities. Any consistent commitment to save children from the tragedies of conflict will be undermined if United Nations programmes and agencies dedicated to promoting development are the preferential victims of budgetary cuts.

Brazil believes in the power of sports, arts and cultural activities in this field. An innovative example is the “Capoeira for Peace” programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, launched last month by Brazil, the United Nations Children’s Fund and civil society organizations. The initiative will enable 1,200 children formerly associated with armed groups to practice capoeira — a dance-like form of martial arts inherited by Brazil from Africa — as a way to offer them an activity that fosters discipline and promotes group interaction and cooperation, thus facilitating their social reintegration in the province of North Kivu.

Let us again recall that the protection of civilians, including children, should be carried out in a

non-selective manner. Children in Juba, in Bangui, in Aleppo, in Goma and in Rafah deserve the same concern, solidarity and engagement on our part. In the same vein, children, as a vulnerable segment of society, are often one of the first victims of economic sanctions, as those measures negatively impact and frequently compromise their education, health and living conditions.

That is why investments in diplomacy, conflict prevention, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and economic and social development are always the best choice. They not only bring us closer to sparing children from war, they also provide those same children with a telling example of how to resolve disputes through dialogue, not through coercion.

To conclude, let me emphasize that Brazil will remain engaged with the Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Working Group and the United Nations system, as well as with our bilateral partners, in order to shield children from violent conflict worldwide, while striving to ensure better living conditions for future generations.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

**Mr. Grunditz** (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and my own country, Sweden.

At the outset, we would like to thank the United States presidency for the continued focus of the Council on this important issue. We would also like to acknowledge the crucial role played by Special Representative Leila Zerrougui and her Office, as well as the important work of the United Nations Children’s Fund and other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the field. In that regard, we would like to thank all of today’s briefers for their valuable contributions to this debate. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General and his staff for an excellent report (S/2014/339).

Armed conflict is devastating for children. Today, 1 billion children live in areas affected by armed conflict, and 300 million of those children are under the age of five. New crises overshadow some of the previous gains we have made with regard to protecting children. The substantive increase in the number of children killed and injured in conflict in 2013 was alarming, and reminds us again of the grave impact on

children of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and of the indiscriminate use of violence by some non-State armed groups. But we must also consider the large-scale indirect effects of conflict on children, namely, the vast number of them who perish from effects such as disease, starvation and dehydration. Child mortality at birth is twice as high in conflict-affected States as compared to developed countries where peace prevails.

Some 77 per cent of children in conflict-affected and fragile States never enter primary school, and malnourishment attributable to conflict imperils their learning capability. Of course, the majority of the world's malnourished children live in conflict-related areas.

This November will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but we still continue to see atrocities against children. The protection of children in armed conflicts is a moral imperative and a matter impacting our credibility as representatives of the international community. One step we can take involves the predeployment training of peacekeepers on child protection, as mentioned by Under-Secretary-General Ladsous in his briefing earlier in the meeting. Last month, Sweden hosted a United Nations child-protection training-of-trainers course at the Swedish Armed Forces International Centre, in which 27 experienced trainers from 23 different countries participated. The course benefited from the participation of child-protection advisers from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, who shared their experiences with the national trainers. Those trainers are now ready to conduct predeployment training of peacekeepers on the issue of child protection in their respective countries. It is important that United Nations troop-contributing countries maintain the highest standards in that regard.

The Nordic countries would also like to stress the importance of children continuing to have access to basic services, including education and health care, during conflict and post-conflict periods. Attacks on schools and hospitals deprive children of their basic rights and may amount to war crimes. The use of schools by armed parties as bases, barracks, weapon-storage facilities or for other military purposes, as detailed

in the Secretary-General's report, disrupts access to education and learning and poses a grave threat to the lives of students and teachers. We have seen appalling examples of attacks on schools in recent months. We call on all States to take concrete measures to refrain from using schools and similar facilities for military purposes and from carrying out attacks on facilities used for hosting children. Protecting schools and access to education in conflict settings is not only a matter of protecting lives but one of minimizing the long-term impact of conflict on children and their communities. Schools simply must be safe havens.

The Nordic countries are deeply concerned about the many cases of indiscriminate violence and killings in Iraq. We condemn the killing and maiming of children, as well as the rampant use of abduction and sexual violence in attacks against civilians and minorities, including children. Likewise, the situation in Syria remains extremely serious, with the killing and maiming of children and attacks on schools and hospitals occurring at very high rates. The fact that children constituted almost a quarter of those killed in the recent Gaza conflict is simply horrifying.

As pointed out in the report, developments in several African States, as well as in Afghanistan, also constitute cause for serious concern, not least with regard to the abduction of children by non-State armed groups, notably Boko Haram. We strongly urge all actors to immediately cease all grave violations of international humanitarian law with regard to children, including sexual and gender-based violence. Perpetrators must not go unpunished. We must fight against impunity and support national and international accountability mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court.

We reiterate our support for the Special Representative's Children, Not Soldiers campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces by 2016, as endorsed by the Council on 7 March. We welcome the commitment by eight concerned Governments to protect children, and we acknowledge the efforts by the Government of Chad to fulfil the requirements of the accelerated implementation of its action plan to end the recruitment and use of children as soldiers. We share the view that more resources will have to be devoted to the healing and reintegration of former child soldiers.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

**Mrs. Morgan** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the briefers who spoke at the outset of the meeting, as well as the presiding delegation for convening this important debate.

In recent months, there has, unfortunately, been no lack of examples with respect to the problem of children and armed conflict. Iraq, South Sudan and Gaza are cases that remind us of the need to continue working collectively to protect those who disproportionately suffer the consequences of armed conflict, violence and abuse.

As a responsible member of the international community, Mexico firmly defends the principle of children's interests having the highest priority under all circumstances, and calls for increased cooperation to address that challenge at the international, national and regional levels. We reiterate our commitment to ensure the full protection of civilians in armed conflicts, especially the protection of women and children, two of the most vulnerable groups.

My country condemns attacks on schools and hospitals as a tactic of war, as well as the use of explosives in densely populated areas, given their disproportionate and indiscriminate effects on civilian populations, especially minors. Such acts are contrary to international humanitarian law and to the international law of human rights.

We welcome recent advances to counter that trend, especially the Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals, which was circulated in May by UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the Special Representative and seeks to contribute to the implementation of resolution 1998 (2011).

Moreover, the recently adopted resolution 2143 (2014) constitutes an innovative and positive step forward aimed at ensuring the protection of schools and promoting measures to discourage and put an end to the use of schools for military purposes. Attacks on schools not only endanger the lives of thousands of children and teachers, they also undermine the future of the societies affected by denying that sector of the population their inalienable right to education and, consequently, the development of their own countries.

My country has supported a number of initiatives in this area, including the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which seeks to prevent and halt the recruitment and use of children in armed forces by the year 2016, as well as

the British Government's proposal to deal with sexual violence in armed conflicts, which seeks to reinforce the international community's response in this area.

From the perspective of the participation of children in armed conflict, Mexico has shown its concern with the link that exists between such conflicts and sexual violence as a tactic of war. Such violence exacerbates conflicts, prevents the reconstruction of the social fabric and, when used systematically, constitutes a war crime and a threat to international peace and security. We will continue working hand in hand with the international community and civil society to show that we are equal to that great challenge.

As indicated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the beginning of this meeting, impunity is a significant obstacle to efforts to grapple with the impact of armed conflicts on children. It is vital that national authorities and the parties concerned take appropriate legal action to bring those responsible to justice. The fight against impunity should be part of the process of reintegration and the particular attention needed by children affected by armed conflict.

In that context, the Security Council must ensure that its Sanctions Committees take into account the protection of children as a central component in their mandates and that they carefully and in detail analyse the cases of persistent perpetrators who commit systematic violations against children, so that more dynamic measures can be taken in that regard.

We urge the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to promote the effective use of all the tools available to it, such as the regular use of visits to the field and the convening of informative meetings, emergency or informal, when faced with cases of grave violations, at the request of the Chair or of any member of the Working Group.

Finally, my delegation wishes to recognize the very worthy work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui and her team, as well as that of UNICEF, who, together with civil society, have implemented a practical mechanism for investigating and monitoring and who work tirelessly on this priority issue on the international agenda.

We cannot, nor should we, lower our guard. The future of our children is our chief responsibility.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

**Mr. Bamrungphong** (Thailand): At the outset, let me express my appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this important debate. Thailand also thanks the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/339), as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and the UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation for their informative briefings.

As a member of the Human Security Network and the Movement of Non-Aligned countries, Thailand aligns itself with statements to be delivered later in this meeting by the representatives of Switzerland and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Thailand is no less concerned than others when it comes to the plight of children affected by armed conflict. The large number of children killed or injured, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's latest report, in the ongoing conflicts in many areas is unacceptable and must end immediately.

Thailand, as a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, is fully committed to fulfilling its obligations under those instruments. We have been an active supporter of various international efforts on child protection. However, we are concerned about certain aspects of the Secretary-General's latest report on children and armed conflict, which mentions the situation in the southern border provinces of Thailand. In that connection, I would like to present some of our observations.

First, Thailand wishes to underline that the scope of the report should be confined only to situations of armed conflict or those on the Council's agenda. I would like to make clear that the situation in the southern border provinces does not constitute armed conflict as defined by international law. Neither is the situation in Thailand's southern border provinces on the Security Council agenda. Therefore, Thailand disagrees with the inclusion of the situation in that area in the report prepared by the Office of Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, whose mandate is, and should be, limited solely to situations of armed conflict.

No one denies that violence against innocent children is abhorrent. Thailand has never spared any effort to enhance child protection in the country in an effective and sustainable manner through law enforcement and various protective mechanisms. We have close and

constructive cooperation in the area of child protection with the relevant United Nations agencies under their respective mandates, and we continue to enhance such cooperation in the best interests of the child.

Secondly, the United Nations should be extremely mindful of the sensitivities and complexities of the situation on the ground, which require specific knowledge, understanding and expertise, as well as a tailor-made approach. The United Nations should therefore work closely with, and have the consent of, the Governments concerned, particularly when non-State actors are involved.

The mentioning of, or direct engagement with, non-State actors needs to be done with the utmost care and only when mandated. Such engagements can complicate the situation on the ground, give those groups more leverage and may, in many cases, imply recognition of such groups. In order to avoid unintended negative consequences, the United Nations should play a supportive role aimed at ensuring that States can carry out their sovereign responsibility to protect children.

Thirdly, we strongly suggest that the sources of the information included in the reports of the Secretary-General be identifiable and verifiable. We value objective and accurate information from all stakeholders. Likewise, information or comments provided by the Governments concerned should be honoured and seriously taken into account.

Child protection is a critical issue of common concern and requires our collective efforts and constructive cooperation. Therefore, it is essential that the relevant United Nations agencies and Member States enhance mutual respect, trust and confidence. In that light, Thailand would like to point out that the arbitrary stretching of mandates, the reliance on inaccurate and biased information and a lack of sensitivity will not serve or nurture the spirit of cooperation. On the contrary, it can only be counter-productive, create mistrust, misdirect future policy and resources and, even worse, inadvertently place children in such situations at higher risk.

In conclusion, Thailand reaffirms its decisive determination and systematic efforts to promote and protect human rights, particularly among women and children. We will continue to work constructively with the international community and the appropriately mandated United Nations bodies, as well as with civil society, to better safeguard our children.



**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

**Mr. Cardì (Italy):** I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. Let me also take this opportunity to commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for her work and we reiterate our strong support for her mandate. I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous, UNICEF's Ms. Yoka Brandt and UNESCO Special Envoy Forest Whitaker for their commitment, which, in our view, is crucial to efforts to advance our cause.

Italy associates itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union and wishes to deliver some remarks in its national capacity.

As a constant advocate of greater Security Council action to address the scourge of children in armed conflicts, Italy welcomes the progress made in recent years towards strengthening the protection framework. That trend is confirmed by resolution 2143 (2014), of which Italy was a sponsor.

Italy also concurs with the Secretary-General's assessments in his annual report (S/2014/339) regarding the increase in deliberate attacks on schools, teachers and students. Of the 23 conflicts profiled in the report, 17 involved targeted attacks on schools, students and/or teachers, and even hospitals.

In too many parts of the world, violations against children, including sexual violence, are carried out with impunity, perpetuating what the Secretary-General's report calls "the disproportionate effect armed conflicts have on children".

Cooperation with national and international courts is crucial. In cases involving serious crimes of concern, when national judicial systems are unable or unwilling to intervene, let us remind everyone that States parties to the Rome Statute should consider referring such cases to the International Criminal Court.

The commitment of the entire United Nations system is critical to ensuring the implementation of the architecture created since resolution 1621 (2005). We therefore commend once again the work of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations, to develop a comprehensive and systematic training programme on child protection and

children's rights for all peacekeeping personnel. That is an initiative that Italy has strongly supported since its inception. Italy also hosts the Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units based in Vicenza as part of its technical cooperation with any willing country and party.

We have a solid protection framework to implement and a decisive Children, Not Soldiers campaign to support and consolidate. Any boy or girl whom we save from the scourge of war represents hope for a better future. As many speakers before me have said, we need to maintain the pressure on the part of the international community, but at the same time we should acknowledge the progress made and commend Governments that engage strongly, as in the case of Chad, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We hope that the trend will continue and that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict will soon be ratified by all countries. That will show our strong determination to join forces to implement all its provisions for the sake of each and every child in the world.

**The President:** I would like to thank the representative of Italy and the previous speakers for sticking to the allotted five-minute time period for their statements.

I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

**Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan):** At the outset, I would like to thank the United States presidency for convening today's open debate on children in armed conflict. We also wish to thank all of the briefers for their extensive and important briefings.

Armed conflicts continue to inflict violence and deprivations of many kinds upon children. Given their lack of capacity to make choices, be it social or political, children are increasingly exposed to various threats, such as being orphaned and suffering injuries and disabilities. Unfortunately, traumatic and violent experiences are not easy to forget and have long-term implications for affected children and societies at large.

My country remains concerned about the negative impact of armed conflicts on children, and strongly condemns all violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights

law committed against them. The emergence of high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a result of the numerous conflicts and wars, many of whom are children, are a daily reminder of the gross violations committed against children. However, where the right of return continues to be challenged and impunity prevails, reconciliation and sustainable peace seem hardly to be attainable. Mechanisms of reconciliation and transitional justice should safeguard the rights to restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and reparations.

We cannot but agree with the view that children have no place in war under any circumstances and that the best way to protect is to prevent. Protection efforts and related international support policies must be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences. In that regard, we appreciate the critical role played by the Security Council and the related mandate-holding bodies in bringing the issue of children's rights and protection to the forefront of international development and the humanitarian agenda. In that connection, I would also like to commend the Children, Not Soldiers campaign.

The work of the Security Council, as well as various initiatives pursued by the United Nations system, has been instrumental in making a change on the ground. Yet serious challenges remain. In the context of the protection of children's rights, particular consideration should be granted to internally displaced children in terms of ensuring their inalienable right to return and to the implications of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation. We commend the attention paid to the situation of IDPs, particularly child IDPs, by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, during her recent address to the Human Rights Council just a week ago.

Children who have become hostages or are reported missing pose another challenge deserving urgent action. The resolution of that issue should not be contingent upon the political settlement of conflicts.

Ensuring the protection and sustainability of war-affected children should be a high priority for the entire United Nations system, both during and after armed conflict. It is important to develop and support policies and programmes that provide war-affected children with access to the quality education and training in technical skills that will enable them to pursue productive and sustainable livelihoods.

In conclusion, I express our support for the Secretary-General's recommendations contained in his report on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339).

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on presiding over the work of the Security Council and for holding this important meeting.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

In those areas that are controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, the Army of Islam, also known as the Free Army, or other terrorist entities that are satellites of Al-Qaida, criminal battalions have been created under a number of different names. They include the Zarqawi Youth around Damascus, the Khalifa Youth in Al-Bukamal in the eastern part of the country, and the youth of the Ibn Taymiyyah Brigade in the Aleppo area, which is linked to Jabhat Al-Nusra. Those battalions are fuelled by children who have been brainwashed in order to turn them into monsters, murderers, rapists and executioners. They undergo rigorous physical training, drill with arms and carry equipment and weapons that weigh more than their own young bodies. The innocent laughter of children has vanished from the region, replaced by slogans of hatred, murder and blood. The children have been turned into suicides with an instinctual hatred for their fellow citizens.

In one of the videos that are circulating, an old man is talking to some children in a school yard. He speaks with a distinct Gulf accent and indoctrinates them with distorted religious statements that he then ties to a historical personage, religion or party so as to establish a religious and divine justification for killing and slaughtering. In the video, he asks them what should be done with evil Christians and Jews, and the response they have been taught is that their throats should be cut — preceded, of course, by the phrase "Allah akbar" or "Allah is great".

In order to deal with such violations, the Government of Syria, since the beginning of the crisis and in accordance with its constitutional responsibility to protect its citizens, has undertaken various measures aimed at promoting the protection of children, including,

as I have said, every possible measure to prevent the recruitment of children into combat, including a decree adopted on 6 May 2013. The Government has taken steps to prevent the targeting of schools and hospitals and violence against children, including sexual violence, killing and mutilation. The relevant Syrian authorities are cooperating with the Special Representative in the country regarding the monitoring of crimes committed against Syrian children and their investigation. The Government has presented her with proof and confirmed information on the hundreds of crimes and serious violations committed by the armed terrorist groups in Syria, in the hope that that will help to expose those crimes, but so far we have not seen any concrete steps taken to do so.

As an example, on 6 April, our delegation presented the Special Representative with verified information on the armed groups' systematic attacks on schools and hospitals, including 58 cases relating to schools and 54 cases of children killed, abducted or mutilated. On 7 March we asked for an investigation by the Special Representative into the recruitment of Syrian children as war correspondents by foreign authorities and satellite TV networks. On 7 April, we informed the Special Representative about the more than 18,000 cases of organ trafficking involving Syrians in northern Syria. Around 100,000 children in refugee camps in Turkey are at risk for such trafficking. We have voiced our concern dozens of times about the situation of children in the refugee camps in neighbouring countries, which we do not have time to discuss today. What has the Special Representative and the country team done to verify those crimes or to denounce the violations perpetrated by the terrorist armed groups against the Syrian children in my country?

**The President:** I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Mayr-Harting:** I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

I would first like to thank all of today's briefers for their presentations, and in particular to recognize

Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to reaffirm our strong support for her mandate.

The report presented to the Council today (S/2014/339) underlines yet again the direct impact that ongoing armed conflicts around the world have on children. We urge all parties to immediately stop the violations described in the report and to take action to prevent them in the future. We also call on every State to become party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which has been ratified by all member States of the European Union.

Both the protection and promotion of children's rights and the issue of children and armed conflict are central to the European Union's human rights policy and funding instruments. That includes the right to education and well-being of children affected by conflict, which is addressed through, among other actions, the EU's Children of Peace initiative. That initiative is especially designed to provide education to children in emergencies. Between 2012 and 2014, 108,000 children have benefited from that programme.

The EU is determined to continue its support for activities aimed at preventing child recruitment and at demobilizing and reintegrating former child soldiers into their communities. We emphasize the inclusion of child protection in the training of peacekeepers, the mandates of crisis-management operations, standard operating procedures and the rules of engagement. In 2013, the European Union mainstreamed the promotion of human rights, child protection and international humanitarian law into the mandate of the EU training mission in Mali. The European Union has also incorporated child protection into the planning documents of its operation in the Central African Republic.

We are proud to support the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, aimed at ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children in conflict by Government armed forces by 2016. Fighting impunity for such serious crimes of international concern should be part of our actions, and we continue to see the role of the International Criminal Court as essential in that regard.

The European Union has invested in strengthening its capacity in the area of child protection, both at its headquarters and in its operations. In cooperation with

UNICEF and several non-governmental organizations, we have organized our first regular training course for our staff on children and armed conflict. We are currently finalizing our pre-deployment child-protection training module for civilian and military personnel.

We underline the importance of further cooperation between regional and subregional organizations in view of their important role in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. Last year in Addis Ababa, together with the African Union, the World Bank and the United Nations, we organized a workshop on children and armed conflict, and we hope to further develop such partnerships with other organizations.

We are concerned about the surge during 2013 in the recruitment and use of children in the Central African Republic, which is described in the Secretary-General's report. With help from UNICEF, the European Union is currently implementing an educational programme in the Central African Republic with a component for the temporary care and training of 1,000 children who were connected to armed groups.

We share the Secretary-General's concern about the targeting of schools and the abduction and recruitment of children by Boko Haram, as was most prominently shown by the kidnapping events in April. In the context of its cooperation with Nigeria, the European Union provides assistance in the field of counter-terrorism and protection services for children in the northern Nigerian state of Borno.

We also share the Secretary-General's concern that attacks on schools and hospitals have become a common feature in the majority of armed conflicts and situations covered in his report. We urge all parties to stop attacks on schools and hospitals and to deter the military use of schools in accordance with international law.

Let me also underline that the European Union deplores the grave violations and abuses against children committed by all parties to the conflict in Iraq, as highlighted by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui at the recent special session of the Human Rights Council on Iraq. We are particularly concerned by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's brutal killing of civilians, including children, not only in Iraq, but also in Syria. Children continue to be the most affected by the armed conflict in Syria. Well over 10,000 children have been killed thus far, and many

more injured. We express our profound indignation at the scale, scope and gravity of the violations and abuses committed against children.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm our strong belief that the issue of children and armed conflict must remain in the focus of the Council and of our efforts at the national and regional levels.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Austria.

**Mr. Riecken (Austria):** It is my honour to speak on behalf of the members of the Human Security Network, namely, Costa Rica, Chile, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Panama, Slovenia, Switzerland, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Austria. The Human Security Network is an informal group of States that advocates a people-centred, holistic approach to human security, complementing the more traditional understanding of national and international security.

Let me take the opportunity to thank the United States presidency of the Council for convening this important open debate, as well as today's briefers for their presentations and for sharing their moving experiences with us, and Luxembourg for its work and efforts as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

The Human Security Network welcomes the Secretary-General's recent annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339), including the listing of perpetrators in its annexes. We welcome the hard and committed work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF.

The Human Security Network wishes to draw attention to the adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), which sets out practical steps to combat violations against children in armed conflict and to protect their right to education, including through preventive training in child protection for military personnel, police and peacekeepers. Recent events have shown the timeliness of such a focus on protecting schools from military use, including as weapons storage facilities, and we therefore underline the Council's call on Member States to consider concrete measures to deter the use of schools by armed forces and non-State armed groups. In that regard, the Network also takes note with interest of the work on the draft Lucens Guidelines on the military use of schools.



Although we remain concerned about the high number of parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report, including the 31 persistent perpetrators, we also acknowledge that there has been significant progress, which confirms the benefits and merits of the Security Council framework for the protection of children in armed conflict.

We would like to commend the Chadian Government for the various steps it took in 2013 that led to the de-listing of its armed forces and encourage it to take further measures to ensure the sustainability and effective prevention of violations against children. That progress is an important step towards achieving the goal of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. In that regard, we also commend the Government of Yemen for signing an action plan in May 2014 to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Yemeni armed forces.

The Secretary-General's report also highlights the ongoing crises in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic and their devastating impact on children. Violence in the Syrian Arab Republic reached unprecedented levels in 2013 and remains an urgent concern. The United Nations estimates that more than 10,000 children have been killed in the conflict, and the violations, including indiscriminate shelling, attacks targeting civilians and the killing, recruitment and use of children by armed groups, continue unabated. The emergence of new situations with worrying effects on children reminds us that violence against children is a common feature of conflict nowadays. Most recently, UNICEF reported on 7 August that 429 children had been killed "as a result of airstrikes and shelling" in Gaza. In Nigeria, Boko Haram's attacks on schools and schoolchildren are notorious. That reminds us of the particular vulnerability of girls in armed conflict, who are often used in support roles.

While we welcome the progress made, we would like to point out that the overwhelming majority of parties listed in the report of the Secretary-General are armed non-State actors. We also call for more efforts to address impunity and to investigate, prosecute and punish all those who commit grave violations against children.

Finally, the Human Security Network encourages States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

**Mr. Prozor (Israel):** I would like to congratulate the United States on its presidency of the Security Council this month. I also want to commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for bringing much needed attention to this important subject.

Israel assigns great importance to protecting children in armed conflict, and we look forward to the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November.

One of the world's most-beloved children's authors, Dr. Seuss, once wrote: "A person's a person, no matter how small". All children around the world deserve to grow up in an environment where their dignity and human rights are respected and their aspirations are valued. Yet in too many parts of the world, children are the targets of violence or casualties of conflict. Abuses against children in armed conflicts not only tear at our hearts, they unravel entire communities and destroy the fabric of a society. An estimated 2 million children have died as a direct result of armed conflict over the last decade, and many more have been permanently disabled or seriously injured.

In the Middle East, terrorists regularly single out children in their attacks. In June, millions of Israelis were numb with horror when they learned that Hamas terrorists had kidnapped and murdered three Israeli teenagers — Eyal, Gilad and Naftali — as they made their way home from school. That is just one of many attacks targeting Israeli children. Over the summer, over 3,800 rockets and mortars were fired into Israel, which represents an average of one rocket every 10 minutes. The rockets landed on Israeli kindergartens, playgrounds and homes. Four year-old Daniel Tragerman of Kibbutz Nahal Oz was one of the tragic casualties of those attacks. Daniel's mother, Gila, sent a letter to the Secretary-General this week, in which she wrote:

"Daniel, 4.5 years old, was killed in our house, while playing with his sister in a tent built indoors and not outside, because it's dangerous. He was killed by a mortar shell that was shot by terrorists from Gaza, he died in our hands. Daniel died in front of his little sister, who is 3.5 years old; he died in front of his baby brother Uri, only four months

old and right before our eyes, his mother and father. Daniel was killed by a mortar shell that was fired by Hamas members from an elementary school for boys in Gaza City. It was not a stray shell. It was not an accidental death. From that school, terrorists fired deliberately at the kibbutz to murder civilians — children, women and old people.”

Today, over 1 million Israeli children live with the threat of Hamas missiles. One in every three children living in communities near Gaza has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Thousands of those children cannot sleep at night and refuse to go outdoors — for good reason. In recent weeks, the Israel Defence Forces have discovered dozens of terror tunnels leading from Gaza to the doorsteps of Israeli communities. Hamas planned to use those tunnels to send terrorists into the hearts of those communities to kill and kidnap as many people as possible.

As a father who has raised three children in Israel, I can say that Israeli children grow up in an abnormal reality. They go to school with security guards, walk through metal detectors in malls and live with bunkers in their buildings. They grow up thinking that all of that is normal. Each and every day, Israeli parents worry that their children will be the next victims of a rocket attack, kidnapping attempt, suicide bombing or stone throwing.

Israel is committed to upholding international law and takes extensive measures to ensure the protection of civilians. In contrast, radical extremist groups like Hamas see no problem with using civilians and children to achieve their ends. They deploy minors as suicide bombers and recruit them to carry out attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers; they send children deep underground to dig their terror tunnels; and they place children in harm's way by using schools, hospitals and civilian neighbourhoods as bases for their terror activity. During Hamas's most recent escalation, terrorists booby-trapped hundreds of Palestinian homes and went so far as to use children's bedrooms and even baby cribs to hide explosives and conceal terror tunnels. Hamas also launched M-75 rockets from a children's playground located in the Shuja'iya neighbourhood. Dozens of other rockets were launched only steps from Gaza schools, including the Al-Wakaf Al-Shariah School, the Sinah School, the Haled Al-Alami Girls School and the Shahada Al-Manar Boys School. And, of course, we are well aware that, on at least three separate occasions, rockets were found hidden in the

schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). I can assure you that Hamas did not place them there because it had added rocket science to the school curriculum.

Hamas has made its educational priorities clear. Earlier this year, UNRWA tried to distribute new textbooks to teach Gaza's children about human rights. Hamas rejected the books on the grounds that the materials would brainwash Palestinian children. A representative from Hamas's Education Ministry explained that the books would foster “negative feelings toward armed resistance” and that the inclusion of topics such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would contaminate children's minds.

Learning about human rights would contaminate children's minds? The truth is that every single day Hamas is polluting young Palestinian minds with hatred and violence. Over 100,000 children have graduated from Hamas's paramilitary camps, which encourage teenagers to “follow in the footsteps of the suicide martyrs”. The toxic lessons taught by Hamas are poisoning any opportunity for Palestinian children to grow up in peace. Generations of Palestinians have suffered under a leadership that would sooner tear Israel down than raise its own people up. It is time for the Palestinian leadership to teach its children tolerance, coexistence and mutual understanding.

The United Nations has a duty to shield the world's young people from hate and protect them wherever and whenever they are threatened. For the sake of those children and for the future of our region, the international community must act and must act now. As Dr. Seuss wrote: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better.”

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

**Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*):** I would like to congratulate you, Sir, and your delegation on your assumption of the presidency and thank you for calling this meeting, which gives us the opportunity to hear the voices of all the children affected by armed conflicts. It is also my pleasure to welcome the Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg, Mr. Jean Asselborn. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and the Special Envoy

for Peace and Reconciliation of the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization for their valuable statements this morning.

I would like to take the opportunity to underscore the importance of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign aimed at putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflicts. That campaign comes at an opportune time, in view of the notable increase in violations against children in many conflict areas throughout the world and the severity of the violations committed against them. We express our deep concern about the severity of the violations, which constitute a humanitarian crisis, and about the killing and recruitment of children and other violations, including sexual abuse and kidnapping, such as the action of Boko Haram, in which they kidnapped more than 200 students, who are still missing. All of those incidents are a source of grave concern.

The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339) paints a very painful picture. Many children suffer gravely from the effects of armed conflicts throughout the world. We are also aware that the suffering of children in the Arab region of the world is part of that painful picture. However, I would like to address two particular cases.

Palestinian children are undoubtedly not immune to injustice, given the continued Israeli violations. In addition to the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the grave violations and the killing of Palestinian children in the Palestinian occupied territories, the recent Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip has led to the death of more than 2,000 civilians, mostly women and children.

As for Syria, the Secretary-General's report paints an indescribable picture of grave violations against children and the extreme danger they are in. More than 10,000 children have been killed since the beginning of the conflict, and the number of children killed increased significantly in 2013. Nevertheless, the Syrian Arab Armed Forces continue to indiscriminately shell areas inhabited by civilians, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham continues to commit horrible acts, including kidnappings and other violations against children.

We are also gravely concerned by the violations committed against educational establishments in armed conflicts and strongly condemn the repeated attacks against schools, such as the deliberate attack in Gaza in August against the schools of the United Nations

Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The targeting of those schools, their transformation into part of the battlefield and their use by parties to the conflict for military purposes, such as for military barracks, operational bases and detention centres, is not only a violation of the civilian nature of those schools, but it also endangers children and denies them the right to education.

The facts contained in the relevant reports, including the most recent report of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, shed light on the use of schools and universities for military purposes in more than 24 countries since the beginning of 2009. We believe that the time has come to make further efforts to protect schools and universities from military use.

We would also like to stress the importance of taking further strict measures with regard to those responsible for violations and aggression against children and for the military use of schools. It is also critical to adopt additional laws that criminalize such violations, fight impunity and ensure accountability, with a view to putting an end to the violations and horrors committed against the children of the world. Let us instead invest in the future of those children. They need it the most, and perhaps we will be able to reintegrate them into society and make them forget the horrors they have witnessed.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran): Addressing the Security Council on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, I would like to begin by congratulating the United States of America on assuming the presidency of the Council and by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate in a timely manner on the very important matter of children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Children and armed conflict" (S/2014/339), which covers global trends on the subject. My thanks also go to the briefers and to Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana for their valuable reports to the Council.

Current world events indicate that children are suffering in massive numbers as a result of armed conflicts. Despite all the efforts made at the international level for the protection of civilians in general and despite the measures adopted by the Security Council and the relevant humanitarian institutions, it is still

regrettably true that armed conflicts continue to take a heavy toll on children. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, we are still witnessing the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, and recurrent attacks on schools and hospitals, in contravention of international law.

Children in the occupied Palestinian territories have always suffered the heaviest casualty rate. They continue to be harshly affected by the ongoing military occupation, conflict and blockade. The Secretary-General's report indicates that in 2013, eight Palestinian children were killed and 1,265 injured in the occupied Palestinian territories, while 54 boys between the ages of 14 and 17 years of age were held in Israeli military detention for alleged security violations. Moreover, according to the United Nations, in the latest round of Israeli aggression against Gaza, at least 501 children were killed and over 3000 injured, while 373,000 Palestinian children need immediate psychosocial first aid. According to UNICEF, at least 219 schools have been damaged by Israeli air strikes, while 22 were completely destroyed.

In light of the foregoing, the Non-Aligned Movement would like to take this opportunity to call for accountability for the crimes and violations committed by Israel, the occupying Power, during its recent military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population, and for the wanton destruction of vital civilian infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. The international community, including the Security Council, should ensure serious follow-up efforts to bring an end to Israel's impunity and to secure justice for the victims.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls on all parties to armed conflict to redouble their efforts to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the principle of proportionality, *inter alia*, and the prohibition against the targeting of civilian populations, civilian property and certain special property during an armed conflict, and the obligation of the parties to a conflict to ensure general protection against the dangers arising from military operations for civilian installations, hospitals, schools, means of transportation and relief materials and their distribution.

The Movement of Non-Aligned Nations has also expressed its resolve to eliminate all forms of

discrimination and violence against women and girls, especially in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation, including the systematic use of abduction and rape by the parties to a conflict as an instrument of war, as well the trafficking in and victimization of women and girls. In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement has called upon States to take all necessary measures against the perpetrators of such acts and to ensure compliance with international law and domestic legislation. That should include legislation to protect women and girls in situations of armed conflict, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure access to justice for survivors.

Finally, the Movement acknowledges the progress achieved in protecting children in situations of armed conflict. To sustain those advances, it is crucial for all stakeholders to continue to work closely to ensure that the reports and documents on that important issue are based on clear, accurate and verifiable data. It is, after all, on such data that all comments and recommendations are based. In that regard, the Non-Aligned Movement stresses that gaps in the reporting process must be addressed and that efforts should be made to improve the reporting process. Such efforts should include enhanced cooperation and coordination among the countries concerned and the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Security Council Working Group on the subject. The Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Security Council Working Group must take cognizance of those gaps and ensure that they are addressed. The integrity of the reports and the work of our Organization rest on that fundamental requirement.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

**Mr. Thoms (Germany):** Germany aligns itself with the statement presented by the observer of the European Union.

Allow me to thank today's speakers for sharing their expertise and insight. They have once again shown that the situation of children in today's conflicts around the world remains dire. The annex to The Secretary-General's current report on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339) lists 59 parties to conflict for having committed grave violations against children in conflict situations. Each and every one of them is one too many.



Despite the Council's significant progress on the legislative side, as well as the increasing commitment on the part of Governments to raise and tackle this issue, implementation on the ground remains all too often inadequate. Moreover, it seems that children, along with other civilians, are increasingly being deliberately targeted during conflicts, especially by non-State actors. The current list of shame also shows that dealing with non-State actors remains our biggest challenge. Many of those groups have been listed for far too long. The international community needs to reinforce its efforts in that regard, and we need to find new and creative solutions to deal with that kind of violations.

Taking one current example, we are appalled by reports from Iraq suggesting that the so-called Islamic State has used sexual violence as a tactic of war, in particular against children who belong to religious minorities. Also, in Nigeria, the terror organization Boko Haram regularly abducts, kills and maims children and deliberately attacks schools and hospitals. This year's report by the Secretary-General looks into that conflict for the first time, and the findings are shocking. Children in northern Nigeria grow up in fear and are not safe even in their schools. In that regard, we welcome the very specific and concrete Guidance Note on Attacks against Schools and Hospitals that was launched in May by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in collaboration with UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization. The latest report of the Secretary-General shows that eight parties have been listed for attacks against schools and hospitals in armed conflict.

We hope that the Guidance Note provides clear instructions to those who carry out monitoring and reporting in the field. The Note will contribute to an ever more effective implementation of resolution 1998 (2011). In our view, it is of paramount importance that, where relevant and feasible, a sufficient number of child protection officers be deployed to United Nations peacekeeping and special political missions to allow for comprehensive monitoring and support. It is only when we have a clear picture of what is happening on the ground that we can take adequate action and advocate to create change.

Germany fully supports the United Nations Children, Not Soldiers campaign, and we welcome the commitment of the listed armed forces to ending the

recruitment of children by 2016. Moreover, it would be important to guarantee that the armed forces of those States parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict be allowed to contribute troops to United Nations-mandated missions only once the Secretary-General has certified the full implementation of their action plan with the United Nations to end and prevent violations against children.

Ending grave violations against children is a task that requires joint efforts on the part of us all — United Nations Member States, non-governmental organizations and civil society. While specific guidelines are developed in New York, the actual work to implement them needs to be done on the ground. Therefore, we would like to encourage all Member States to support the United Nations and respective organizations in their important endeavour to end violence against children in armed conflict. Germany will certainly remain committed to this issue.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia.

**Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia): At the outset, I wish to congratulate the United States on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

Malaysia associates itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and with that to be delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

We are deeply concerned by the continuing grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict around the world, as highlighted by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2014/339). Despite a series of measures taken by the international community to protect children in armed conflict, they continue to be recruited, killed, maimed, abducted, sexually exploited and deprived of humanitarian access and health care. In recent months alone, the international community has been stunned by heartbreaking images of children suffering in the crossfire of conflicts beyond their control in many parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East and Africa.

Malaysia is particularly concerned over the high number of child casualties caused by the recent Israeli aggression and atrocities in Gaza, which have claimed the lives of over 500 children. The horrific and brutal

attacks also left more than 3,000 children injured and countless others orphaned. The fact that non-military United Nations facilities sheltering refugees, including schools and hospitals, were deliberately targeted during the conflict is deplorable and cannot be condoned. The sanctity of schools and hospitals in times of war must be safeguarded to ensure that communities in crisis continue to have access to education and health care. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's call, in line with applicable international humanitarian law and in accordance with resolution 2143 (2014), on Member States to consider adopting additional concrete measures to deter the military use of schools and other public places.

We also continue to be alarmed by the arrest and detention of children in the occupied Palestinian territories, many of whom are subjected to cruel and degrading ill-treatment by the Israeli security forces. The mistreatment and lack of adequate legal protection for Palestinian children in detention are unacceptable and must be urgently addressed.

Malaysia notes with deep concern the rise in attacks on and abductions of children by terrorist groups. We also condemn the continuous recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in many parts of the world. No child should be associated with parties to conflict. It is high time that Member States upheld their responsibility to protect children, particularly those trapped in conflict situations. Malaysia therefore warmly welcomes the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, launched by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, and aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. We recognize that this is an ambitious undertaking, and we call on the Secretary-General to ensure that the campaign is mainstreamed throughout the United Nations work, from peace processes to peacebuilding. We are confident that the road map and the comprehensive plan of action that have been incorporated into the campaign will yield many positive outcomes.

We are also deeply shocked by the appalling level of sexual and gender-based violence against children documented in the Secretary-General's report. These acts are horrendous crimes for which those responsible must be brought to justice. They also have far-reaching implications for the development of affected societies in general. We are concerned that impunity for grave violations against children, in particular sexual violence,

is common to several situations and exacerbates even further the vulnerability of children. My delegation believes that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes perpetrated against innocent children, and we continue to call on Member States to establish effective accountability measures to bring justice, dignity and rehabilitation for children victimized by armed conflict.

We fully concur with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Council strengthen provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions that include the deployment of child protection advisers. Peacekeepers and front-line personnel in conflict situations should be adequately equipped to prevent and mitigate violations against children. Malaysia also supports efforts to mainstream the children and armed conflict agenda into the work of the Security Council, which ensures the continued high visibility of this subject matter.

Children are among the most vulnerable members of any society, as they are the easiest prey for ruthless perpetrators. At the same time, they are the key to the future of any society in the world. The violence inflicted upon children in armed conflicts can leave physical and psychological scars that last for generations, affecting efforts to rebuild peaceful communities and nations. We therefore must put an end to acts by groups or individuals who systematically and deliberately target and abuse children in situations of armed conflict.

In conclusion, Malaysia would like to express our continued commitment to working with Council members and the international community to ensure that the protection of children in armed conflict around the world remains our priority.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

**Ms. Bolaños Pérez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*):** We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on a topic so relevant to the work of the Council. We also wish to express our appreciation to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Hervé Ladsous; Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Yoka Brandt; and Mr. Forest Whitaker for their participation and their valuable contributions to today's debate. We would also like to thank Ms. Sandra

Uwiringiyimana for her statement, which motivates us to work even harder.

We take note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339), which is the basis for our deliberations, and express our special appreciation to the delegation of Luxembourg for chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

It is of great concern to our delegation that the information provided in the annexes of the most recent report of the Secretary-General, which includes eight new groups that recruit or use children; kill or maim children; commit rape and other forms of violence, including sexual violence, against children; and attacks against schools and hospitals. These attacks on schools and hospitals or their use for military purposes; the serious violations of the rights of girls and boys, including their right to education; and the murders not only of children, but of teachers and staff working in school buildings, are unacceptable.

We are concerned about the emergence of new and more radical armed groups, the fragmentation of armed forces and the increase of other more violent groups, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham and Boko Haram, which have been changing the landscape of armed conflicts and forging alliances, as well as the appearance of other structures, some in opposition to Governments and others associated with them. We therefore believe that the focus should evolve in accordance with changing circumstances.

We consider it necessary to strengthen national capacities and to support security and justice sector reform, as well as the creation of special tribunals and mixed courts to combat impunity for those who commit serious violations of the rights of children, especially persistent perpetrators, who should not be offered any kind of amnesty or hold office in their respective Governments or armed forces. We emphasize humanitarian principles in order to provide a broad and effective protection, even against the kidnapping of boys and girls affected by conflict or who are in situations of concern. We also deem the complementarities of international judicial bodies, such as the International Criminal Court, to national mechanisms to be equally important in bringing to justice those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against children.

We are alarmed at the resurgence of conflict and the escalation of hostilities that have led to widespread,

grave violations of children's rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic, South Sudan and northern Nigeria, to mention but a few cases. We are deeply concerned by the humanitarian situation that has been created in that region, where the Boko Haram group has intensified its attacks on schools. Guatemala continues to give high priority to address the situation of children caught up in armed conflict, as well as to strengthening provisions for the protection of boys and girls in all relevant mandates of special political and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child protection advisers, as appropriate.

We have supported and will continue to support the Children, Not Soldiers campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF. We thank them for their updates on the effects of the campaign, which has been undertaken in collaboration with other agencies and funds of the United Nations system, to end by 2016 the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the armed forces of the Governments listed in the annexes to the annual reports.

We believe that field visits of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict are very useful in apprising us of each case. Our delegation had the privilege to participate in the visit to Myanmar in December 2013, which allowed us to assess the political will of the Government to end the recruitment of children into its armed forces and its renewed commitment to extend the action plan. We encourage such visits to continue.

In conclusion, we have an obligation to future generations in countries affected by armed conflicts. Violations of the rights of children compromise future prosperity and the ability of countries to achieve a lasting peace. We must pledge to do everything in our reach to prevent heinous violations and rise to the challenge of protecting the world's children.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Estonia.

**Mr. Kolga** (Estonia): At the outset, I would like to thank the United States presidency for organizing this open debate on this important subject. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous, Deputy Executive Director Brandt and Special Envoy Whitaker for their interesting and thought-provoking statements.

Special thanks goes to Ms. Sandra Uwiringiyimana for her emotional and heartbreaking story.

Estonia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by observer of the European Union.

Estonia welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) and shares the deep concern on the grave violations outlined in it. We must take all measures to prevent violations against children, as well as to make violators accountable. We call on all States that have not yet done so to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and to join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Let me stress some key topics from our perspective.

First, education is one of the key elements for prevention. It is also crucial in preventing situations where progress is reversed and the rerecruitment of child militants may occur. We share the Secretary-General's concern over the use of schools for military purposes, as seen — among many other places — in Syria, Gaza and Boko Haram's attacks in Nigeria, among many other countries. Moreover, military conflicts create cross-border situations where neighbours need to find ways to guarantee education to children in refugee camps as well.

We are deeply concerned about the fact that thousands of children remain without basic education. Therefore, let me stress that schools should be for children and should never and under no condition be used for military purposes. In that regard, we welcome the draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict. In that connection, I would like to mention that Estonia highly appreciates UNICEF's work to provide quality education to children in humanitarian crises, and has recently supported UNICEF's work in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Gaza, Syria and Somalia.

Secondly, educating and training the peacekeepers is another important aspect. We believe that the predeployment training should be a rule rather than an exception and, in that respect, welcome the child-protection training launched in April. Let me also reiterate the crucial role of child protection advisers, who have to be deployed in peacekeeping operations, peacebuilding missions and special political missions.

Third is accountability. With regard to the Secretary-General's report, Estonia would have liked to see more focus on the accountability dimension, since

we clearly see impunity as one of the main reasons for the recurrence of these grave violations against children. It is only by consistent prosecution, either domestically or internationally, that we can deter the commission of these crimes by sending out a strong signal that people who commit such atrocities will be held accountable for their action.

To achieve this, we reiterate the important role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) where States are unable or unwilling to bring perpetrators to justice domestically, and emphasize the necessity for all States, the Council and international and regional organizations to cooperate with the ICC. Furthermore, we also believe that the international community should assist in strengthening national judicial capacities to ensure accountability, including through the development of legislation that criminalizes violations against children.

My delegation welcomes the positive progress made with the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, and the ongoing cooperation with the States mentioned in the annexes of the report. However, a lot still remains to be done, and it is important to find more ways to reach out and to cooperate with non-State armed groups.

In conclusion, let me stress that Estonia highly values the work of the Security Council, its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and its open debates on this issue. We appreciate the work of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, UNICEF and all other United Nations structures involved, as well as the utmost important contribution of civil society organizations. There is never too much we can do for children. In short, by protecting children we protect our future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Fathalla** (*spoke in Arabic*): As this is the first time that I am taking the floor in the Security Council this month, I should like to begin by congratulating the United States on acceding to the Council presidency, and to thank it for its initiative of organizing this important debate on children and armed conflict.

I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2014/339). It is a very important document, and we hope that this meeting will make it possible for us to achieve a broader overview in order to promote efforts to protect children in armed conflict and the non-participation of children therein.



We believe this meeting is important because it focuses on issues related to children in armed conflict, and in particular on the tragic conditions that Arab countries are enduring, which have increased children's suffering and the dangers they are facing, whether through trauma or injuries, in the Arab world today. This brings to the fore our responsibility to protect one half of the population of the Arab countries. What we sow today we will reap in the future. International law forbids the exploitation of children and their use in armed conflicts. Despite this reality, many countries, especially in the Middle East, have resorted to recruiting children without considering their wishes. They have been forced to bear arms and become soldiers, as well as to commit crimes, become a part of the machinery of war and confront the dangers of facing a warring opponent.

We should emphasize the promotion of the rights of the child, particularly in the light of the changes that have occurred in the Middle East since the end of 2011. At the 2012 Baghdad Summit of the Council of the League of Arab States, a declaration was made at a special meeting addressing the issue of a five-year plan for promoting children's rights around the Arab world in order to combat the negative effects of conflict on children. That included follow-up mechanisms and a revitalization of Arab entities' work in the area, as well as organizing seminars and workshops aimed at promoting the exchange of ideas and the role of civil society organizations in promoting children's rights in society.

The 2013 Doha Declaration also looked at the issue of children in the Arab region. The Arab countries reiterated the importance of cooperation among Arab States in promoting the rights and well-being of children, both from a qualitative and quantitative point of view. It also examined the importance of guaranteeing the means necessary for providing protection to children in areas of armed conflict. The Amman Declaration emphasized for the post-2015 development agenda, in a document that was adopted by the Ministers of Social Affairs in 2011 and that provides for the importance of guaranteeing social protection for children and putting an end to all forms of violence against them, while promoting development prospects in the Arab countries and the post-2015 agenda.

Conditions in the Arab region are dependent on the implementation of the relevant international conventions relating to children's rights and the

prohibition of violence against children. We would like to emphasize some of the efforts undertaken by the League of Arab States to protect children, specifically in the light of current political and social trends in the Arab world and their impact on children.

First was our cooperation with Ms. Coomaraswamy, the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We were involved in a campaign launched together with UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as it related to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Through various activities and working with various entities, the League discussed the rights of children and the possibility of inviting Arab States that were not yet party to the Optional Protocols to accede to them, particularly that on the involvement of children in armed conflict. It is very important that we become party to the Optional Protocols if we are to protect children and their rights.

Secondly, the League of Arab States is working to support the efforts of the current Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, to promote the rights of children affected by armed conflict, to protect them and to back the Children, Not Soldiers campaign that she launched at the beginning of this year. Our goal is to see all children demobilized by 2016 and to end their recruitment by Government armed forces. We support the efforts agreed to by Government bodies to deal with this scourge and create greater cooperation.

We note the issue of violations perpetrated by non-State armed groups and those non-governmental armed groups listed in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339). It is key that cooperation be promoted between the Office of the Special Representative and the League of Arab States, which will soon conclude an agreement on the issue that will be very similar to the one signed between the Special Representative and the European Union. The goal is the protection of children's rights. The League will also be promoting cooperation with UNICEF in order to organize a conference on rescuing Syrian children, thereby reaffirming the importance of protecting children, especially in armed conflict, and as a response to UNICEF's campaign to promote the rights of Syrian children.

Lastly, I would like to highlight the fact that more than 1 million Palestinians in Gaza are suffering from

collective punishment under the Israeli occupation, and from the blockade that has been in place since 2007, affecting about 90 per cent of the people living there. In addition, a very large number of children were wounded or killed in the most recent war in Gaza, which lasted some 50 days. The children in Gaza need the efforts of the international community and international help in protecting their rights. They also need international assistance, through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other specialized United Nations agencies, in order to rebuild the Gaza Strip and guarantee their basic rights and their right to a life of dignity, and to put an end to the serious violations of the four Geneva conventions and of international humanitarian law, as well as of other conventions that were put in place in order to protect the rights of people under foreign occupation.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria): I would like to begin by saying that the commitment we must demonstrate to children affected by wars and all other forms of abuse should go well beyond that represented by the international legal instruments and Security Council resolutions that bind all States. It is a moral duty — greater than the duty based on our representation of our own countries or on our service in international organizations — to fight, as hard as we can, the plague of children being used as soldiers, targets or any other form of abuse. I firmly believe, and state on behalf of my country, Algeria, that children's place is in school, and those schools should be immune and protected.

It is heartening that the international community has started to size up this crucial issue. Today's open debate — which I thank the United States for convening — is of paramount importance and follows similar meetings held in the past couple of years. However, while some legal instruments do exist in this field and the Security Council has adopted some resolutions on the subject, we have to face the fact that, according to credible accounts, 300,000 children are still forcibly enlisted as soldiers and many others are still abused in the maelstrom of conflict situations. Children in the occupied Palestinian territories continue to suffer from the prevailing military occupation. They continue to be arrested, detained and prosecuted in juvenile military courts, as has been highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339). We all have in

mind the images of the children on the beaches of Gaza, their schools destroyed.

At this juncture in the debate, Algeria believes that the Security Council should make its message and action as clear as possible. First, the whole world should know that the Council will take specific action wherever continued abuses against children are committed and against whomever is committing them, be they States, groups or individuals. Secondly, all peacekeeping operations should encompass, beyond the current advisers that exist, specific differentiated provisions on children in conflict situations. Thirdly, the Secretary-General's reports should include specific recommendations. Fourthly, the Security Council should be proactive and preventive on the issue of justice and accountability, whether that involves States, armed groups or individuals. Sanctions cannot be an evasive or hypothetical option.

On a more positive note, I must thank the Secretary-General for his report and commend the tremendous work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zerrougui, and her Office, which deserve greater and broader support, both politically and in terms of giving her Office the appropriate means. We commend her for the United Nations global Children, Not Soldiers campaign carried out with UNICEF.

It is also important to encourage agreements with regional organizations and States. Our duty is to encourage those States that have voluntarily entered such agreements and shown effectiveness. In that respect, we deem it important to congratulate Chad for setting an example for Africa and beyond. All Member States should continue to work to stabilize and help those countries with appropriate measures. The international community should embark on rebuilding homes and souls. We owe it to children to ensure they hold pencils and computers in safe schools, and not machine guns or targets in killing fields.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

**Ms. Frankinet** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium aligns itself fully with the statements by the observer of the European Union and the representative of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict. I would like to make the following observations in my national capacity.

My country welcomes the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339) and his report on the plight of children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2014/453).

Belgium regrets that armed conflicts continue to affect children disproportionately. Indeed, the annual report notes a significant spike in 2013 in the number of cases of killing and maiming of children in several countries. In addition, the recruitment and use of children in conflict remain endemic. Impunity also remained a worrying problem.

Belgium welcomes the appointment by the Democratic Republic of the Congo of a presidential adviser on sexual violence and recruitment of children. My country welcomes the progress made in the national security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly following the adoption of the national action plan in 2012. However, the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued, indicating that efforts must also continue. The impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of sexual violence also remains a serious concern. For those reasons, my country calls on the Congolese Government to fully and effectively implement the action plan and encourages it again to take all possible measures to bring perpetrators of sexual violence to justice. The Government must also ensure that those responsible for serious violations are not recruited into or from its security services.

Belgium would like to reiterate its concern regarding the use of explosive weapons, particularly in densely populated areas, and calls on all parties to armed conflict to renounce their use, in particular given the harm they cause to children. My country also calls upon States that have not ratified the relevant international instruments to do so as soon as possible, in particular the conventions banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

Belgium is also of the opinion that the Government armed forces listed in the annexes to the report of the Secretary-General on the plight of children in armed conflict should not be able to provide troops to peacekeeping operations until they have fully implemented action plans to end violations against children.

Finally, Belgium welcomes, as the Secretary-General does, regional and subregional organizations' initiative and the important contribution they make in

terms of conflict prevention, mediation and peacekeeping operations. My country therefore echoes the invitation extended to them by the Secretary-General to further include elements for the protection of children when developing their policies, planning missions, training personnel and conducting peacekeeping operations.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of India.

**Mr. Mukerji (India):** I take this opportunity to congratulate the United States on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month and for organizing today's open debate on this issue of great importance and urgency.

Children constitute nearly one third of humankind and are our most valuable resource. Childhood is the foundation for the physical, psychological, social and intellectual development of any country.

Our commitments to the rights of the child are continuously threatened by the perpetrators of armed conflict. Children in many parts of the world are being forced to bear arms and wage war alongside adults. In affected areas and in new areas, schools continue to be attacked, health care and education are on the brink of complete breakdown and development is coming to a standstill. That does not bode well for the proper implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, which we are going to adopt at the summit on the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, in 2015.

India is deeply concerned that children are becoming increasingly trapped in the vicious grip of armed conflict, as both targets and victims of violence and abuse. The primary responsibility for addressing this issue lies with the Governments of Member States. That is due to their obligations and responsibilities under the relevant treaties and conventions they are party to and to the duty that Governments have towards their citizens. India acknowledges the integral role of civil society in this framework and as invaluable partners in our national and international efforts on children's issues.

There is a reference in paragraphs 172 to 176 of the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) to the impact of left-wing extremist armed groups on children in India. That is a very serious issue, which the Government of India has addressed as a priority. India believes that through a combination of development and security-related interventions, the left-wing extremists problem

can be tackled. We do not underestimate the challenge, but we are committed to redressing the situation through a combination of law and robust policy initiatives. The Indian National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, set up in 2007, is one of the few commissions of its kind in Asia. It ensures that actions taken in India are in consonance with our Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989.

If Governments of Member States need assistance in strengthening their capacities and resources to tackle this problem, all of us in the United Nations must demonstrate our willingness and commitment to rendering such assistance. India, which this month marks the fiftieth anniversary of sharing our development experience with our partner countries in the developing world, reiterates our readiness to do so.

We note that among the recommendations included in the report of Secretary General is a call for independent access by the United Nations for the purpose of monitoring and reporting on grave violations against children, and facilitating contact between the Organization and non-State armed groups for the purpose of dialogue. We believe that the United Nations should act only in cooperation with the Government of the Member State concerned, especially now that we have an empowered institution that we unanimously agreed to establish at the sixtieth anniversary Summit of the United Nations in 2005, which is the Human Rights Council. In that context, we note that the Human Rights Council has already completed its first round of the Universal Periodic Review of all 193 States Members of the United Nations.

With respect to the interface between the United Nations and non-State actors, we would note that non-State actors are not bound by any legal obligations or commitments. Any proposed interface with them is therefore open-ended. It would be more effective for the Council to recommend the strict application of the rule of law as deterrence to armed non-State groups, especially for the investigation and prosecution of those non-State actors that are inveigling children into armed conflict or violating the fundamental human rights of children in armed conflict with impunity.

We are dismayed that, despite the clearly spelled out provisions of paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001), the report of the Secretary-General selectively includes issues that do not appear relevant to threats to the maintenance of international peace and security.

That needlessly diverts the attention and resources that are needed to address the core issue being debated today. The selective inclusion in sub-section B of the Secretary-General's report of only countries from the developing world, in our view, is a dangerous approach. The impact of violent extremism and of the recruitment and radicalization of children, the use of children to commit violent acts, as well as incidents of armed attacks on schools, which are listed in that section, cannot be confined only to the developing world. They occur in developed countries too, and need to be addressed in a global framework.

We have referred to resolution 1379 (2001), which was adopted in 2001. Since then, we have established the Peacebuilding Commission. Perhaps the Security Council should review the provisions of that resolution to provide a more direct role for peacebuilding activities to include provisions for the protection of children.

An area where India has been at the forefront of implementing the Council's decisions on the topic of our debate today is through our participation in the peacekeeping operations. Based on the experience we have garnered as the largest contributor to such operations, we must express concern at the lack of resources to implement all the provisions of the mandates. At the very basic level, we need to ensure that more child-protection advisers are deployed in those operations. On a broader level, we expect the Council to take advantage of the two current parallel review processes under way of peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. Both of them are directly under the ambit of the Council. The objective should be to use the provisions and resources of peacebuilding activities in a more proactive and sustainable manner. That, we believe, should apply especially to guaranteeing the safe return of children impacted by armed conflict, and to the sustainability of their demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Okamura (Japan):** I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation for your leadership, Sir, in convening today's open debate. Let me also thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Johanna Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Forest



Whitaker, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Peace and Reconciliation, and Ms. Sandra Uwiringyimana for their briefings.

Today I would like to focus on the issues of child abduction and matters related to it. On 14 April, the extremist Islamic group Boko Haram abducted 276 girls from their school in Chibok, Nigeria. Two-hundred twenty three of them are still missing. Prime Minister Abe stated here at the United Nations last September (see A/68/PV.12) that Japan would do everything possible to prevent sexual violence against women during armed conflict and to support, both materially and psychologically, the people who unfortunately become victims of such acts. It is absolutely necessary to prevent similar outrageous crimes from taking place again, and we should also spare no efforts in supporting the victims. In that regard, on 13 June, the Government of Japan contributed \$855,000 to provide psychosocial support and health care for the victims and their community in Nigeria.

That horrid incident symbolizes the vulnerable condition of children in armed conflict. It is neither the first time that children have been abducted, and it does not happen in Nigeria only. According to the Secretary-General's current report (S/2014/339, last year 147 students were abducted in the Republic of the Congo and 250 were abducted in South Sudan. Also, the number of child abduction cases by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria is increasing. The Security Council should consider the best ways to prevent and eliminate child abductions in armed conflict.

One of the purposes of child abduction is to recruit child soldiers. In that regard, the success of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign is of considerable significance.

We welcome the progress made, such as the successful use of the age verification scheme that Chad has already used in approximately 3,800 of its military units, in cooperation with United Nations agencies.

Over the past six months, since the last open debate (see S/PV.7129), the Government of Japan has provided more than \$1 million to the Central African Republic, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and South Sudan for children in need of protection, including psychosocial support.

In order to achieve the goal of the campaign by 2016, its agenda has to be reinforced. The age verification procedure must be established universally, and those who violate it must be sanctioned. While the campaign

is applicable only to Government military forces, the Security Council should begin to consider how the fruits of the campaign could be diverted to non-governmental military groups, given that they make up the majority of perpetrators.

Lastly, a main objective of United Nations peacekeeping operations is to protect civilians in conflict and post-conflict situations. Children are the most vulnerable in such situations. Yet we still hear cases in which United Nations peacekeepers violate the rights of children. United Nations peacekeeping operations should be a model for safeguarding our children. We, the troop contributing countries, should recognize our responsibility to train our personnel at home so that they will not abuse children in the course of their duties, but protect them.

In conclusion, we should be reminded that abduction is one of the six most grave violations against children. Yet that subject has not attracted adequate attention in the Security Council. It is not recognized as a trigger in the annex of the Secretary-General's report, and is not subject to the monitoring and reporting mechanism. It is high time to think anew on this matter.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

**Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal):** I wish to thank the United States delegation for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict, an issue to which Portugal attaches great importance.

I thank today's briefers for their presentations. I would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her briefing and to commend her tireless efforts in contributing to the advancement of the agenda on children and armed conflict.

Portugal fully supports the Children, Not Soldiers campaign with a view to ending the scourge of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts by 2016, both by Governments and non-State actors. Much has been done, and we value the significant steps taken to prevent recruitment and to end the use of children by armed forces and groups. Action plans have proved to be excellent tools to engage with armed forces and organized armed groups. However, political commitment per se is not enough. Compliance is also required.

The Council adopted resolution 1261 (1999), its first resolution on children and armed conflict, 15 years ago, recognizing that this issue has serious implications for international peace and security. We are fully convinced that the issue of children and armed conflict has serious implications for international peace and security, and we believe that the protection of children in such situations requires the commitment of the international community as a whole.

Despite the significant progress made in advancing the agenda with the adoption of a number of resolutions and the creation of mechanisms to better address the issue, the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339), presented in the Chamber today, is blunt in describing the appalling reality of children affected by conflicts and as one of the main victims of the changing nature of warfare and related human rights violations and abuses, who bear the impact of the use of explosives, air strikes and terror tactics.

It is extremely worrying that the Secretary-General notes that the situation has deteriorated in a number of countries, including in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria and northern Nigeria. The abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria in April is an appalling incident that serves to stress the need to continue to address the issue of children and armed conflict.

In recent years, the Security Council has consistently underscored the need to hold accountable persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children. We hope that, in the near future, all perpetrators of such grave violations, including the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access, will be listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports.

The normative framework for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict must continue. Portugal believes that the Council should continue to address situations of concern, while striving to find the best way to promote the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

We are gravely concerned about the widespread and intentional attacks against schools, teachers and students as an instrument of war. Schools and education facilities are now part of the battlefield, as they are systematically being used as bases, barracks, weapon caches, detention centres and even torture chambers by regular armed forces and by armed non-State opposition groups. Education infrastructure

has become a strategic target of attack, putting children and teachers at risk and denying children their right to education. That pattern needs to be reversed.

Against that backdrop, Portugal supports the development of the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, which we have co-sponsored, as a concrete tool to protect educational facilities and limit the impact of conflict on students' safety and their right to education.

Those who abuse children in times of conflict cannot go unpunished. The need to tackle impunity regarding persistent perpetrators, already clearly identified, should certainly guide our work in the near future. We are referring to individuals or entities that have been identified as persistent perpetrators for five years or more, most of which are non-State actors. The Council needs to address those difficult cases and ensure that such individuals are accounted for and sanctioned. If that is not done, the Council's credibility will be at stake.

The International Criminal Court continues to play a fundamental deterrent role, one complementary to the roles of tribunals at national and international levels, by holding perpetrators accountable and by investigating and prosecuting those responsible for committing atrocities against children.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, Portugal would like to emphasize the importance of including child-protection advisers in the mandates of missions. In addition to child-protection advisers, it is fundamental to ensure appropriate predeployment training in child protection for peacekeepers and to provide effective screening of peacekeepers to ensure that individuals who have committed grave violations against children do not serve the United Nations. United Nations peacekeepers are the face of the Organization on the ground and must reflect the values of respect and the protection of human rights.

The harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children and its undeniable long-term consequences for durable peace, security and development are widely recognized. In 1996, Graça Machel said,

“The impact of armed conflict on children must be everyone's concern and is everyone's responsibility” (*A/51/306, para. 317*).

It still is our responsibility to take collective action to overcome this scourge and to prevent children from being affected by conflict.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

**Mr. Winid** (Poland): At the outset, let me join other delegations in congratulating the delegation of the United States on assuming the presidency of the Council for September and to thank for it for organizing this important open debate.

Poland aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

We commend Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her continuous work as reflected in the reports on children and armed conflict. Also, let me thank the organizers of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which aims to eliminate child recruitment by Government security forces by 2016.

It goes without saying that children are often the ones to suffer most in the course of and after armed conflicts. Growing up in an environment of hostility has an immense impact on a child's development and future adult life. It reflects on one's health, physical integrity, education and social abilities, as well as the advancement of one's talents.

Although a lot has already been done to prevent the engagement of children in armed conflicts, there is still concern about persisting threats. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339), presented by Ms. Zerrougui, rightly highlights the worsening situation in a number of countries where children are severely victimized — sexually assaulted, hurt or even killed — in attacks against schools, hospitals and other civilian facilities. Often orphaned, they are frequently deprived of health care and medical attention and suffer from the denial or lack of humanitarian help and assistance. We must also not forget that, in some parts of the world, children are abducted or recruited as soldiers.

Under such tragic circumstances, they become both the victims of and the actors in armed conflicts. Their recruitment occurs in a number of ways that are often violent and cruel. However, in some instances and for various social and economic reasons, they enter military service voluntarily, simply to escape poverty or to protect their local communities. In that context,

let me recall that resolution 2143 (2014) underscores the importance of mainstreaming child protection issues when undertaking security-sector reform, including through age-assessment mechanisms to prevent underage recruitment and through the establishment of child-protection units in national security forces.

Poland, as the prime mover of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted almost exactly 25 years ago, does its utmost to raise awareness of children's rights and to ensure that the rights of children are respected in our own country and internationally. By way of example, I will simply mention our co-sponsorship of resolutions 2068 (2012) and 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict.

In our opinion, it is of utmost importance that all countries sign, ratify and effectively implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in order to preserve children's dignity. Furthermore, violators of those provisions should face international accountability mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court. I hope that this open debate will contribute to real action that will save children's lives.

**The President:** I now give the floor the representative of Canada.

**Mr. Rishchynski** (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate the United States of America for assuming the presidency of the Council during this month.

(*spoke in English*)

We also wish to thank the United States for holding this open debate and take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for the work undertaken by the Security Council to protect children in armed conflict.

(*spoke in French*)

The horrifying situations in Syria, Nigeria, South Sudan and Iraq are brutal reminders of the actions and violations being committed against children and the need to take additional measures to protect them. The rights and protection of children are priorities in Canada's foreign policy and development assistance. Canada is a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its first two Optional Protocols. Canada recognizes and firmly supports the need to prevent the recruitment and use of children in conflicts and the need to work for the rehabilitation of children who have been recruited and used in hostilities.

Beyond the international framework for protecting children in armed conflict, it is critical to ensure the implementation of that protection. That is why Canada consistently calls for the Security Council to systematically impose sanctions and adopt targeted measures to hold perpetrators accountable for committing their depraved acts. We call on the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the Special Representative to continue to consider ways to increase pressure on those individuals who persist in committing violations and to ensure compliance with international obligations.

*(spoke in English)*

One such example is the Security Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism. In the light of the mass kidnapping of schoolgirls in Nigeria by Boko Haram, we encourage the Secretary-General to add abductions as a formal trigger for the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children in armed conflict and for the listing of the armed groups involved.

Canada sees education as essential to security, stability and development. Education is, in fact, intertwined with the children and armed conflict agenda. The military use and targeting of schools deprives children of access to education, while putting the lives of students and teachers at risk. It also impedes the future of the country by preventing the next generation from developing its full potential. We deplore in the strongest terms the ongoing use of schools by armed parties as bases, barracks, weapons caches and detention centres, or for other military purposes. In March, Canada co-sponsored resolution 2143 (2014), which called for increased efforts to protect children in armed conflict and, among other things, expressed deep concern at the military use of schools and attacks on schools.

*(spoke in French)*

We should also support effective predeployment training in child protection for personnel involved in field missions, including military and police personnel. It is also crucial that such personnel be screened to prevent individuals who have committed violations against children from serving with the United Nations. That goes to the heart of the United Nations mandate.

Canada is convinced that both formal and informal child protection systems are important. Formal systems include donor support for civic registration and vital statistics, with data collection disaggregated by gender,

ethnic origin, wealth quintile and other factors. That, in turn, would contribute to establishing age-verification procedures for military recruitment. Informal systems include active participation by families, communities and the children themselves in the creation and fostering of protective environments that contribute to preventing recruitment and other violations. Capacity-building is an essential element of the protection of children. Experience has shown that the protection of children in conflict situations is complex and requires the application of diverse and specialized medical, psychological and social skills and knowledge.

*(spoke in English)*

We recognize that actions speak louder than words. Canada has therefore made concrete contributions to efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Since 2008, Canada has contributed over \$27 million to initiatives relating to the prevention of the recruitment and demobilization of child soldiers. In addition, we recently provided \$10 million to UNICEF to implement the monitoring and reporting mechanism under resolution 1612 (2005). That project will improve child protection in countries experiencing armed conflict, including, among others, Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria.

On 24 January, Prime Minister Harper announced that an additional \$50 million in humanitarian funding will be allocated for education and child-protection activities that support the No Lost Generation initiative. With the support of the Government of Canada for that initiative, it is expected that our partners will be able to reach 660,000 children with protection and education interventions to help restore hope to children affected by the crisis in Syria. Let me assure you, Sir, that Canada will continue to fight against the unspeakable violations that threaten the safety, dignity and lives of girls and boys in situations of armed conflict in every corner of the world.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

**Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

I wish to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the United States delegation for convening this critical open debate on children and armed conflict. We



also express out thanks to the Secretary-General for his latest report (S/2014/339).

Before proceeding further, I would like to just mention how Islam teaches us to treat children. Like all major religions and faiths, Islam sees children as a blessing from God, and they must be received with joy and gratitude. They are to be loved, nurtured and safeguarded with great care. Islam accords children certain rights that must be observed by their parents and the community. Among the most sacred of these rights are the right to life and the right to be educated properly. These teachings resonate strongly in the Charter of our organization, which calls for the creation of conditions conducive to the sound upbringing of children and the youth. Following these teachings, it is thus deeply appalling to acknowledge that civilian populations, in particular children, tend to bear the heaviest consequences of armed conflicts.

It is in this context that I reiterate the OIC's firm opposition to violence as a way of settling disputes. We repeat our consistent objection before the Council over the deliberate targeting of and indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks against civilians, in particular children. The perpetrators of such violations must be held accountable. It is pertinent to note that the Secretary-General's latest report contains the opportune message that more must be undertaken at all levels of cooperation to ease the impact of armed conflict on children. It should be noted, however, that global efforts to eradicate violence against children in times of armed conflict rest upon our ability to settle conflicts in an expeditious and peaceful manner.

The OIC resolves to continue to play an important role, together with the international community, in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Guided by its own charter, the OIC stands ready to strengthen its partnership and to enhance cooperation with the United Nations, aimed at identifying early warnings for potential conflicts and to respond effectively to such identified situations. On its part, the OIC has made persistent efforts for the maintenance of peace and security, as well as conflict prevention and conflict resolution, in its member States. In that respect, we are pleased to mention our close cooperation with the United Nations in the efforts to restore peace and security in such places as Somalia, Afghanistan and the Sudan.

In 2013, the OIC opened a peace, security and mediation unit with a view to increasing the

organization's capacity to deal with the increasingly challenging issues of peace and security. The OIC is grateful to note that this unit was set up with United Nations assistance. In the context of the promotion and protection of human rights, the OIC is steadfastly committed in its support for its Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission. That support is an unequivocal signal of our determination to consolidate the political, security, economic, social and cultural concerns of our members.

As the Security Council plays an instrumental role in ensuring States' compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law, it should step up its efforts to ensure accountability for violations. It is clear that observing the principle of accountability strengthens the protection of children in armed conflict, as it deters the occurrence and recurrence of violations and crime.

The OIC therefore reiterates its call on the Security Council to uphold its responsibilities pertaining to the children victimized by the Israeli occupation in Palestine. The Secretary-General's report describes how Palestinian children continue to be affected by the prevailing military occupation. Similar accounts and reports issued by various United Nations mechanisms, especially the Human Rights Council, continue to document serious violations of the human rights of Palestinian children. As witnessed by the entire world during Israel's recent military aggression in Gaza, the brutality that was inflicted on families, including children playing in the open, was self-evident. That demands robust international attention, accountability and political resolve. The OIC considers these highly serious incidents to be part of a failure of the international community to ensure the broader protection of civilians, including children, in armed conflict.

International conflict resolution depends primarily on the ability of the Council to fulfil its responsibilities, as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations. The OIC therefore reiterates its call on the Security Council to act decisively on situations posing a threat or already impinging on international peace and security. It is incumbent upon us and the Council to ensure that the basic rights of children are fulfilled. That also means that there must be zero tolerance for children being recruited or dragged into warfare or killed and maimed in hostilities. It is high time that the international community made the protection of children in armed

conflict a priority issue for every Government and all multilateral organizations. The OIC is committed to this challenge.

I shall end my statement by re-emphasizing the importance and urgency for all countries, in concert with the Security Council and relevant United Nations entities, to fully uphold the protection of children and their rights in armed conflict. Since the preferred approach is to ensure that violence does not occur in the first place, the peaceful settlement of disputes must be enforced consistently in accordance with the Charter, as well as established international human rights and humanitarian law.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Hilale** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate, which bears witness to your country's commitment to and ongoing focus on this topic.

I wish to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui for her briefing, dedication and passion in carrying out her mandate, as well as Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Ms. Yoka Brandt and Mr. Forest Whitaker for their briefings. I would also like to thank Ms. Uwiringiyimana for her very moving and courageous testimony.

Children are often doubly victimized in armed conflict because of their vulnerability. On the one hand, they are the first victims of violence, in particular sexual violence, and their most basic rights are violated; on the other, they are recruited by parties to conflict as child soldiers, in blatant violation of international law. That is why this debate is particularly important in mobilizing the international community to strengthen the existing legal instruments for the protection of children. Through its consistent commitment, the Council has clearly demonstrated that combating violence and abuse against children in armed conflict is not only a moral and humanitarian obligation, but an imperative for international peace and security.

Morocco welcomes the commitments made by various States parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of children's rights, the progress achieved in liberating child soldiers from the ranks of armed forces or groups, and the growing number of national action plans on this topic that have been signed or are being negotiated.

Morocco also welcomes the efforts undertaken in the framework of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF. My delegation hopes that initiative will achieve its goal of halting the recruitment of children by 2016 and of supporting national initiatives in this area.

Morocco condemns all forms of violence against children, including their use as shields at stockpiles or barracks, taking them as hostages, or their recruitment in refugee camps. Morocco also condemns attacks on schools and hospitals and the use of such sites for military ends.

Although today's debate has the merit of galvanizing all stakeholders in the international community, it is unfortunate to note that efforts made until now to end children's participation in armed conflict have fallen short. In fact, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, child trafficking and their exploitation in prostitution and pornography, various Security Council resolutions and the Paris Principles have been unable to achieve their noble goals. That is why my delegation believes that the efforts of the international community to deal effectively with this problem would benefit from the following multifaceted approach.

First, the approach should be global and implemented with an exhaustive understanding of the root and structural causes of the problem, such as poverty, discrimination, social exclusion and social and economic inequality.

Secondly, it should be a strategic approach that deals not only with current conflict situations but also emphasizes prevention, in particular by allowing democracy and human rights, the strengthening of good governance and the promotion of sustainable development to take root.

Thirdly, the approach should be cross-cutting and involve all stakeholders, in particular Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations and organizations protecting human rights.

Fourthly, it should be flexible and take into account the multifaceted and evolving nature of armed conflicts, as well as the specificities of each conflict.

Lastly, the approach must be practical and combine both incentives and specific measures, in particular to

deal with acts of reprisals and to plan for redress when violations are committed, as well as for reintegrating child soldiers into society in the framework of appropriate national reconciliation processes.

In parallel, national strategies for the protection of children continue to depend on the capacity-building of Governments and on available material, financial and human resources to allow such strategies to be long-lasting. That is why it is important to rapidly respond to the appeal of the Secretary-General in his report (S/2014/339), which calls upon donors to meet the funding needs for the implementation of action plans and national programmes.

The Kingdom of Morocco was one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We have also complied with our obligations under the Paris document with regard to this issue. Morocco's legal arsenal regulating enlistment and military recruitment is in full conformity with international law. It prohibits all military integration under the age of 18 and stipulates measures to support young soldiers in all the training process and integration.

As was pointed out by Ms. Zerrougui this morning in her statement, the ongoing nature and increasing number of children recruited in armed conflict, in particular by armed jihadist groups, including the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, as well as the kidnapping of dozens of girls by the Boko Haram terrorist group, challenge us all and calls for coordinated efforts by the international community.

Resolute action must be urgently taken to ensure accountability for all of those who continue to flout international law and child-protection standards. Coordinating these efforts among various parties in the United Nations system is a guarantee of efficiency and success. However, the primary responsibility is borne first and foremost by the parties to the conflict, who must comply with their international obligations under Security Council resolutions and the relevant international conventions.

In conclusion, it is time that crimes against children in armed conflict be considered crimes against humanity. For children are the future of their respective countries — something that the international community has a responsibility to protect.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

**Mrs. Carrion (Uruguay)** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to express Uruguay's gratitude to the Permanent Mission of the United States of America for holding this open debate on children and armed conflict. We would also like to wish that delegation every success in its presidency of the Security Council. Uruguay would also like to thank the Secretary-General and to express its gratitude for the work of his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui. We reiterate to her our country's full support for her mission. Uruguay would also like to underscore the role of the Executive Director of UNICEF, whose joint efforts with Ms. Zerrougui is extremely important to ending child recruitment by security forces or armed groups by 2016.

During the Council's previous debate on 7 March (see S/PV.7129), organized by the presidency of Luxembourg, Uruguay stated its alarm and repulsion at the impact of armed conflicts on children. Even more shocking is the confirmed increase of serious violations of the rights of children. In that regard, Uruguay would like to thank Secretary-General for his comprehensive report of 15 May (S/2014/339). We urge countries to fulfil the recommendations set out in paragraph 4 of the report, in particular the call to Member States that have not done so to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols.

Many children, whose number is both alarming and increasing, are day after day the targets of killings, sexual violence, rape and recruitment by armies or armed groups. Added to that are the unacceptable attacks on schools and the deliberate use of schools for military purposes, which puts the life and security of children and their right to education in danger. Even worse is the confirmation that most children who take part in armed conflicts are recruited by the very States of which those children are nationals.

The topic that we are discussing is also on the agenda of the General Assembly, where my country tries to play an active role every year. Notwithstanding that, Uruguay would like to underscore the role that the Security Council has been playing through the adoption of various resolutions with the goal of determining and implementing concrete action to end the illegal recruitment and exploitation of children in areas of armed conflict.

It is important to remember, just as in the previous open debate on this topic, that thanks to the action plans that arose from the mandate of the Security Council in this area, in the past 20 years or so thousands of children have been released from exploitation that tramples on the human dignity of each human being. Uruguay would like to underscore once again the value of resolution 2143 (2014), on the rights of children during armed conflicts. In particular, we would like to reiterate our deep concern at the lack of progress in situations of armed conflict where parties continue violating with impunity provisions of international law that provide protection to children.

The Council emphasizes its grave concern in that resolution, and it demands that the parties involved in armed and armed groups to respect the norms set out in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as to refrain from using schools for military purposes. My country considers this aspect essential for respecting the rights of the child enshrined in various instruments, in particular in article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of Child, which obliges States to respect their children's right to education.

It is also important to once again acknowledge the contribution of the International Criminal Court with regard to various actions on this topic, in particular by classifying as war crimes those activities that lead to sexual violence against children, or the recruitment or isolation of minors under 15 years, or their use in hostilities or armed conflicts. Other international tribunals that have assumed the responsibility to protect children under their purview merit broader recognition.

Uruguay considers it essential that we support efforts to fight impunity for all who are responsible for serious violations against children and urges the Security Council to refer cases of such violations to the International Criminal Court. Uruguay also believes that cooperation with national and international courts is a basic and essential part of efforts to ensure that such cases are tried effectively.

Another crucial aspect is ensuring that due attention is given to the effective reintegration of children who have been linked to armed groups. In that regard, effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are vital to enabling these children to reintegrate sustainably and successfully into society.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to repeat what we said in the previous debate on this subject on 7 March (see S/PV.7129), which is that reintegrating children into society also involves considering situations where children have been accused of committing crimes during their enforced association with armed groups. Children in such situations should above all be considered victims themselves, and should be treated as such under international law in the framework of a judicial system that makes their complete social rehabilitation possible.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

**Mr. Anjo (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*):** At the outset, I would like to congratulate the United States of America on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month, and to thank the delegation for its work in organizing the Security Council activities designed to coincide with the start of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are also grateful to the delegation of the United Kingdom for its work in leading the Council last month. My delegation also commends the Secretary-General's report submitted to the Council on children and armed conflict for the period from January to December 2013 (S/2014/339) and the important role played by the Office of the Secretary-General in the issue of children and armed conflict and in monitoring children's situations and their protection.

Iraq is confronting enormous challenges resulting from the vicious attacks aimed at crippling its transition to democracy and our Government's efforts to establish order and stability throughout the country, and derailing Iraq's ability to enjoy its economic, social and political human rights. At this point, we would like to comment on the section on Iraq in the report. We agree with the observation in paragraph 70 on the increase in the number of security incidents in 2013. These are the result of terrorist organizations' direct targeting of residential areas where there are markets, schools and hospitals, killing and injuring thousands of innocent civilians, including children. Neither Al-Qaida nor the Islamic State in Iraq has hesitated to cold-bloodedly declare their responsibility for these attacks.

Regarding paragraph 71 of the report, on the association of children with armed groups, we would like to point out that this phenomenon contravenes our military service law, which prohibits military



service for those under 18. My Government is also continuing to take every possible measure to prevent the recruitment of children by armed groups, through efforts to eliminate all circumstances that might be conducive to such recruitment. In recent years many armed groups using terrorism to achieve their goals have worked to recruit scores of children and exploit their innocence by using them to plant explosives or assist others in doing so. The Iraqi Government has taken various steps to combat such acts, including developing programmes and enacting legislation aimed at preventing the exploitation of children, and providing the financial resources needed for this. Iraq's penal code and counter-terrorism laws have established basic rules designed to punish those recruiting anyone, including children, into such criminal terrorist activities.

The Government of Iraq has continued to protect its citizens in general, and in particular to address the negative effects of terrorism on children and provide them with protection from its attacks. We have worked to encourage a culture that promotes and protects human rights, based on international standards. Within the framework of the United Nations, the Government is working relentlessly to draft and endorse resolutions on counter-terrorism, as well as working with its international partners on providing security to the Iraqi people and protecting our children from terrorist attacks.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

**Ms. Čolaković** (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I would like to thank the United States delegation for convening this open debate to further consider the role of the Security Council in the issue of children and armed conflict. I would also like to express our appreciation to all of today's briefers.

As one of the first countries to have signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on the involvement of children in armed conflict, Bosnia and Herzegovina is particularly aware of this issue. In that regard, we call on all Member States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CRC and its Optional Protocol. Despite all the steps we have taken at various levels, including through international law and human rights law, children are still suffering from the horrors of war. As the most vulnerable group of all, they are often subject to rape, sexual violence and abduction. They continue

to be recruited, killed, maimed and deprived of their right to education and health care. Their involvement in armed conflict, including when violence is perpetrated against them, constitutes a serious violation of human rights.

We are deeply concerned about the grave violations outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) and reaffirm that it is the State's primary responsibility to provide protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflict. All parties to conflicts should comply fully with international law in order to protect the civilian population. Moreover, the protection of children in situations of armed conflict should be seen as a priority that is above politics. We reiterate that both gradual and more vigorous measures should be directed against groups and individuals who persistently commit serious violations against children. In order to end impunity for violations against children, Member States must uphold existing international standards and put into practice their obligations through national legislative systems. Perpetrators must be brought to justice.

Protecting children in armed conflict is one of the duties of the United Nations. The series of relevant Security Council resolutions demand protection for children in armed conflict. There have been significant improvements by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations aimed at better ensuring the protection of children in conflict zones. We therefore call upon the Council to continue to support the children and armed conflict agenda by strengthening provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions, including the deployment of child protection advisers. We also need to ensure that peacekeepers are of the highest quality and that they uphold the highest standards.

Preventing crimes against children is an important component of the set of measures developed to promote post-conflict settlement and recovery. In accordance with the relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions, all parties concerned need to ensure that child protection provisions are integrated into all peace negotiations and peace agreements. Children affected by armed conflict must be a priority in the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction process. They are our future. Reintegrating such children into communities is often a difficult task, especially for domestic and

international stakeholders dealing in multifaceted peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

To resolve such complex issues, there is a need for efficient coordination among the different actors on the ground. Particular attention should be given to refugee and displaced children, children with disabilities and those who have been subjected to sexual violence. In addition, education is an essential tool for the advancement of societies. Therefore, in times of conflict as well as in post-conflict periods, all steps should be taken to safeguard the right of the child to education.

We believe that cooperation and exchanges of information between the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and relevant sanctions committees should be improved. We reiterate the importance of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign in preventing and putting an end to the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict. Accordingly, we also recognize the important contribution of regional and subregional organizations to conflict prevention, mediation and peace support operations.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that conflict prevention is a starting point or prerequisite for sustainable peace, development and respect for all human rights. We firmly believe that the Security Council should remain committed in its determination to ensure the full implementation of and respect for its resolutions on this issue. The protection of children needs to be on the top of any future review agenda for the sake of our own future.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Spain.

**Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain)** (*spoke in Spanish*): As the text of my statement will be distributed, I will deliver a summary of it, highlighting the most salient points.

First, I would like to express Spain's gratitude for the organization of this debate.

Secondly, I would like to say that Spain fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union and that we thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2014/339) and the Special Representative for the magnificent job she has done.

I believe we all know that Spain attaches great importance to the efforts of the international community to put an end to the scourge of the violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. We therefore wholeheartedly support the incredibly important and interesting Children, Not Soldiers campaign initiated by the representative of Luxembourg. We are supporting it with a substantial financial contribution. Without neglecting the importance that should be placed on the work done with armed groups, it is crucial that we not forget the growing prominence of non-State armed groups, and the campaign's objective therefore seems accurate and realistic.

There are positive and negative elements to the current situation. In terms of positive elements, we note with satisfaction that public statements have been made by the leaders of certain armed groups, who have issued orders prohibiting the recruitment of children. We believe that shows that the approach we have adopted is the right one.

Spain agrees with and supports all the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. In particular, we share the view that the protection of the children must be mainstreamed from the beginning in every action undertaken by the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is crucial that that be duly reflected in the mandates and that we take the necessary measures to provide appropriate training to peacekeeping operations for the protection of children. Among the positive elements, we would also welcome the actions undertaken by regional and subregional organizations in this area. We believe it is important to highlight the work that such organizations do on the ground.

However, we must not deceive ourselves. There are still negative elements. Recent armed conflicts have demonstrated the devastating effect of conflict on children. The attacks on schools and hospitals, the images of children killed or maimed as a result of attacks against civilian targets and the continued use of explosive devices in populated areas are tragic events that we must put a stop to. Accordingly, Spain calls on all parties to conflict to fully comply with the provisions of resolution 2143 (2014) and to cease attacks on schools and desist from their indiscriminate use for military purposes. Out of the 3 million refugees from the crisis in Syria, over 1 million are children. I believe that proves a point.

Spain is currently active in two crises that have particularly relevant implications for children in armed conflict: the Central African Republic and Mali. As a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict of 2000 and to the Paris Commitments, Spain has always ensured that its troops deployed in both countries receive appropriate training on the matter.

To conclude, the fight against impunity continues to be a key and crucial element. I would like to reiterate that the primary guarantors of children's safety and well-being in conflict are Member States themselves, who have the obligation and responsibility to protect their own citizens, prosecute perpetrators and care for victims.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

**Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan):** I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely meeting on children and armed conflict and for the United States' able leadership of the Council this month. I would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office for their tireless efforts towards mitigating the devastating impact of war on children, and the other speakers for their statements.

Afghanistan aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Children around the world suffer enormously as a result of war, violence and armed conflict. This devastating reality is even more widespread today due to the upsurge of bloody conflict and brutal extremism in Iraq, Gaza and South Sudan and around the world. In Afghanistan, children have suffered immeasurably as a result of over 30 years of war. Their childhoods have been compromised and characterized by persistent violence, killing and loss. Today, resurgent conflict and pernicious extremism continue to cause children tremendous suffering. They are caught in the crossfire of military operations, explosions of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and deadly suicide attacks. They are exploited by terrorists who force them to serve as combatants, suicide attackers, manufacturers and planters of IEDs, and even sex slaves.

The enemies of Afghanistan, in flagrant violation of international law, deny Afghan children — particularly

girls — their fundamental right to education. The Taliban threaten girls and their teachers with acid attacks, killings, injury and abduction to prevent them from attending school. Terrorist groups attack schools, plant IEDs inside school premises, and detonate IEDs and suicide bombs close by. In 2013, schools were attacked in at least 73 such incidents, resulting in the deaths and injuries of dozens of children. In parts of the country, the fragile security situation has forced the closure of hundreds of schools, affecting 115,000 children in 2013 alone.

The Government of Afghanistan deplores the use of children in war and affirms that child recruitment is unacceptable in all cases. It is tragic that Afghan children attempt to join the national and local police and army, and that they are compelled to lie about their age in order to serve and earn money for their families. Noting this terrible reality, my Government has established a series of policies and practices aimed at mitigating child recruitment.

In 2010, Afghanistan launched an inter-ministerial steering committee on children and armed conflict. In 2011, the committee developed a national action plan to end and prevent the recruitment of children into the Afghan National Security Forces. Since then, among other reforms, my Government has established child protection units within the Afghan National Police and Afghan local police recruitment centres; those in the western region rejected 132 boys from voluntary enlistment in 2013. High-level focal points have been assigned to promote the protection of children within the Afghan National Police, the Afghan local police, and the Afghan National Army. In addition, the Government has pioneered age-verification procedures in Heart, in the western part of the country, and aims to extend this good practice throughout the country and to share similar good practices with developing countries elsewhere in the world.

On 1 August, Afghanistan reaffirmed its commitment to ending child recruitment into the Afghan security forces by endorsing a road map towards compliance, with the support of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and UNICEF. My Government looks forward to continuing its efforts to implement the national action plan and uphold the commitments laid out in the road map.

Afghanistan faces profound challenges in its fight to find peace, but we are committed to doing our utmost to end child recruitment and enhance child protection in the country. We cannot do this alone; we call on our international partners to maintain their support in order to help us achieve our goals. As Afghanistan looks towards a bright new future with the conclusion of the elections process, we hope to strive towards an Afghanistan in which all children are able to live in freedom and in peace, and the horrors of war and violence are but distant facts of history.

**The President:** I give the floor to the representative of New Zealand.

**Mr. McLay** (New Zealand): New Zealand thanks Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui, Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and Ms. Brandt of UNICEF for their particular presentations. We commend Sandra Uwiringiyimana for so bravely sharing her experiences; and we acknowledge Forest Whitaker's very real contribution to the Children, Not Soldiers campaign.

The report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2014/339) makes solemn and disturbing reading. Globally, armed conflicts continue to take a significant, disproportionate and grave toll on children; that should be of alarming concern to every single United Nations Member State. New Zealand therefore urges State and non-State actors to stop violations and to hold perpetrators to account. We remain concerned by the number of persistent perpetrators, and repeat our call for the Secretary-General's annual report to detail how long each persistent perpetrator has appeared on the list.

There has been some good progress towards ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. We commend the work of the Special Representative's Office and other partners, and alongside Morocco we acknowledge those Governments and non-State actors that are progressing action plans to end that practice. Nonetheless, engagement with non-State actors must be intensified further, given that they are the majority of those recruiting and using children in armed conflict.

We welcome the strengthening of partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations, but more work remains to be done there as well. Effective action to eliminate violations against children must start at the national level. We must give priority to developing a culture that deplores the direct

involvement of children in conflict, and condemns all violations against children. The United Nations itself must foster that culture, particularly on the front line. As a first step, New Zealand calls for mandatory child protection training for all United Nations peacekeepers that will stay with them throughout their military service and should be a key influence on culture and attitudes after they return home.

New Zealand condemns the intentional targeting and military use of schools, teachers and students. It is unacceptable that any child should be denied his or her right to education, and no family should ever fear sending its child to school. Likewise, hospitals and medical facilities must not be targeted or used for military purposes. New Zealand's Defence Force operates under a structured framework around the use of schools, all underpinned by core principles, including the protection of civilians and children, and respect for children's rights to education.

New Zealand endorses the development of the Lucens Guidelines and encourages other States to do likewise. We stress the need to address violations and abuses against children in all mediation efforts and peace agreements. Mandates for all relevant peacekeeping operations and special political missions should include robust child protection provisions, and child protection advisers should be deployed to any conflict that severely impacts children.

Issues such as reintegration, as mentioned earlier by the representative of Uruguay; forced suicide attacks, as mentioned just a moment ago by the representative of Afghanistan; abductions; casualty reporting; the impact of explosive weapons with wide-area effect; and overall accountability measures, among others, also deserve attention and further consideration.

New Zealand is committed to the protection of children affected by armed conflict. It will only be with a shared sense of that duty that we will bring an end to the unconscionable violations against those whom Indonesia earlier described as a blessing from God.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

**Ms. Mogobe** (Botswana): As this is the first time Botswana addresses the Security Council since your assumption of the presidency for the month of September, Mr. President, allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you on that and to



reiterate our standing pledge to constructively engage with the Council on the work before it. We also wish to thank the United States delegation for organizing this important thematic debate.

Botswana attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. We therefore take this opportunity to reaffirm our strong commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as to the full implementation of our obligations under the Convention. We take those obligations very seriously and continue to establish national strategies and mechanisms aimed at the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

As we have on previous occasions shared with the Council, Botswana has and continues to prioritize education, which we deem a fundamental constituent in the promotion and protection of the rights of children. In that regard, we have succeeded in achieving universal access to education, and now strive to ensure its quality and relevance.

We also continue to strive to implement other programmes intended to safeguard the rights of children in early childhood, including access to health-care services and child-health interventions. However, such interventions are still far from being enough. As found in most parts of the developing world, there are still significant challenges to those efforts, mainly due to resource and capacity constraints.

While we continue to address the challenges with the means currently available to us, we also look to the elaboration and adoption of the post-2015 development agenda to provide clear direction on the means of implementation on issues relating to the protection of children. We believe that those should also be mainstreamed into international security operations.

We wish to acknowledge the support of the relevant United Nations agencies, in particular UNICEF and other partners, including civil society organizations and the private sector, in their facilitation of our national efforts to uphold both our international and domestic responsibilities to advance, as well as defend, the safety, security and general well-being of the world's children.

Botswana welcomed the Secretary-General's report in May (S/2014/339) on children and armed conflict, which highlights global trends on the impact of armed conflict on children, as well as the main activities and initiatives regarding the implementation of the

relevant Security Council resolutions, and other work on children and armed conflict.

The Secretary-General's report clearly illustrates the negative and disproportionate impact of armed conflict on children, and calls on all of us to play our part to prevent grave violations against children and to make violators accountable in order to expedite the promotion and protection of the rights of children.

In that regard, we also wish to commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, who earlier this year delivered a statement (see S/PV.7129) to the Council detailing the efforts her Office has embarked upon to better protect children in conflict situations. The Special Representative reiterated her intention to work towards child-free Government armed forces by the end of 2016. To that end, the Office of the Special Representative, together with UNICEF, launched the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, which aims to end and prevent the recruitment of children by Government armed forces. Botswana fully supports those initiatives and it hopes to see some results in the near future.

Botswana welcomed the Security Council endorsement of those intentions in its resolution 2143 (2014), and we wish to add our voice to the Council's support for the initiative and all the other work that the United Nations carries out in that regard. We believe that the international community as a whole has the wherewithal to successfully end and prevent grave violations against children in armed conflict. However, action has to be timely and effected in a peaceful manner and should conform to the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as to established international humanitarian law.

I wish to conclude by reaffirming Botswana's commitment to the promotion and protection of the rights of children and to ensuring the full implementation of our national obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

**Mr. Kyaw Tin (Myanmar):** First of all, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the United States presidency of the Security Council for organizing this important open debate. Our thanks also go to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the

Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing and her dedication to protecting children in armed conflict. We also extend our appreciation to all other briefers for their presentations.

My delegation shares the international community's concern over the suffering of a growing number of children affected by armed conflicts unfolding in many parts of the world. Myanmar therefore welcomes the noble undertakings of the United Nations to end grave violations against innocent children through a cooperative approach, especially the Children, Not Soldiers campaign.

We also thank the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the annual report (S/2014/339) describing global trends in the impact of armed conflict on children. With regard to the assessment of Myanmar, we feel that it needs greater balance, as it mainly focuses on reported isolated incidents of individual violations and complaints received from various sources. It should have provided adequate space for the response taken by the country concerned to those complaints. As the report's coverage is for 2013, some of its contents have been overtaken by the recent positive developments in the country.

In Myanmar, we have a long-standing, sound legal basis and directives that prohibit forced conscription, as well as the recruitment of minors under 18. Yet, in the past, there have been unfortunate incidents of minors finding their way into military service for various reasons, including a lack of proper documents to verify age and weaknesses in recruitment procedures, minors' own relationship problems and the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas.

But Myanmar today is different. Those issues are being addressed more seriously and are being rectified. Soon after embarking on the democratic transition in 2011, Myanmar took bold steps to address the issue with strong commitment by signing a plan of action. Myanmar is one of the few countries that is making important progress in implementing its plan of action, as highlighted by the Special Representative in her statement this morning. I thank her for that. Among the concrete actions taken are the establishment of a complaint mechanism, a public awareness-raising campaign against child recruitment, including erecting billboards across the nation. Human rights education training for trainers has been organized for senior-level

military officials. The number of complaints, which include both factual complaints and some fabricated ones, has of course risen owing to the rising public awareness and greater media freedom. Those who commit underage recruitment are punished according to the law. Since the launching of the action plan, legal action has been taken against a total of 229 military personnel, including 40 officers, for wrongful recruitment of underage individuals into the military.

The Myanmar Government army is fully committed to preventing underage recruitment and has indicated its firm determination to finalize the full implementation of the action plan during the six-month extension period in order to be delisted from the report of the Secretary-General. To that end, Myanmar's committee to prevent underage recruitment in the military is meeting more frequently every month with the country task force on monitoring and reporting of grave violations of child rights in armed conflict. The list of suspected recruits received from the complaint mechanism is being jointly verified fortnightly. That led to the release, on 1 August, of another group of 91 underage soldiers from the military services, bringing the total number of discharged underage recruits to 363 since the launch of the action plan. Even before the signing of the action plan, 597 underage soldiers had been released since 2004 through our own voluntary verification procedures.

Myanmar has taken many other tangible steps this year to prevent underage recruitment. Access for monitoring visits is now granted for visits not only to Government armed forces, but also border guard forces. To prevent underage recruitment, infantry units are no longer allowed to recruit directly. Only recruitment centres are tasked with recruitment duties. Procedures for proper recruitment have also been strengthened and improved by introducing new layers of scrutiny. More than 3,000 seminars and lectures on the prevention and protection of children in conflict have already been conducted for military personnel throughout the country. The controversial directive exempting matriculated students over the age of 16 from recruitment to non-combat training has also been abolished, as recommended by the Security Council Working Group.

One of the major developments contributing to our efforts to protect children in conflict has been the unprecedented progress of the Government's peace negotiation process to end the six decades-long ethnic

conflict. A nationwide ceasefire agreement is now within arm's reach. The return of peace and stability to every corner of the country augurs well for the Government's efforts to achieve rural development, as well as for the efforts to protect children in areas of conflict.

Myanmar believes that enhanced cooperation through a clear work plan between the country task force on monitoring and reporting of grave violations of child rights in armed conflict and the Government armed forces will eventually pave the way for its delisting by the Office of the Special Representative. We are therefore prepared to collaborate with the country task force on monitoring and reporting of grave violations of child rights in armed conflict and the Office of the Special Representative to review the progress on the implementation of the action plan and to identify remaining key areas requiring further progress for full compliance and delisting. Our aim is to reach that goal even before the targeted date set by the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. We are also hopeful that our serious effort to address the issue will receive encouragement, fair assessment and an equally positive response from the United Nations. Through our collective efforts, we can achieve our shared goal of making our Government armed forces free of underage recruits before 2016. Such an achievement will also serve as a good example for the remaining non-State actors to follow.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Somalia.

**Mr. Kullane (Somalia):** I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on children and armed conflict.

I would like first of all to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Ms. Yoka Brandt, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Forest Whitaker, UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, as well as our sister Sandra Unwiringiyimana, for all their prior remarks.

The Somali Federal Government commends the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for all her efforts. We also commend the resilient system of child protection established by the Security Council, which is now being implemented in Somalia through the Somali Federal Government. Somalia is firmly committed

to the protection of children in armed conflict. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General recently visited Somalia and met with the President, His Excellency Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and with the Prime Minister of Somalia. The President renewed Somalia's commitment to taking concrete steps to move forward on the implementation of the two action plans signed in 2012 to end the recruitment and use of children, as well as to end their killing and maiming, by armed forces. The Somali Federal Government also strongly reiterates its commitment to achieve the objectives of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign and to take all concrete measures to prevent and end child recruitment by all forces in Somalia. We also reaffirm Somalia's intention to be the next campaign country to be delisted.

At the national level, the laws governing the armed forces, the police and the security services categorically prohibit the recruitment of children to their ranks. The ongoing political, constitutional and security sector reform process offers unique opportunities to join efforts and marks significant progress towards improving child welfare and protection after 25 years of conflict that has deeply affected the people of Somalia.

The Somali Federal Government welcomes the support of the United Nations, in particular that of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and UNICEF, to Government institutions aimed at facilitating implementation of the action plan that has been signed.

Key steps taken towards compliance with the action plan include the establishment in May of a joint military-civilian child-protection unit within the Ministry of Defence. The unit is charged with coordinating the activities of the action plan at the headquarters level and with mainstreaming child protection in policies and activities within the Somali National Armed Forces and across Government institutions. The Government of Somalia will soon appoint focal points at the sector level. Furthermore, in March, the Government adopted a standard operating procedure for the handover of children separated from armed groups. The Government welcomes the joint screening of troops and new recruits, which we just resumed and will continue. The mobile screening team, comprised of representatives from the Somali National Armed Forces, the United Nations, AMISOM and the European training team, was established on 14 May and has been conducting systematic screening of Somali

military units, including the Somali National Armed Forces and the Somali police force. With respect to the separation of children, as part of the activities set out in the action plan, 250 Somali National Armed Forces soldiers were screened at the Jazeera Training Camp in Mogadishu on 29 June. In addition, some 900 new recruits were screened. No child was found among the soldiers.

Somalia is committed to strengthening child protection by expediting the ratification process of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its Additional Protocols concerning the involvement of children in armed conflict. That policy will be implemented based on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

In our protracted civil war, we have learned that the first casualties are hope, culture, values, principles, dignity and integrity. Today Somalia stands for healing, restoring and repairing all the sectors that have been affected by the protracted civil war, so that our children, who are our future, can learn from our mistakes. We must provide them with an environment that allows them to reach their potential and we must ensure that they and we are not defined by the horrors of the civil war, but by the speed with which we are overcoming them.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Pavlichenko (Ukraine):** On behalf of the delegation of Ukraine, I wish to thank you, Sir, for organizing this important meeting. I would also like to acknowledge Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for introducing the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339) on that issue.

Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made earlier in this debate by the observer of the European Union. My delegation would like to make the following statement in its national capacity.

Ukraine strongly believes that the full and effective implementation of the obligations undertaken by Member States in accordance with the basic documents in the field of the protection of children's rights must be a priority at the national, regional and international levels in daily life, let alone armed conflicts. We fully share the Secretary-General's concern over the impact that ongoing armed conflicts have on children. Although not on a scale as large as in some other parts of the

world, but no less dramatic, the issue of children and armed conflict has, unfortunately, become pertinent to Ukraine.

Since the beginning of the conflict provoked by the Russian Federation — and more recently Russia's unconcealed military aggression against Ukraine — there have been repeated abductions of children by Russian-sponsored terrorist groups in eastern Ukraine, including from orphanages and medical facilities. They have been illegally moved outside the country. Children are being killed and wounded as a result of the activities of armed groups active in eastern Ukraine. According to the latest report of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Ukraine, at least 23 children have been killed since mid-April, while and at least 38 have been wounded in eastern Ukraine.

The protection of civilians, particularly children as the most vulnerable group, has been a top priority to the Government of Ukraine while conducting its anti-terrorist operations. The Government has taken a number of practical steps in order to enhance coordination in evacuation activities. A significant number of children has already been evacuated from the zone of the security operation. Several groups of children who had been forcibly moved outside Ukraine by illegal armed groups were successfully returned to Ukraine and are now safe.

According to the latest official statistics, 35 per cent of the the internally displaced persons (IDPs) registered by the Government are children. In order to facilitate their enrolment in schools, the Government of Ukraine allowed school administrations to enrol IDP children based only on a written request by their parents. Authorities are also working to simplify the procedure for children to obtain medical care. On 8 August, the President of Ukraine signed a law that allows for the transfer of State property to local authorities in order to establish new kindergartens. The Government of Ukraine is also addressing the need to provide psychological assistance to children who have been affected by the atmosphere of fear and intimidation.

In that light, we deem it necessary to increase Member States' commitments to the topic under discussion today by acceding to, and effectively implementing, the relevant universal and regional instruments, in particular the Convention on the



Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Ukraine commends the work of UNICEF and other specialized United Nations agencies in the area of children and armed conflict. We greatly appreciate the assistance provided to us by the United Nations and the relevant humanitarian organizations aimed at addressing the adverse implications that Russian aggression continues to inflict on children in Ukraine.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Montenegro.

**Ms. Pajević** (Montenegro): We thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate. We also thank today's briefers for their valuable presentations.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the observer of the European Union. I would like, however, to highlight some points of particular importance to my country.

As stated in the latest report of the Secretary-General, armed conflict has continued to have a disproportionate impact on children. It is worrisome that

“More than 4,000 cases were documented by the United Nations in 2013, but thousands more children are estimated to have been recruited and used.” (S/2014/339, para. 9)

We fully share the concerns presented in this report with regard to grave violations against children.

The Security Council has indeed made substantial progress in advancing the children and armed conflict agenda, but more action is needed to protect the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and to ensure that perpetrators of grave violations against children are held to account. It is in that context that we emphasize the importance of fulfilling the objectives of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign, launched earlier this year as a new effort to end the recruitment and use of children by Government forces in conflict by 2016. To that end, we welcome and recognize the positive developments and achievements by some Governments listed in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General. We urge all others to demonstrate the necessary willingness and determination to end the recruitment and use of children in armed forces.

Thousands of boys and girls around the world are still being recruited into Government forces and armed

opposition groups to serve as combatants, cooks, porters, messengers or in other roles. Girls, and sometimes boys, are also recruited for sexual purposes. That is simply unacceptable and it has to come to an end once and for all. Therefore, we call on all States to become party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

We expect that the campaign will make a significant difference with its two-fold contribution — first, to the full implementation of action plans to end and prevent recruitment; and, secondly, to the release and reintegration of children into civilian life to ensure that children released from armed forces or groups are able to become productive members of their societies and are no longer at risk of recruitment in the future.

We remain gravely concerned about attacks on and the increasing use of schools for military purposes. That does not only have a devastating impact on children, but it is a violation of international humanitarian law. Schools can be converted into a military targets, and students, teachers and learning facilities can indeed be made vulnerable to attacks and other forms of violence by parties in conflict. In line with resolution 2143 (2014), we call on parties to armed conflict to respect the civilian character of schools, while encouraging States to take measures to prevent the use of schools by armed forces and non-State armed groups.

As this year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we have to remind ourselves that the right and access to education is a fundamental human right. Children must be provided education, even in situations of armed conflict. We have to ensure that all measures are taken to protect students, teachers, schools and universities from attack and military use. Against that backdrop, we welcome the development of the Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict as a practical measure in protecting schools against military use. We support the work towards the finalization of the Lucens Guidelines and the process leading towards their broad endorsement.

With respect to United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and the indispensable role they play, Montenegro would like to advocate for strong a child-protection component to be incorporated in the missions' mandates. That would require peacekeepers,

military and security personnel to receive specialized child protection predeployment training.

Montenegro is also concerned about the use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas. We would like to call on all parties to conflict to refrain from the use of such explosive weapons so as to ensure that civilians are protected, in particular children, against death, injury and psychological harm.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has a key role in fighting impunity. When crimes of an international scale are committed and national judiciaries are unwilling or unable to deal with them, State parties to the Rome Statute should pay due consideration to referring those situations to the ICC. It is also vital that the Security Council, to the extent possible, use the option to refer situations to the ICC.

In conclusion, let me point out that it is for everyone — the international community, regional and subregional organizations, non-governmental organizations and the entire United Nations system — to contribute to our common and noble objective, that is, to prevent any future occurrence of children being involved in armed conflict.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

**Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): The delegation of my country welcomes this open debate on the topic of children and armed conflict.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The issue of the rights of children and the protection of those rights is a top priority for the Government of the Sudan, as evidenced by the efforts and policies it has continued to implement. With regard to the Government's achievements at the international level, for example, my country has acceded to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child and of its two Optional Protocols, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

My Government has also ratified two relevant conventions of International Labour Organization Convention No.138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition of and Immediate Action for

the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The delegation of my country has expressed its support for the campaign launched by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict in cooperation with UNICEF. We also took part in the inauguration ceremony of that campaign.

Secondly, at the level of national legislation, the law on the armed forces, the law on the police and the law on security formally prohibit the recruitment of children under 18 years into the ranks of the armed forces. Furthermore, our country has set up a comprehensive system of justice for minors as well as a corrections system for minors. We are also involved in the promulgation of the law of 2010 on the protection of children, as well as the establishment of a special prosecutor for the rights of minors.

Thirdly, in terms of a mechanism for the protection of minors, the Government has established a unit for the protection of children within the armed forces, as well as a department within the Ministry of the Interior for the protection of children and families. Furthermore, the Government has tasked the Prosecutor General of Darfur to investigate the crimes committed in Darfur since the start of the conflict there in 2003, in particular allegations pertaining to violations of the rights of children. The Government has also established a fact-finding commission with regard to the abduction and recruitment of children in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Furthermore, last July the Government inaugurated a national ten-year comprehensive plan for the promotion of human rights in the Sudan.

Fourthly, regarding the level of cooperation with United Nations agencies involved in the rights of children, the Government of my country in Khartoum, through the Permanent Mission of the Sudan to the United Nations, is in constant cooperation with the Office of the Assistant-Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as with UNICEF, in order to address all the concerns related to children. On that point we would like to underscore the very successful visit carried out by a mission of the UNICEF Executive Board to the Sudan last May. We expect it to have a positive impact on the situation of children in the Sudan.

The Government of my country is pursuing its efforts aimed at promoting the rights of children.

On that point, the National Council for Children in the Sudan established a national task force last April in charge of dealing with the situation of children in emergency situations. It has been tasked with protecting children, focusing on the situation of children that find themselves in emergency situations, also in coordination with the UNICEF office. In the same context, the National Council for Children organized a seminar in May on local cultures and their impact on the protection of children, using as an example the issue of the recruitment of children.

The seminar sought to achieve the following goals. First, it sought to raise awareness of the international standards and principles regarding the rights of children, and to step up the role of the media with regard to the local cultures that encourage the recruitment of children, while reiterating the important role of civil society organizations and scientific organizations in that area.

Secondly, the goal was to prepare the launch of a media campaign to announce and outline the goals of the seminar. That campaign will be coordinated with the UNICEF office in Khartoum and will be sending awareness-raising messages through local community leadership, including through women. The campaign will involve coordination with the parties involved in the recruitment of children in order to put an end to such recruitment. All of those institutions are involved in those efforts. Thanks to the policies I have just mentioned and thanks to the concrete policies that we have been implementing, we would like to call for the Sudan to be dropped from the list in the annex to the Secretary-General's report (S/2014/339).

As part of our comprehensive approach to the protection of the rights of children, my country would like to draw the Council's attention to the following points. First, there is a need to assist the Governments of countries in conflict in their efforts to put an end to those conflicts by persuading or forcing the rebel parties to lay down their arms.

Secondly, we need to remedy the deep-rooted causes for the enrolment and recruitment of children by focusing on the causes of conflict, in particular poverty and the impact of climate change. It is also important to put an end to the unilateral economic sanctions that have been imposed on certain countries, forgive the debts of the developing countries, provide those countries with technical assistance and help them develop their capabilities in the area of education and

training. Furthermore, it is important to participate in assisting their reconstruction efforts.

Thirdly, it is essential to involve the Governments.

Fourthly, the signature by rebel movements of action plans that seek to put an end to the recruitment of children is not enough to ensure the end of the violations that they commit. Those violations have to be accompanied by the condemnation of those rebel movements and by forcing those rebel movements to lay down their arms and negotiate.

Fifthly, the delegation of my country, while being fully committed to continuing its cooperation with United Nations bodies mandated to protect the rights of children, would like to call for efforts to ensure that reports of the Secretary-General be based on confirmed and reliable information. Sudanese rebels often wear uniforms that are very similar to the uniforms of the regular army in order to conceal themselves. Furthermore, we would like the information in question to be circulated to Member States before it is reflected in reports of the Secretary-General. The report before us today includes very important statistics and figures and is very sensitive, and the fact that Governments have not been shown the information means that the information should be treated as allegations and not be included in the report of the Secretary-General. Such reports should be characterized by transparency and credibility.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Gata Mavita wa Lufuta** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Let me begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, and expressing our satisfaction to see you preside over the Security Council in September. You are the representative of the United States of America, a country with which my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, enjoys excellent relations, marked by reciprocal respect. I would also like to thank you for convening this important Security Council meeting on children and armed conflict, a subject that gives my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the opportunity to speak on an issue that is now one of my Government's top priorities.

My delegation takes due note of the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict (S/2014/339). I also note that it is my country's continued relapses into war that have produced the phenomenon of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

However, with time and on the initiative of our Head of State, my Government decided to end this phenomenon within our armed forces by taking various actions, including setting up biometric files for identifying military personnel in order to keep better track of army units' personnel data, including their age. For the same reasons, and to clearly express our political commitment and firm determination to eradicate the phenomena of sexual violence and child soldiers, on 9 July the President of the Republic, Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, appointed Mrs. Jeannine Mabunda to be his personal representative on combating sexual violence and the recruitment of children. Last week Mrs. Mabunda ended a visit to New York to consult with key stakeholders from the international community in this area.

My country supports the United Nations Children, Not Soldiers global campaign launched earlier this year by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, together with UNICEF, aimed at eradicating the recruitment and use by Government security forces of children in armed conflicts by the end of 2016. It should be emphasized that the objectives of this campaign, as outlined in resolution 2143 (2014) of 7 March, are already part of a series of initiatives that my Government is working to implement effectively. The progress that has been made on the ground in this area no doubt figured in the Secretary-General's commendation, in his report, of my Government's efforts to combat this phenomenon, and in his encouraging my country's military authorities to further strengthen the procedures for verifying the age of prospective recruits during future recruitment drives.

It is important to emphasize that my Government's efforts are supported by various international partners, including the United Nations. In October 2012, in fact, the Congolese Government and the United Nations signed an action plan consisting of a series of commitments aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children by the armed forces and security services as well as sexual violence against children. To ensure the plan's effective implementation, my Government, together with its partners, has committed to assessing the progress made in this situation every six months. I would point out that significant progress has indeed been made since the plan was signed.

Furthermore, the Congolese authorities have issued two directives, of which the first, decreed by the Minister of National Defence and Veterans' Affairs, is

intended for the armed forces. It instructs commanders of military training centres to facilitate access to military encampments for the United Nations special Task Force on children and armed conflict and for child protection agencies for the purpose of verification. It also instructs the military leadership to take severe disciplinary and punitive action against anyone committing a serious violation of children's rights. It also provides for awareness and training campaigns in every military garrison in the country in order to enable all military personnel to absorb the action plan's directives and resulting obligations.

The second directive, issued by the Director-General of our national intelligence agency, grants members of the United Nations special Task Force and child protection agencies access to the intelligence service's staff, documents, sites and facilities and authorizes the release of all children associated with armed groups and their referral to child protection agencies. Thanks to these orders, the United Nations Task Force and child protection agencies have been able to visit five military training centres and to identify without hindrance about 5,000 recruits. Two coordinating bodies have also been set up to monitor implementation of the action plan, with encouraging results. According to the Government's interim report on the plan, covering the period from 4 October 2012 to 30 June 2013, 2,894 children were separated from the military and from armed groups by June 2013, while during the same period 2,824, including 365 girls, were taken in charge through transitional host centres.

Combating impunity for serious crimes against children has entered a new phase with the establishment of new juvenile courts in 10 of the country's provinces. Again with the aim of strengthening the protection of children, the Government has decided to disqualify anyone who has committed six serious violations of children's rights during a conflict from joining the armed forces. These strong measures targeting children's rights have had significant results.

To avoid confusion, my delegation would like to make it clear to the Council that since the defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars, and in accordance with President Kabila's appeal to the armed groups to lay down their arms, some of the national armed groups have responded to that appeal. The findings show that as these groups give themselves up, their ranks include children, whom our armed forces systematically remand to child protection services. This could be interpreted



to mean that these children have come from our army, when in fact there are no more child soldiers in the ranks of our armed forces today.

Among major actions taken by the authorities to combat sexual violence was the law of 20 July 2006. This law, by comparison with the old Congolese criminal code, has made important innovations, including raising the age threshold for victims of sexual abuse from 14 to 18. It severely punishes practices such as forced marriage and prostitution, exploitation of children, sexual slavery, bestiality and genital mutilation, which are subject to stiff penalties. Nonetheless, the new law on sexual violence both retains these offences and adds 16 more, based on international humanitarian law.

In conclusion, my Government is determined to build on the efforts already made in implementing its action plan for eradicating sexual violence and the recruitment and use of children in armed forces and groups, as well as other serious violations of children's rights. In that regard, my country would like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and Ms. Sylvie Lucas, the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg and Chair of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, for their dedication to the cause of children. My country also welcomes the excellent cooperation that has evolved with the Office of the Special Representative, the United Nations special Task Force, the child protection division of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNICEF. To all these partners, my country is extremely grateful.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Yemen.

**Mr. Bahah** (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the United States on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also thank the members of the Council and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui.

My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, and by the representative of Indonesia, on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Yemen is working to build a sound foundation for a democratic civil society based on comprehensive

national dialogue among actors in the economic, social and political fields. That process seeks to prevent the recruitment, criminal exploitation and use of children and minors. There is a national consensus that recognizes that children associated with armed forces are victims rather than culprits and that they must not be subject to criminal sanctions, in accordance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and legal norms with respect to juvenile offenses.

Yemen has made great progress in the dialogue among the parties concerned. In April 2012, the Minister of the Interior ordered the implementation of legislation requiring that recruits into the armed forces be a minimum of 18 years of age. In her visit to Yemen in November 2012, Special Representative Zerrougui met with members of the Government, the President and representatives of non-State armed groups. The Government committed to developing a plan to end the recruitment and use of children. Following her visit, we established a joint coordination committee to implement the action plan. The Council of Ministers endorsed the draft action plan drawn up by the United Nations and my Government in order to prevent the recruitment and mobilization of children in the security and military forces.

In spite of its modest resources and complex situation, Yemen is cooperating with its international partners to prevent the recruitment of children and to ensure the demobilization of all others from within the ranks of the army. My Government reiterates its commitment to strengthening the promotion of the rights of children and highlights the need to step up efforts to end their recruitment. We thank all the organizations and partners working with us, including UNICEF.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

**Mrs. Natividad** (Philippines): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and for this opportunity to speak before the Council. We join others in congratulating the United States on its assumption of the presidency.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2014/339) describes exhaustively and in detail the dire situation of children recruited, killed, maimed and violated by groups in situations of armed conflict. My Government reaffirms its resolve to protect children and their rights

in situations of armed conflict. We note the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict. The international community must exert its utmost efforts to protect children, particularly those in extremely difficult situations.

My Government continues to work steadfastly to protect our children. Last March, the Philippine Government under the Aquino Administration signed with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front the historic Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, presaging greater peace, progress and prosperity for the southern Philippines. That concrete result of our commitment to the peace process was achieved through hard work with our domestic stakeholders and with the support of the international community. We must all do our part to ensure that the vision of the Bangsamoro is fully achieved. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, working with the Philippine Government, can help build on that achievement by working closely to delist the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

President Aquino also signed executive order No. 138 in 2013, which provides for the establishment of the Monitoring, Reporting, and Response System for Grave Child Rights Violations in Situations of Armed Conflict. The Response System serves as a monitoring arm of the children and armed conflict programme framework. Its primary objective of prevention and timely response falls squarely within the overall agenda of the Philippine Government to protect Filipino children.

We acknowledge the due recognition given to the positive developments that have taken place in the Philippines. Those institutional and legal developments need to be appreciated within the larger context of inclusive and sustainable growth and the peace and development agenda of my country. The United Nations should be mindful that the work for children should also support the good work that is being done on peace processes such as those in my country.

The Philippines continues to work very closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. More frequent and regular interaction and deeper engagement by the Special Representative with stakeholders, including with Member States Missions to the United Nations, may

help move the relevant processes forward and help identify possible solutions to outstanding issues. Such interaction may further help the Special Representative in the preparation of a balanced, impartial and candid report.

In the same vein, the Philippines reiterates the Non-Aligned Movement's position that we should all continue to work closely to ensure that the reports issued by the Special Representative and that the documents emanating from the Working Group are based on clear, accurate, current and verifiable data. It is, after all, that data that provide the basis for the Secretary-General's reports and upon which all comments and recommendations are based.

My Government has stressed this before and will continue to stress this point: gaps in the monitoring process should be addressed and efforts be made continuously to improve the reporting process, including through enhanced cooperation and coordination between the countries concerned and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and the Working Group.

Likewise, the listing and delisting criteria for parties should be clear, transparent, objective and balanced. As the Philippines has stated before, the Security Council may wish to assess the level of commitment, the reach of mechanisms and the efforts and outcomes on the ground as indicators for the delisting of parties. As we remain focused on those goals, the Security Council may wish to consider a stronger focus on how delisting can work to encourage and sustain the efforts to protect children in armed conflict.

It would in fact be an indication of failure on the part of the Security Council and the United Nations if the lists continued to expand. There should be movement in, and subsequent graduation from, the lists so that the Council and the Office of the Special Representative can dedicate precious resources and energy to those situations requiring urgent utmost attention. Let the appropriate United Nations agencies do their job in securing the improvement of situations for children.

It is important as well that the discussion of the issue of persistent perpetrators be in keeping with the mandate of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The current monitoring efforts also must be in keeping with paragraph 2 (d) of resolution 1612 (2005), which

“stresses that any dialogue established under the framework of the monitoring and reporting mechanism by United Nations entities with non-State armed groups in order to ensure protection for and access to children must be conducted in the context of peace processes where they exist and the cooperation framework between the United Nations and the concerned Government”.

Allow me to reiterate the position of the Philippine Government. We value the sanctity of every human life. We need to protect each life, particularly those of our children and youth. Our position is unchanged. The situation in the Philippines does not warrant any inclusion or mere mention in the report. It is our hope that the concrete developments and the concerns we have expressed, particularly on data and reporting, will be taken into full account in subsequent reports. The Philippines offers more positive lessons learned and points to advancements — not setbacks — that warrant our exclusion from the list.

For its part, the Philippine Government will continue to do its utmost to sustain its accomplishments in advancing and protecting the welfare of our children, and to work even more vigorously to help ensure that our children grow up safely and without fear to become the people they want to be. The children are our posterity and need all our help. Let us help them in the best way that we can.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

**Mr. Seger** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): As it is late, I will be brief. First I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate. I also thank Luxembourg for its tireless efforts in chairing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Without question, we also welcome the important work of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and firmly support the Children, Not Soldiers campaign to end the recruitment and use of children by Government security forces in conflict by the end of 2016. Her work has already yielded significant results, for example in Chad.

Despite such progress, hundreds of thousands of children still suffer the effects of armed conflict in the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Syria, Gaza and elsewhere. In Nigeria, Boko Haram systematically attacks schools and in Iraq, the scale and brutality of the

violence against civilians have achieved unprecedented levels. That is why Switzerland welcomes the work of the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack under the Lucens Guidelines.

It is also urgent that we all mobilize to strengthen respect for international law and put an end to grave violations against the rights of children, especially their recruitment and use by non-State actors. The commitments made by such actors remain very limited and the adoption of action plans with these groups faces several obstacles, including their ephemeral nature, governmental opposition or access restrictions under legislation relating to the fight against terrorism. Member States must always allow the United Nations access to those groups with the aim of adopting and implementing action plans. Switzerland continues to support the critical work of the non-governmental organization Geneva Call.

Serious violations of children’s rights, particularly sexual violence, too often remain without consequence in armed conflict. Serious international crimes must be judged primarily by national judicial institutions, but if those are unable or unwilling, the Security Council should use its power to refer matters to the International Criminal Court. In addition, it is essential to train peacekeepers on issues related to the protection of children and to include related provisions in the standard operating procedures and rules of engagement. That programme should be mandatory for any troop-contributing country. Switzerland will make a financial contribution to a review of the impact of the deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions.

Finally, Switzerland encourages States that have not yet done so to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

**The President:** I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

**Mr. Wenaweser** (Liechtenstein): I would like to thank your delegation, Mr. President, for convening this debate and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the other briefers for the information and analysis they have provided to us. I also would like to extend special thanks to Ambassador Lucas, Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, for her presence in the Chamber and the work she has been doing throughout the year.

While we welcome the Secretary-General's annual report (S/2014/339), we are once again appalled by its findings. Children around the world continued to suffer serious violations of their rights, including unlawful recruitment and use as soldiers, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions and denial of humanitarian access in 23 conflicts in 2013. Since then, the plight of children has gone from bad to worse in several situations, including in Gaza, Syria, Iraq and Nigeria. Liechtenstein particularly condemns the unspeakable violence committed by Boko Haram and fully supports its listing in the annex to the report, as well as its inclusion in the Council's Al-Qaida sanctions list. We are also shocked by the atrocious abuses of children by Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, as evidenced in the statement of the Special Representative.

We would like to congratulate the Special Representative and UNICEF for the success of the Children, Not Soldiers campaign. We commend the Government of Chad for having implemented the Action Plan and for its delisting from the Secretary-General's report. We are also pleased to see the progress achieved by the Governments of Yemen, Myanmar, Afghanistan and South Sudan. At the same time, we note that 51 of the 59 parties listed are non-State actors. Most of them have been listed for at least five years and are hence considered persistent perpetrators. We therefore continue to support the Special Representative's efforts to engage with all relevant parties to conclude action plans and promote their implementation. We welcome in that regard the commitments made by non-State actors in South Sudan, the Philippines and in Syria. We hope that those will soon be followed by action and tangible progress on the ground.

Of the 23 conflicts profiled in the Secretary-General's report, 17 included targeted attacks on schools, students and teachers. In 15 conflicts, parties used schools for military purposes. Liechtenstein reiterates its condemnation of those practices, which gravely endanger civilians and deprive children of their education. We urge States to take steps nationally and internationally to end those serious violations of international humanitarian law and to protect children's right to education. We therefore welcome the draft Lucens Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, and hope for their widespread implementation. We commend the leadership role that Norway has taken in that respect.

We cannot continue to tolerate inaction and impunity with regard to the atrocious crimes committed against children every day. Liechtenstein believes that the Council should make more frequent use of its power to refer situations to the International Criminal Court, which can play an important role in that regard. Furthermore, efforts aimed at resolving conflicts must take greater account of children's needs. Mediation processes and peace negotiations and their outcomes should include the perspective of children at the earliest possible stage; that will lead to broader understanding and acceptance and ultimately better implementation. We therefore call on the Council, the relevant United Nations entities and the Member States concerned to consistently integrate and address the needs of children in all relevant decisions and policies and, most important, in their work on the ground.

**The President:** The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

**Mr. Zagaynov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have had to take the floor once again with regard to the statement made by the representative of Ukraine. Our Ukrainian colleagues' attempts to use any United Nations context to spread trumped-up accusations about the Russian Federation are not surprising. It is clear that their assertions are nothing more than attempts to blame on others what is being done by Ukrainian armed forces radicals to the citizens of eastern Ukraine under the pretext of so-called anti-terrorist operations. The facts show that the Ukrainian side is fully responsible for the suffering of children in Donetsk and Luhansk.

Attempts to depict the goal of providing assistance to children and the efforts to ensure security as some sort of wrongdoing are particularly cynical. Dozens of children's lives were taken not because of Russian aggression, but as a result of the massive artillery and rocket fire by the Ukrainian armed forces on civilian targets, including schools and kindergartens. There have been many eyewitness accounts of that. It is unfortunate that the Ukrainian delegation does not understand the futility of trading in the suffering of its civilians, including the youngest ones.

Once again, we call upon the representatives of Ukraine not to engage in fruitless politicking and instead work towards peace and overcoming the rampant and dire humanitarian crisis in the east of the country.



**The President:** The representative of Turkey has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now call on her.

**Mrs. Sucuoğlu** (Turkey): We feel obligated to take the floor once more as we are astonished by the baseless allegations, made by the Syrian regime's representative, of organ trafficking related to Turkey. The organs that he mentioned sadly belong to the Syrian children indiscriminately killed by the regime. The operations he mentioned are conducted in cooperation with the United Nations to save those children who are seriously injured. We just want to set the facts straight.

Just today the press reported that 30,000 Syrian children have been born in safety in Turkey. Turkey's opening of its doors to Syrians escaping conflict not only saves the lives of men, women and children, but also inspires hope for the future of Syria through those newborns.

**The President:** The representative of the Syrian Arab Republic has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now call on her.

**Ms. Alsaleh** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are forced to take the floor again to respond to the allegations in the statements made by the representatives of Qatar and Turkey.

As usual, the representative of Qatar made allegations against my country's Government in order to cloak his country as the protector of freedoms. In referring to the state of Syrian children, he completely disregarded his country's role in the financing of terrorism and its support for terrorist groups operating in my country.

The facts regarding the Qatari regime's involvement in providing support to jihadist extremist groups in

Syria have been documented and verified in various international reports, including a report by CNN in June. Its role has been described as that of a key ally of the United States in financing Wahabist terrorist groups, including groups linked to Al-Qaida, such as the Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Other reports refer to the involvement of the Qatari regime and the connection of some of its sheikhs to Al-Qaida.

The children that the representative of Qatar referred to died because of Qatar's support for terrorist groups. That clearly reflects the hypocrisy of Qatar's approach with regard to the fate of children in Syria. The Syrian people will never forget the crimes committed by the sheikhs, supported by their petrodollars in Qatar. Those responsible for those crimes should be brought to justice. The Syrian people will not forgive the hypocrites who contributed to their suffering — those who shed crocodile tears for Syrian children while giving the green light to those who kill children in Syria.

As for the representative of Turkey, we are puzzled by her feigned surprise with regard to the fate of children in our country. But perhaps Turkey believes that the constant attacks against Syrian civilians by terrorist groups supported by Turkey and the facilitation of access to Syria across Turkish borders for thousands of terrorists is the best way to protect Syrian children.

**The President:** There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

*The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.*