

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict, March 7th, 2014, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement by Mr. Errázuriz, Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations*

We thank Luxembourg, Minister Asselbourn and you, Madam, for convening this open debate and for your country's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My country welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 2143 (2014), proposed by Luxembourg and sponsored by Chile at a critical time, as highlighted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. We value and welcome the statements delivered by the Secretary-General; his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui; the Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Anthony Lake' and especially by Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, whose testimony has urged the Council to take decisive action on the issue before it.

My delegation endorses the statement to be delivered later by the representative of Greece on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which my country is a member.

On the international scene today, the vulnerability of children in situations of armed conflict contributes an element of urgency, dedication and strong commitment to global efforts to protect children — efforts that should certainly not be selective. The situations in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, among others, remind us of our responsibilities. In that regard, Chile would like to emphasize the challenge implicit in the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Our reflections here will be based on some issues raised in the President's concept note (S/2014/144, annex). As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, to Convention No.182 of the International Labour Organization and to the Paris Principles on children associated with armed forces or groups, Chile welcomes the campaign "Children, not soldiers", launched yesterday by the Special Representative and UNICEF and aimed at preventing and eradicating the recruitment and use of children by armed Government forces by 2016. We would like to stress how important it is that the campaign not divert attention from action designed to eradicate this practice by armed groups. We believe the campaign could benefit from forming coalitions and holding regional meetings, as was done in the framework of the conferences on the use of children as soldiers held in Maputo and Montevideo in 1999.

States bear the primary responsibility both for ending impunity and for trying and punishing those responsible for atrocities committed against children. In cases where States are unable or unwilling to bring the suspects to justice, responsibility lies with the International Criminal Court to prosecute crimes covered under the Rome Statute. International commissions of inquiry must tackle this issue and redouble efforts to preserve the evidence of such highly serious crimes.

The registration of births, including delayed registration, not only makes it possible to verify the age of child recruits and ensure that they are demobilized, it also constitutes evidence that can be used to punish those responsible for their recruitment, thus helping to end impunity. We welcome the fact that today's resolution 2143 (2014) covers this issue. The Council should consider taking more forceful action against those who commit serious and persistent violations against children and imposing sanctions on persistent perpetrators. We would welcome recommendations on the subject from the groups of experts on the Sanctions Committees and hope that resolutions on new committees and mandate

renewals will take due account of the situation of children in armed conflict.

In connection with the implementation of resolution 1998 (2011), of which Chile was a sponsor, we emphasize the importance of respecting the civilian nature of schools and condemn attacks and threats of attacks contravening international humanitarian law on schools and hospitals and on those protected through their connection to them. We are also concerned about closings of schools and hospitals in situations of armed conflict, undermining the right to education. We urge parties to armed conflicts to refrain from such actions and hope that the Secretary-General will continue to monitor and report on military uses of schools and hospitals. We are in favour of drafting and implementing guidelines to reduce the use of schools and universities by parties to armed conflicts in support of their military actions and thus minimize the adverse effect of armed conflicts on the safety of students and education. In that connection, we note with interest guidelines formulated by civil society that could be a basis for Government action in this area. We believe that this issue should be covered in ceasefire agreements and in post-conflict agendas.

It is essential that mandates for peacekeeping operations and important United Nations political missions make specific provisions for the protection of children, the ongoing deployment of child protection advisers and training in the area for contingents and staff, and ensure that we be kept informed on these issues in the Council's consultations on those mandates. In that context, we appreciate the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations regarding the matter. Based on my country's experience in peacekeeping missions, we have incorporated into the police sections of such missions policewomen from Chile's Carabineros and Policía de Investigaciones, whose experience in the area can contribute concretely to implementing mandates as they relate to the protection of children.

We stress that more decisive and systemic efforts are needed to end impunity and find a lasting solution to the issue of eradicating and preventing illegal violations of children's rights. Two years before the twentieth anniversary of Graça Machel's report on children and armed conflict (A/51/306), Chile reiterates its commitment to making an active contribution to preventing and eliminating all forms of violence that affect the children of the world, from armed conflicts to urban violence.

I will conclude with the watchwords of Chile's Nobel Prize laureate Gabriela Mistral: the future of children is always today. Tomorrow will be too late.