

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

Statement by Mr. Raja Zaib Shah, Permanent Mission of Malaysia to the United Nations

At the outset, allow me to take this opportunity to convey my congratulations to you, Mr. President, and Luxembourg on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month, as well as on convening this open debate. My delegation also expresses its appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, and Mr. Alhaji Babah Sawaneh for their briefings.

Malaysia is particularly concerned that armed conflicts in various parts of the world still plague children's lives, depriving them of their right to life and physical integrity, as reflected in the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (A/HRC/25/46).

My delegation is perturbed at the thousands of children who are recruited, killed, maimed, abducted, subjected to sexual violence, indoctrinated, forced to commit atrocities, denied humanitarian access and deprived of health care. Despite the progress made thus far, more needs to be done in the area of the protection of the child in armed conflict.

The recruitment and use of child soldiers by parties to armed conflict is not only a war crime, it also affects a community's invaluable asset — its children. Children should be allowed to develop their potential as they traverse from childhood to maturity. Children are persons who must be protected during an important period of their development. Malaysia reaffirms its strong commitment to efforts to protect and promote the rights of children. We condemn the recruitment and use of children as soldiers by any party in conflict.

My delegation also believes that accountability for ending the impunity of those responsible is a duty under both domestic and international law. We cannot deny the fact that in many conflict situations the most vulnerable members of the population, particularly women and children, are targeted with impunity. My delegation is of the firm conviction that there should be no leniency or amnesty for crimes perpetrated on innocent children. In that regard, we call on Member States to steer their national accountability systems towards meeting international standards in order to establish effective accountability measures in the hope of bringing justice, dignity and rehabilitation for children victimized by armed conflict.

In 2005, the Secretary-General proposed the development of a monitoring and reporting mechanism in document S/2005/72. Malaysia feels that was a positive step in the right direction. We furthermore believe that such a mechanism would provide objective, accurate and reliable information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers in violation of applicable international law, and on other violations and abuses committed against children. We would like to see further developments on the monitoring mechanism, as we believe that the mechanism would urge Member States and United Nations agencies to take action to protect children affected by armed conflict.

The discussion on children affected by armed conflict would not be complete without making reference to the role of United Nations peacekeepers. My delegation believes that training is an underpinning element in ensuring the effectiveness of the work of peacekeepers in protecting children. We underline that peacekeepers to be deployed in conflict areas must be exposed to the issues and instruments for the protection of children in the field. Such a mechanism would greatly assist peacekeepers in executing their

duties and would further ensure better protection for children in armed conflict.

We are encouraged by the ongoing work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF, other agencies of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations dealing with children affected by armed conflict. Malaysia takes note of the “Children, not soldiers” campaign of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children by Government armed forces in conflict by 2016. We believe that the campaign should not only create awareness but should also encourage adherence by States to respect the rights of children.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Malaysia has undertaken efforts to ensure that the rights of its children are protected. On 12 April 2012, Malaysia further reaffirmed its commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of children by acceding to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, namely, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Prior to that, in July 2009, Malaysia initiated its national policy on children and its national plan of action on children. Taken together, both sets of initiatives outline the Government of Malaysia’s priorities to promote and protect the rights of children in Malaysia.

To conclude, Malaysia reaffirms its commitment to continue working together with the international community in advancing the agenda for the protection of children in armed conflict. Malaysia upholds the significance of resolutions 1261 (1999) and 1612 (2005), on children in armed conflict. We call on Member States to demonstrate political will and give attention to this important issue for us to better accord the necessary protection to children from the harms of conflict. Rest assured, Malaysia will continue to do its part in that regard.