

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

*Statement by Mr. Khan, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations*

We thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate and for steering the strong, yet pragmatic resolution 2143 (2014) on children and armed conflict.

The testimony of Alhaji Babah Sawaneh, the former child soldier, this morning has touched our hearts. We appreciate the valuable briefings given by the Secretary-General, his Special Representative, Ms. Lelia Zerrougui, and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

Children are our most valuable asset. They need to be protected and nurtured through better education, proper nourishment and moral guidance. The dictum of the Charter of the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war cannot be realized without making a continued investment in the future of our children. All cultures foster love and affection for children.

Yet we find millions of children trapped in wars and conflicts around the world. As noted in the concept paper (S/2014/144, annex), tens of thousands of children continue to be recruited, killed or maimed, sexually abused or deprived of their right to education and health care when schools or hospitals are attacked. In situations of armed conflict, children are often coerced into taking part in active hostilities. Pushing children into combat situations is inhuman. As a child soldier, a child becomes both the subject and object of crimes. The scourge can and must be stopped.

With the Council's determined efforts over the past 15 years, significant progress has been made to reduce the number of child soldiers. Comprehensive norms and standards have been developed. Thousands of children have been demobilized, rehabilitated and reintegrated into societies but the task has not been accomplished. We should all support the Special Representative's "Children, not soldiers" campaign by creating a greater awareness through media campaigns about the recruitment of children as soldiers, by conducting dialogue with the mothers and families of the affected children, by enlisting the endorsement of all parties to conflict to the initiative and by mobilizing resources for capacity-building.

The establishment of legal frameworks, aid verification mechanisms and universal world registration systems prevent child recruitment and reinforce accountability. Investigative and prosecutorial capacity-building helps in combating impunity and punishing perpetrators. Persistent perpetrators must be identified and brought to justice under national judicial systems and, where applicable, through the use of international criminal justice mechanisms.

Education is an enabler and emancipator, and by far the most effective answer to armed conflicts. Attacks on schools endanger students and teachers, destroy premises and deprive children of their right to education. Such attacks, in most cases, are perpetrated by terrorist and other armed groups that do not respect national laws and international norms. In any case, the military use of schools should be strictly prohibited in all circumstances. The international community should therefore strengthen the hands of national Governments in dealing with these groups and protecting seats of education and learning.

Peacekeeping missions can play a vital role in the protection of children in situations of armed conflict; they are often the first line of defence. It is therefore essential that peacekeeping missions receive the necessary training and resources to effectively perform their critical tasks. As the largest contributor of peacekeeping troops, Pakistan welcomes the recommendations in resolution 2143 (2014) on specific operational predeployment and in-mission training of peacekeepers. Pakistan treats this responsibility with the utmost seriousness.

We should continue to encourage the closer involvement of regional and subregional organizations in protecting the rights of children in armed conflicts. The African Union's intercession in Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone and Mali, for instance, has been quite successful. These experiments are worth replicating. Progress on the delisting process depends on the political will of the countries concerned.

We support the mandated reporting and monitoring procedure to protect the rights of children in armed conflicts. We want to

strengthen the political consensus around such mandates. For that purpose, the legal parameters of the mandate must be respected. Focus should continue to remain on situations of armed conflict and those threatening international peace and security.

Finally, we call for the cessation of all armed drone strikes as they infringe the rights of children to life, education and development.