

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

Statement by Mr. Hassan, Permanent Mission of Sudan to the United Nations

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this open debate on children and armed conflict, taking into account the ongoing efforts in the campaign to end child recruitment by the end of 2016, launched yesterday with the participation of our delegation.

Issues related to protection of the rights of children constitute a major priority for the Government of the Sudan, as evidenced by a number of efforts and achievements by the Government. To give a few examples only, first, concerning its international commitments, my country has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It has also ratified International Labour Organization Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138, on the minimum age for admission to employment and work, and ILO Convention No. 182, on the worst forms of child labour.

Secondly, at the national level, the laws governing the armed forces, police and security services categorically prohibit the recruitment of children under the age of 18 in their ranks. My country has established an integrated system of justice and corrections for minors, including the 2010 law on child protection, and the creation of a competent prosecutor's office to that end.

Thirdly, with respect to child protection mechanisms, the Government has established units for the protection of children and the family within the military forces and the Ministry of the Interior. It has also established a national council for children and appointed a prosecutor for crimes perpetrated in Darfur in order to investigate all allegations since the onset of the conflict in 2003, particularly claims related to violations of the rights of children. The Government has also established a fact-finding committee on the abduction and recruitment of children in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. In July 2013, it launched a 10-year comprehensive national plan to promote human rights in the Sudan.

Fourthly, with respect to the engagement with the relevant United Nations bodies, through its Permanent Mission to the United Nations, the Government of the Sudan has remained in constant contact with the Office of the Under-Secretary-General, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, with a view to addressing all child-related concerns.

The Government of the Sudan is also making ongoing efforts to improve the situation of children. In that regard, over the past few weeks, the Sudanese national child-care council has set up a national coordinating task force on children in emergency situations, including all the relevant actors and bodies working on this important question. One of the most important mandates of the task force is to ensure child protection, deal with cases of children in emergency situations and coordinate with UNICEF and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Similarly, in June 2013, the national child-care council organized a symposium on local cultures focused on protecting children, including when it comes to recruitment. The symposium was aimed at the following objectives.

The first aim was to enhance awareness of international principles and standards on the protection of children; bring into play the role of the media with regard to local cultures that favour the recruitment of children, as well as underscore the role of civil society and scientific institutions in this connection; and prepare the launch of an information campaign to promote the goals of the symposium, which will be

coordinated with the UNICEF office in Khartoum. The campaign will send outreach messages with the participation of the local community leadership and women's groups. Work is under way with various relevant agencies for the completion of the action plan on children and armed conflict.

Given the policies that I have mentioned and the practical steps we have taken in that regard, we call for removing the Sudan from the list of countries annexed to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

My delegation would like to draw attention to the following points that need to be taken into account if we want the debate on children and armed conflict to be inclusive comprehensive.

First, Governments suffering from conflict must be assisted in their efforts to end them, by persuading and compelling armed rebel groups to put down their arms and turn to negotiation as a means to settle their differences.

Secondly, the root causes of the presence of children in the military must be addressed, alongside the root causes of conflicts, by eradicating poverty, dealing with the impacts of climate change, lifting the unfair unilateral economic sanctions imposed on certain States, including the Sudan, and cancelling the debts of developing countries and providing them with technical support and capacity-building, particularly in the areas of education and post-conflict reconstruction.

Thirdly, the fact that rebel movements are signing on to action plans to end child recruitment is not enough. Such measures must be backed up with condemnation of the behaviour of rebel groups, which must also be forced to lay down their arms and pursue negotiations. Fourthly, Governments must take part in any efforts relating to the issue of children in conflict, transparently and on a basis of national sovereignty.

In conclusion, my delegation reiterates its commitment to continuing to cooperate with all United Nations bodies dealing with children, and calls for the Secretary-General's reports to include correct and verifiable information based on objective and impartial sources, about which Governments must be consulted before that information is incorporated into official reports.