

Children and Armed Conflict
12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Ms. Štiglic, Representative of Slovenia

Allow me first to thank Germany for having organized this important open debate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings and for their tireless efforts dedicated to protecting children affected by armed conflict.

I would also like to align Slovenia with the statements of the European Union, the Human Security Network and the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict. Today's debate is based on the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2011/250), which shows that 2010 was not a very positive year for children affected by armed conflict around the world. There have nevertheless been some improvements, among which I would like to highlight the signing of new action plans and the progress made in implementing existing action plans. We welcome the fact that the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict gave briefings to a sanctions committee that resulted in its adding the practice of recruiting and using children as a criterion for sanctions. We hope that this practice will be adopted by other committees.

Although positive steps have been taken to hold persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children accountable, we believe that the Security Council should impose further targeted measures on such perpetrators that will prevent them from committing any other grave violations against children. Slovenia would also like to voice its support for the Secretary-General's recommendation encouraging concerned Member States to facilitate contact between the United Nations and non-State actors in order to ensure broad and effective protection of children.

We are pleased to see that the mechanism for protecting children affected by armed conflict that was developed subsequent to resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) has produced important and visible results. We would like to commend the Working Group, and in particular Germany and other previous Chairs of the Group, for the work it has done over the past five years. The Working Group has become a credible and well-established subsidiary body of the Council. We encourage it to use all the tools at its disposal, including more field visits and the organization of urgent or informal meetings, which will enable it to be even more responsive.

Two-thirds of the country situations discussed in the Secretary-General's report include attacks on schools and hospitals. Almost half of children who do not attend school are children in conflict situations. Education gives children the possibility of a future without insecurity. This has been confirmed on many occasions, including at the 2009 thematic dialogue in the General Assembly on education in emergencies, and General Assembly resolution 64/290 on the same topic last year.

Slovenia strongly supports the expansion of the new trigger on attacks on schools and hospitals, by expanding both the Secretary-General's list of parties to the conflict who engage, in contravention of applicable international law, in attacks on schools and hospitals, and of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. That decision further develops the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict and is a step in the right direction. We hope that in the not-too-distant future it will encompass all six grave violations against children in armed conflict.

Both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are part of the normative framework for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. Slovenia therefore supports the campaign for universal ratification of the Protocols by 2012. Slovenia will also continue to be engaged in rehabilitating disabled children affected by armed conflict and in efforts to remove landmines and other unexploded ordnance.

Children should not suffer because of armed conflict; they should not be victims of any grave violations and should enjoy their rights fully. Today's adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) is an important step in that direction, and it is for this reason that Slovenia has joined in co-sponsoring the resolution.