

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
18th June 2015, Security Council Chamber

Statement made by Sabri Boukadoum, Representative of Algeria to the United Nations

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Arab Group.

The Security Council is holding this very important open debate a few days after N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, was stricken by heinous terrorist attacks that resulted in many dead and wounded, including children. I would like to express our sincere condolences and deep sympathy to the families of the victims, and our solidarity with the Chadian authorities.

I would also like to congratulate Malaysia on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and on its organization of today's debate on children and armed conflict. I wish to commend the work of the President in his capacity as Chair of the Working Group on this very issue. I would like also to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/409) 38/96 15-18380 S/PV.7466 Children and armed conflict 18/06/2015 on global trends related to the situation of children in armed conflict. Our special thanks go to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her briefing and for her steadfast, faithful and continued commitment to the cause of children.

The Arab Group would like to emphasize some principles and elements that we deem extremely important in dealing with the present issue. Above all, we cannot support any difference of opinion when children and their well-being and future are at stake. Regardless of the situation, location or political differences between States, or even in situations of open conflict, children should be protected. That is a moral and legal obligation.

We now have criteria that can be used to define when a child is a victim and when violations are committed, and it is a fundamental principle that we must act on that — “we” meaning the international community, and above all the Security Council, with the Secretary-General as a whistleblower. The Secretary-General has a responsibility to tell, and the Security Council has a responsibility to act. Children's playgrounds must be in their schoolyards and secure homes, not in battlefields. Regardless of their religion, citizenship, ethnicity or social position, we should make no distinction. Children are children, and we should ensure that they do not become victims, soothe them when required and reconstruct their future when necessary. Children must remain off limits with regard to adults' qua

gmires. We continue to witness the increasing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including acts of sexual violence, killings, attacks on schools and/or hospitals and recurring attacks or threats of attacks on protected personnel, in violation of international legal standards. This year, as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), we should note that significant progress has been made in seeking the cooperation and compliance of national security forces on this issue, since almost all of them now have their own action plans for addressing it. However, we should also note that this did not stop children from being the primary victims of conflicts in 2014.

(Spoke in Arabic): As we mark the first anniversary of the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign, and despite the significant efforts of Governments and agencies of the United Nations to demonstrate the harmful effects of terrorist acts on children, this negative trend continues to grow. The Arab Group believes the Security Council should consider the possibility of expanding the criteria for inscribing names of the perpetrators of such crimes in the lists annexed to the Secretary-General's report. Abduction is one of the criminal actions used by extremist groups in various countries to intimidate or influence local ethnic or religious communities. Girls in particular are victims of sexual slavery and other indescribable violations. They are deprived of an education, raped and forced into marriage. The recent savage attacks on and abductions of girls by Boko Haram and Daesh and the selling of girls to terrorist fighters are other challenges we must overcome.

With regard to peacekeeping operations, the Arab Group calls for the inclusion of child protection advisers in the mission mandates. They must be on the ground to ensure that children affected by armed conflict are protected as they should be in the framework of peacekeeping operations. We must submit reports on those efforts.

The issue of the collective abduction of civilians, including children, is one that we are seeing increasingly in situations of armed conflict. The abduction of children leads to other violations, such as murder, maiming, recruitment and sexual violence. The Arab Group condemns such violations committed against children in Syria and Iraq by the terrorist group Daesh, which murders, rapes and forcibly displaces children, as well as denying them access to education by closing schools and using them for combat purposes.

While the Council is looking at the issue of children and armed conflict around the world, the Arab Group urges it not to forget the children of Palestine, who are suffering under acts of aggression and oppression and grave violations of human rights owing to the Israeli occupation. That conflict has been going on for more than 70 years, and Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to seriously violate international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions. That situation systematically exhibits three of the six criteria for evaluating violations against children. The war in Gaza last year resulted in the deaths of more than 500 Palestinian children who were targeted and killed deliberately as they played on the beach or sought refuge in United Nations centres. Around 3,000 children were disabled for life, schools 15-18380 39/96 18/06/2015 Children and armed conflict S/PV.7466 were attacked, 54,000 children left homeless, and at least 373,000 children in Gaza are now in need of psychological and social support. None of what was destroyed has been rebuilt yet.

The Arab Group reiterates its confidence in Special Representative Zerrougui, which it demonstrated recently when the League of Arab States and the United Nations signed an agreement aimed at strengthening the protection of children affected by armed conflict in the Arab world. It constitutes an important measure to ensure the protection of children. The Arab Group believes it is essential that the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative be strengthened by providing the financial and human resources it requires