

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**  
**18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement made by Paolo Gentiloni, Representative of Italy to the United Nations*

I wish to thank the Malaysian presidency for convening today's open debate and for introducing resolution 2225 (2015), which recognizes abductions in armed conflict as a listing criterion in the annexes of the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2015/409).

I also thank the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF for their work in identifying ways that will help us better prevent and respond to the scourges that continue to afflict children in armed conflict. I am here to reaffirm Italy's strong support for the Council's endeavours.

Abductions are often a precursor to other grave violations, from recruitment to mental and physical abuse and other harmful practices, such as forced marriage. They can be used in retaliation by non-State actors such as Daesh, Boko Haram and other terrorist groups that neglect children's right to education and deny their empowerment, especially that of adolescent girls, and target ethnic and religious communities. We believe that our common efforts to counter violent extremism should also be aimed at eradicating that plague.

Resolution 2225 (2015), which we adopted today, is a very relevant tool for addressing the increasing use of abduction. But even more relevant will be its concrete implementation through the work of the Security Council and its bodies, supported by the entire international community.

As a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 2007, Italy strongly supported the inclusion of specific provisions on the protection of children in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations. The targeted training of United Nations personnel on children's rights remains paramount to ensuring effective peacekeeping on the ground.

Italy is continuously engaged in such efforts through our training centres. The review of peacekeeping operations will no doubt be an opportunity to provide concrete recommendations on how this important topic may be considered in planning and conducting peacekeeping operations.

Accountability at the national and international levels is also key to ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice. National authorities have the duty to enforce the rules and investigate and prosecute violations and abuses. At the same time, we must spare no effort in supporting the international criminal justice system.

Prompt action is vital so as to reduce the exposure of children to serious risk factors, while promoting and implementing long-term initiatives for the recovery and social integration of former child soldiers and victims of conflicts.

According to UNICEF, approximately 14 million children have been impacted by conflicts in Syria and Iraq. Italy pays particular attention to their condition. Last year, we allocated a total of €2 million for projects carried out by UNICEF in support of children in Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. They included social and educational activities that involved the creation and management of child and family protective facilities. We funded programmes, such as UNICEF's "No Lost Generation" initiative, aimed at tackling child malnutrition and providing psychological assistance and support for minors and their families. In the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq, since January 2015 we have financed assistance to young Christian and Yazidi girls who are victims of violence.

Our own lessons learned from those and other programmes have been that, in the short term, success lies in the ability to rapidly re-establish family, social and institutional protection networks and set up direct relief initiatives. Short-term success, however, is not enough. Medium- and long-term actions are crucial to safeguarding the security and development of children in situations of crisis and conflict. This requires the adoption of a multidimensional approach that is able to address the root causes of poverty, lack of education and basic services, and the militarization of societies.

*Mr. Aman took the Chair.*

Lastly, at this juncture, as we approach the adoption of the post-2015 agenda, allow me to reaffirm that the needs and rights of children and adolescents, particularly adolescent girls and those living in poverty or otherwise excluded, must be a cross-cutting priority in our development efforts.