

Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict
Wednesday, 16th June 2010, Security Council Chamber (GA-TSC-01)

Statement by Ambassador Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

I too would like to extend a warm welcome to you, Madam President, and to thank you for personally presiding over this important debate. It is a great pleasure to discuss the issue of children and armed conflict under your presidency. I would like to pay special tribute to the Government of Mexico and its Mission here for very ably chairing the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as to Canada for chairing the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict at the United Nations. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Khare for their briefings. Most of all, Ms. Manju Gurung has inspired us all with her courage and her strong faith in a better future.

The United Nations architecture on children and armed conflict — including the monitoring and reporting mechanism, action plans and the Working Group — have been in place for almost five years now. During those years, there has been steady progress in reducing the number of child soldiers in the world. Some parties to conflict have been de-listed from the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports, such as Burundi in the most recent report (S/2010/181). Parties in the Sudan, Nepal and the Philippines recently signed action plans. In another welcome move, six Central African countries adopted the N'Djamena Declaration last week and committed themselves to taking measures to protect children according to global standards.

Meanwhile, however, some new conflict parties have been listed. The latest report of the Secretary-General contains a list of 55 conflict parties in 13 countries. Clearly, there still remains a major challenge in eliminating the scourge of inhuman treatment of children trapped in armed conflict.

Today I would like to address three issues. The first is accountability for persistent perpetrators. Japan is particularly concerned about 16 parties which have been listed for the past five years. In order to ensure accountability for those persistent perpetrators, the Security Council agreed in resolution 1539 (2004) to consider the possibility of imposing targeted measures against those groups. But the practice is not necessarily consistent or even.

To hold persistent perpetrators accountable, the Security Council should include in its resolutions on the sanctions committees provisions in respect of conflict parties who commit serious violations against children. The Working Group should exchange information and coordinate closely with the work of the sanctions committees. The informal briefing given the other day by Ms. Coomaraswamy to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo was useful, as would be others she could make in the future. We very much encourage other sanctions committees to invite her and to consider similar briefings.

The second issue is rape and other sexual violence. We welcome the fact that, in accordance with resolution 1882 (2009), the report of the Secretary-General this year has listed for the first time the parties responsible for rape and other sexual violence. The report's indication of a relatively low incidence of sexual violence against children does not reflect the reality on the ground or the practice of parties. We believe that it reflects the difficulty of collecting and verifying information on sexual violence in conflict situations. Timely and reliable data are indispensable for appropriate action. Japan is particularly grateful to the efforts of UNICEF and peacekeeping operations personnel on the ground in collecting information and data on sexual violence. We encourage Ms. Coomaraswamy to coordinate closely with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the monitoring and reporting of sexual violence against children.

Third is the issue of attacks against education. Japan believes that education is the most essential means of promoting human potential. Achieving universal primary education is one of the fundamental pillars of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, we have to express strong condemnation of the widespread attacks against schools committed by several armed groups and forces, as reported in the Secretary-General's report. A new UNESCO report, "Education under Attack 2010", indicates that the number of attacks on schools, students and teachers is growing in conflict situations, and that these attacks on education appear to be far more severe and systematic than previously thought. The targeting of girl students in specific settings is a particular concern.

We call upon all conflict parties to stop and prevent attacks against schools and other educational facilities, and against teachers and pupils, including, in particular, girls, and to fully respect international humanitarian law. It is our hope that

the next report of the Secretary-General will include full information and analysis on these attacks, which have a severe longterm impact on children and sound national development.

In conflict situations, children are the most vulnerable. Japan is a strong advocate of the concept of human security. I am pleased that Japan and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Friends of Human Security — which is growing — are jointly promoting the mainstreaming of this concept in the work of the United Nations. This human-centred, multisectoral approach, which focuses not only on protection but on empowerment at the individual and community levels, is particularly relevant when we consider children and armed conflict.

Japan has been providing support, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, for projects that address the issue of children and armed conflict in a comprehensive and multisectoral manner, in many countries including Timor-Leste, Nepal, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Japan remains committed to strengthening the protection and empowerment of children affected on the ground.