

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

*Statement made by Koki Muli Grignon, Representative of Kenya to the United Nations*

I thank you, Madam President, for having convened today's debate. Kenya welcomes the global importance and priority that the Security Council and the international community continue to attach to the protection of children affected by or involved in armed conflicts. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/409), which enumerates the grave violations committed against children in armed conflicts, and for impressing on us the urgency of the need for greater protection of our children.

The recruitment of children as weapons of war underlies larger and more systemic issues that include the breakdown of a country's social fabric and imply a long-term generational aspect to the conflict and the possibility of future mass atrocities. We need to address the root causes of conflict, including political, social and economic inequalities. Child protection should be part and parcel of any strategy for managing and preventing conflict. In that regard, we appreciate the progress being made through the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Kenya is deeply concerned about the fact that the number of children being recruited or abducted, and even volunteering to take part in armed conflict throughout the world, has escalated to unprecedented levels. Child soldiers are engaged in severe conflicts where there has been evidence of horrific abuse and brutal violence. We call on the Security Council to address this critical issue as a specific priority concern. We note with dismay the current unprecedented challenges presented by the protection of children who are growing up in situations affected by conflict. The subjection of children to reprehensible acts of violence and abuse must move humanity to reimagine the responsibility to protect; it is indeed our collective moral imperative and legal obligation.

In Kenya, the volatile situations in South Sudan, Somalia and, more recently, Yemen are of great concern and present a clear, persistent and continuing threat to our national security. Armed groups such as Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram continue to be emboldened and will not be defeated or discouraged from abducting and recruiting children by engagement and diplomacy alone. The Security Council and the international community must intercede to save the world's future.

Decades of conflict in our region have resulted in a continued flow of refugees into Kenya. The burden of hosting nearly 600,000 refugees continues to place great strains on the delivery of social services, particularly in education, health and the provision of security. The majority of the refugees are women and children, including ex-soldiers and children involved in armed conflict. The world must not continue to permit children to grow up in refugee camps where they can hardly survive, let alone thrive. We therefore urge the Security Council to spare no effort and to engage robustly with the African Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in seeking solutions to end the conflicts in the affected regions. As the world gathers in September for the United Nations summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda, the concept of leaving no one behind must be applied to all countries and regions in conflict.

Kenya applauds the launch of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF for galvanizing the commitments of eight concerned Governments to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children in national security forces by the end of 2016.

We welcome the Secretary-General's call to the Security Council to continue supporting the children and armed conflict agenda by strengthening provisions for the protection of children in all relevant mandates of the United Nations peacekeeping, special political and peacebuilding missions.

We recognize that the most effective way to protect children is to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts and to prevent conflicts from escalating. In that regard, Kenya is actively involved in seeking ways to end conflicts and find sustainable peace through cooperation with IGAD. Kenya has been at the forefront of initiatives to negotiate for peace in the region. The international community must also urgently and collectively address effective ways to bring the existing conflicts to an end.