

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

Statement made by Oh Joon, Representative of Republic of Korea to the United Nations

I would like to congratulate Malaysia on its Council presidency for the month of June.

Since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) 10 years ago, the international community has continued to raise awareness regarding the protection of children in armed conflicts. Our efforts, however, have often been hampered by blindness and savagery. In 2014, we witnessed how countless children were sacrificed in conflicts for which they were not responsible. Our concern is that victimizing children is not only unacceptable in itself but sows the seeds for conflicts in future generations.

As the “Children, Not Soldiers” campaign, launched by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui and UNICEF, points out, children are not soldiers. No responsible member of the international community should use children for military purposes. Nor should the sacrifice of children be accepted as a mere unintended consequence of military actions. “An eye for an eye will make the whole world blind”.

We support the Secretary-General, who stresses our common humanity and calls upon all Member States not to lose sight of the vital objective of protecting children, which is both a moral imperative and a legal obligation. We also support the Secretary-General’s zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Accountability is the key to ending gross violations against children and preventing their recurrence. Monitoring and reporting, listing in the Secretary-General’s report, targeted sanctions and enhanced justice mechanisms have proved to be effective in seeking accountability.

We welcome resolution 2225 (2015), adopted today, which includes abductions as a new trigger for listing in the Secretary-General’s annual report. Enriching our toolkit for the protection of children is a signal that our shared vision is expanding, while pressuring all stakeholders to join us. It is encouraging that, this year, armed groups in the Central African Republic and South Sudan have released children under their control. Extremist groups such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, however, are likely to remain persistent. That is when a more fundamental and determined approach should be taken.

Lastly, we stress that children cannot be completely safe from devastating armed conflicts once they break out. Prevention is the best strategy. As a member of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Republic of Korea will continue to make efforts to prevent relapses into conflict. When prevention fails, a political solution should be swiftly sought. We should be especially vigilant with respect to situations in which the overwhelming sacrifice of children is overshadowed by the political and military context and perceived as an inevitable part of armed conflicts.