

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

Statement made by Sandoval Mediolea, Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

(Spoke in Spanish): We wish to thank the delegation of Malaysia for having convened this open debate, and Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her valuable input to the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/409).

The report underscores the increase in extreme violence recorded in 2014 and its relation with the serious violations of the rights of girls and boys. This fact alone must serve to reaffirm our collective determination to keep this issue at the core of the international agenda.

Our participation today reflects the commitment of Mexico to continue to contribute to raising awareness about this issue. We did so when we chaired the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in 2009 and 2010, which led to resolution 1882 (2009), in which the Security Council firmly condemns the abduction of children in situations of armed conflict. We also underscore the practical progress achieved on the ground, such as plans of action and the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the six serious violations committed against children.

Mexico has explicitly condemned acts carried out by extremist groups, particularly during the violent events of 2014, and it is with great concern that we note that the most recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict highlights the increase in abductions of children in conflict situations. Although the records are insufficient, the Secretary-General reports that more than 2,750 children have been abducted in 12 conflict areas. Of those cases at least 1,730 were abducted by the self-proclaimed Islamic State and 500 by Boko Haram.

The international community cannot ignore or tolerate this situation. The abduction of children may well constitute a crime against humanity and a war crime. To meet this challenge we have an extensive normative framework, such as the Geneva Conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international humanitarian law, which together establish an obligation to ensure humane treatment for civilians and attention to the specific vulnerabilities of children, including prohibiting the taking of hostages, among other things. A number of Security Council resolutions explicitly condemn attacks on schools and hospitals.

Mexico believes it is useful that in the Security Council, the United Nations and States Members reinforce our response to these serious violations, including through existing mechanisms. We recognize the usefulness of monitoring and of the inclusion of a list of parties in conflict that are violating these standards in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports. Recent successful cases of the release of children associated with armed conflicts through United Nations facilitation is proof of how effective these measures can be.

We underscore the importance of penalizing this crime in national legislation, as well as prosecuting perpetrators in national tribunals or, if those tribunals are unable or unwilling to do that, at the International Criminal Court, as a preventative measure and in order to combat impunity. Similarly, we consider it necessary to strengthen actions to ensure effective protection of places such as schools, hospitals and recreation centres for children and adolescents in order to prevent acts of violence that not only take innocent victims but also diminish the possibilities of providing safe places for children and their development in conflict and postconflict situations.

We must not forget that violence and abductions have devastating psychological effects on children and that in order to correct that impact and care for those children and their families we need greater psychological, medical and legal assistance, and that involves considerable cost for the countries involved in conflict.

The extreme violence that we saw in 2014 committed by the actors referred to in the Secretary-General's report will have a serious and lasting impact on the children who have been their victims. Therefore we, the international community, will face additional long-term challenges in providing comprehensive reintegration programmes. Those challenges pose a potential additional risk for the resurgence of violent acts in some regions where the situation is not improving.

We welcome the adoption of resolution 2225 (2015) today, in which the Secretary-General is requested to include cases involving the abduction of children in the annexes to his reports on children and armed conflict. We recognize that cases such as that of Dominic Ongwen of the Lord's Resistance Army show how contemptible such crimes against children in armed conflict are. They are clear proof of how violence in conflicts feeds upon itself and is repeated when children are not protected. We therefore urge the international community to take relevant measures to halt the growing trend of child abductions and to establish and strengthen the necessary mechanisms to keep such crimes from happening.