

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

Statement made by Omar Hilale, Representative of Morocco to the United Nations

(Spoke in French) : Allow me to begin by thanking the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Dato Sri Anifah Aman, for his presence, and to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ambassador of Malaysia, His Excellency Mr. Ramlan Bin Ibrahim, for his commitment and tireless efforts as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict. I would also like to thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, the Secretary General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, for her courage and dedication to the thorough implementation of her mandate and the high quality of her report. I would also like to thank the representative of UNICEF for her briefing.

A year after the launch of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign and 10 years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), much progress has been made. Children continue, however, to be the first victims of conflicts. The year 2014 saw an alarming intensification and a dangerous recurrence of conflicts, which are becoming increasingly complex, with unprecedented forms of violence, destructive effects and the involvement of violent extremist groups, all of which has made clear the great vulnerability of tens of millions of children.

The mass abduction of children by Daesh and Boko Haram has become an increasingly widespread characteristic of conflict situations. The whole world, powerless, frustrated and outraged, is witnessing a wave of child abductions being systematically used as a military tactic to terrorize, subjugate and humiliate entire communities. Children are also being abducted for the purposes of recruitment and exploitation for all sorts of tasks, including their use as human shields or as suicide bombers. Many are used as combatants, messengers, sex slaves, spies or traffickers, or even as beasts of burden to transport ammunition. Snatched from normal life, school and the bosom of their families, they are carried off by armed groups and thrust into a world of violence and horror. Their abduction is often a precursor to other grave violations against them, such as murder, mutilation, recruitment, exploitation and sexual violence.

Another source of concern is their detention and the denial of their basic liberty in response to their presumed association with extremist groups. Children should be treated as victims. The prohibition of violence, in particular murder, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture, against civilians, in particular children, is a principle of international customary law, universally applicable to all armed conflicts. The illegal and arbitrary detention of children is prohibited under international humanitarian and human rights law.

No cause can justify the abduction of children. They have the right to be protected at school, at home, in their environment and in their community. Those abducted by State or non-State armed groups and subsequently released have lived through terrible scenes and psychologically traumatic experiences during their captivity. How can such children be expected to get over their suffering, their traumas, and be able to rebuild their life or start it anew? They need our support as a matter of priority. As Ms. Zerrougui emphasized this morning in her statement, the continuation of and increase in child recruitment in armed conflict, in particular by jihadi armed groups including the Islamic State, and the abduction of hundreds of girls by the terrorist group Boko Haram, demand our attention and the coordination of the efforts of the international community.

Morocco condemns in the strongest possible terms all forms of violence against children, their abduction by State or non-State armed groups, their use as shields near arms depots or military camps, their being taken as hostages or their recruitment at refugee camps. Morocco also condemns attacks on schools or hospitals and the use of such facilities for tactical purposes.

It is the international community's duty to take strong emergency measures to hold accountable all those who continue to flout international law and the rules for the protection of children, wherever they are. The coordination of such efforts among the various stakeholders in the United Nations system is a guarantee of effectiveness and success, but the primary responsibility falls above all on the parties to conflict, who must comply with their international obligations in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the relevant international conventions.

Although today's debate has the merit of remobilizing all the stakeholders in the international community, it must, unfortunately, be acknowledged that the efforts made so far to end violence against children and their involvement or use in armed conflicts are insufficient. My delegation believes that the international community's efforts would benefit from being part of a composite, strategic approach that not only addresses ongoing conflict situations but also

emphasizes prevention through the establishment of democracy and the upholding of human rights, the enhancement of good governance and the promotion of sustainable development. At the same time, the approach must be pragmatic, combining incentives with more binding measures, in particular with regard to accountability and the struggle against impunity.

Lastly, the resettlement of children who have been victims of terror and scenes of horror during their abduction, and their reintegration into society, must be given a high priority. There is no single solution, but various methods are effective in reducing, for example, the number of child soldiers in non-State armed groups, including the strengthening of the rule of law, the mobilization of resources for rehabilitation programmes and the analysis of the social, political and economic dynamics that result in children allowing themselves to be enlisted. It is time that crimes committed against children in armed conflict be considered crimes against humanity, for children are the future of their nations.