

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

Statement by Joy Ogunu, Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations

Mr. President, I want to welcome you to the Security Council and to thank you in particular for having convened this seminal debate.

The protection of children is undoubtedly a moral duty and a legal obligation for all States. We thank the Secretary-General for his abiding commitment to the cause of the protection of children. We wish also to thank the briefers for their insightful statements, which have not only underlined the salient dimensions of their achievements in the field but also highlighted the challenges that we all face in our collective effort to protect the world's children.

It is encouraging to note that since the adoption of resolution 1998 (2011), efforts to protect students, teachers and schools in situations of armed conflict have gained considerable momentum. The monitoring and reporting of attacks on schools and on the military use of schools have also registered some improvement, facilitating more concrete and effective responses to heinous attacks on institutions of learning.

Our abiding concern derives from our consternation at the events of the night of 14 April 2014, when 276 girls in the prime of their lives were viciously abducted from the sanctuary of their dormitories in Chibok, in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. Their dreams and aspirations were rudely interrupted by the infamous extremist group Boko Haram. It appears that we all have reached our limits of tolerance for this kind of **16/96 15-18380 S/PV.7466** Children and armed conflict **18/06/2015** impunity. Today we are encouraged that the proposals designed to stem the spate of abductions of children have received due attention universally.

A fundamental and enduring step forward is to make deliberate and incremental efforts to institutionalize these policies at both the regional and national levels and, where possible, institute peer-review mechanisms for effective monitoring. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was instituted as a tool for advancing children's rights. While it builds on the same basic principles as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Union (AU) Children's Charter highlights issues of special importance in the African context.

The fact that all States members of the AU have acceded to the Children's Charter and all except seven have ratified it underscores the critical importance of the rights of children. This year, as Africa commemorates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, represents an opportunity for States parties to make a renewed commitment to children's rights.

As a demonstration of our national commitment to the well-being of children, Nigeria was among the first group of States to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration in Oslo, Norway, on 29 May. The Declaration complements and strengthens our existing national safe schools initiative, established in 2014 as part of the policy response of the federal Government to promote safe zones for learning. The guidelines for protecting schools and universities from military use during armed conflict will serve as a compass to guide and reinforce efforts towards the achievement of this objective. We are committed to the dissemination of these guidelines and to promoting their implementation. We are indeed persuaded that this initiative will promote and protect the right to education and prevent the discontinuities in education inherent in situations of armed conflict.

We commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and acknowledge the importance of the monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations against children in armed conflict. We emphasize the critical importance of resolutions 1998 (2011) and 2143 (2014), which in particular urge all parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education.

In advancing the cause of the protection of children in armed conflict, the Council today is delivering a message of hope and a signal of the strength of our collective will. The adoption of resolution 2225 (2015) today reinforces both our collective will and our shared responsibility, for it is certainly within the Council's capacity to protect the vulnerable from the ravages of conflict and other blatant breaches of peace and security.

Nigeria reiterates its commitment to working assiduously with all people of goodwill.