

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**

**18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement made by Flores Herrera, Representative of Panama to the United Nations*

(Spoke in Spanish): I would first like to thank Malaysia for presiding over the Security Council this month and for having convened this open debate on an issue of such great importance to the international community as children and armed conflict.

It is of great concern to see the increase in armed conflicts and humanitarian crises throughout the world, conflicts in which boys and girls continue to be used as soldiers. While some have been able to escape the violence with their families, many of them, unfortunately, remain under threat, putting their entire future in jeopardy. Both girls and boys are used as tools of war, and they are exposed to sexual violence, psychological trauma, abduction, recruitment, and other violations of their human rights. For those boys and girls, their hopes for a dignified life by 2030 will not be achieved.

We welcome the initiatives taken by UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Women and other United Nations agencies in addressing this issue. In particular, we commend the work of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as all the other actors involved in implementing the Security Council mandate for the protection of children in armed conflict and in ensuring an effective and comprehensive follow-up to the reporting mechanism.

We must stand firm if we wish to permanently eliminate the recruitment of children in armed conflict. While children have no voice in political conflicts, they have the most to lose. This past week saw the publication of a report by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, which bears a close connection with the subject at hand. It recommended prohibiting the sending of peacekeeping troops from countries currently on the lists in the Secretary-General's annual reports on children and armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence, as long as they remain on the list. We believe that the establishment of accountability, the elimination of impunity, and the imposition of prosecution and penalties are important in efforts to proceed against all those who commit violations against children. National justice systems, regional and subregional cooperation and the international community should ensure that such proceedings take place. Political will, the implementation of initiatives to protect children affected by armed conflict and the establishment of protection mechanisms are essential to the prevention of violations against children and the recovery of children affected by armed conflicts, and it is our responsibility as States to play that role.

I am pleased to announce that Panama has taken the decision to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, presented on 29 May at the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools: Protecting Education from Attack, since there are 28 million children in conflict areas today who cannot go to school, and, according to the Conference's 2014 report, "Education under Attack", schools have been attacked in 70 countries. We call on those Member States that have not yet done so to join this initiative. We wish to reiterate our commitment to the global effort to protect students, teachers, schools and universities by supporting the Declaration.

Lastly, we support resolution 2225 (2015) on children and armed conflict, introduced today by the representative of Malaysia under the agenda item, a resolution of which we were a sponsor and which seeks to strengthen efforts to