

**Security Council Open Debate on Children and Armed Conflict**  
**18<sup>th</sup> June 2015, Security Council Chamber**

*Statement made by Ramírez Carreno, Representative of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the United Nations*

*(Spoke in Spanish):* On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we would like to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, Mr. Anifah Aman, for his presence here and for convening this open debate on children in armed conflict, a topic to which my country attaches great importance due to its impact on the weakest and most vulnerable part of the population. We would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, and the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Yoka Brandt, for their briefings. We would also like to thank Ms. Eunice Apio for her testimony and participation today.

Venezuela reiterates its firm rejection of the abuses and violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law against boys and girls in armed conflict, and urges all parties to comply with their obligations under applicable international law. The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2015/409) that we are discussing today points out that in 2014 we saw unprecedented difficulties in protecting tens of millions of children who live in conflict situations. That is discouraging because it undermines the future of children who today are experiencing the atrocities of war and who are condemned to grow up with a culture of hate and violence. That must draw the attention of the international community to make children a priority and to decisively tackle grave violations of children's rights.

In many cases, socioeconomic vulnerability, abuses, ethnic and religious intolerance, discrimination, exclusion and violence, which these children face as a consequence of war, facilitate their participation in the hostilities and worsens the harmful repercussions that armed conflict can have on them. The report of the Secretary-General and the deplorable and tragic situation of children in armed conflict should serve to mobilize all of the moral forces of the international community to stop the military escalation of conflict and to protect girls and boys with all available resources, children who on a daily basis are traumatized daily, kidnapped, abused and killed.

The Secretary-General's report stresses that the majority of violations of the rights of children are committed by non-State actors and that extremist violence has intensified to unprecedented levels. We reiterate that the Council should take the necessary measures to guarantee a genuine commitment to stop encouraging armed groups and other non-State actors with financial or military capabilities, whose goal is to destabilize Governments and perpetuate the spiral of violence.

With regard to the references to Syria, Iraq and Yemen contained in the report, we are deeply concerned about the situation of children in those conflicts. We wonder how many more children will have to lose their lives and become martyrs to terrorism and violent extremism before the actors with influence on the parties to the conflict understand the urgency of working decisively to find a political solution to that tragedy — a solution that should include all parties.

The Secretary-General's report states that 557 Palestinian children were killed in 2014, the third highest figure in the world for that year, and that at least 4,249 boys and girls were wounded. At least 543 schools were damaged or destroyed in the State of Palestine in 2014, which is the highest number recorded in all situations of armed conflict during that calendar year. We can therefore see that the occupying Power in Palestine repeatedly violated at least three of the six criteria used to designate grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. However, we note with concern that the military forces responsible for those acts were not included on the annexes in the Secretary-General's report this year. We ask what scale the grave violations committed by the occupying Power in Palestine against civilians, especially children, would need to reach in order to consider including the perpetrators of those violations in the annexes to the report.

We emphasize that failure to act in accordance with the Council's resolutions on this issue — making selective use of the criteria for listing the parties in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report — saps the 26/96 15-18380 S/PV.7466 Children and armed conflict 18/06/2015 spirit and intent of those resolutions. That weakens and calls into question the transparency and objectivity of the mechanism that the United Nations and its Member States should employ in that respect. We support accountability for violations committed against children in armed conflicts, as the report recommends. No one should be exempt. States have the primary responsibility to put an end to impunity and to try and punish the perpetrators of heinous crimes against children.

We congratulate Malaysia for taking the initiative to bring to the floor resolution 2225 (2015), which was unanimously adopted today and which our country resolutely sponsored. The inclusion of kidnapping among the criteria for inclusion in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports had been a pending issue. We welcome the consensus achieved today among the members of the Security Council and hope that the resolution will be effectively implemented.

Venezuela condemns the abduction of boys and girls in armed conflict such as those currently taking place in Africa and the Middle East. We believe such abductions should be included in the category of crimes considered by the International Criminal Court. At the same time, we repudiate and condemn the indiscriminate bombing in densely populated areas and the use of weapons prohibited under international law.

We urge all parties to conflict to refrain from using schools for military purposes and goals. The use of such facilities for military purposes undermines the human rights of children in terms of their right to education and constitutes an act of intolerance and barbarism.

Finally, in our own region, we would like to highlight the consolidation of the progress being made by Colombia, within the framework of the ongoing peace process, with respect to the protection and reintegration of children affected by the long conflict in that brotherly country.

To conclude, we would like to state that Venezuela will continue to offer its firm support to the efforts of the international community, including the Security Council, to protect and assist the most vulnerable groups in areas of conflict, especially girls, boys and women, in order to ensure their rehabilitation, including their physical and psychological recovery and their reintegration into society.