

Children and Armed Conflict
12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Nazarian, Representative of Armenia

I join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate and welcoming the presence of Minister Westenvelle and other honourable foreign ministers earlier today, as well as the Executive Director of UNICEF.

We also thank Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2011/250), which focuses on the growing trend of attacks against schools and hospitals, and his recommendation that the Council expand the gateway to the annexes to include parties that attack or threaten to attack schools and hospitals. We welcome the recommendations and the positive developments referred to in the report. The report is a useful guide for coping with the continuing challenges in the implementation of resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009) and other relevant documents of the Council.

Conflicts have devastating consequences on children, whose protection is of the utmost importance, deserves the attention of the international community, and should be a primary responsibility of all because it is a serious humanitarian concern and a significant security issue. The protection of children therefore requires a multidimensional and comprehensive approach.

For Armenia, a country hosting tens of thousands refugee children as a result of war and aggression imposed on us, this debate is of particular importance. Innocent Armenian civilians, in particular children, have been subjected to a barrage of heavy artillery, missile shelling and bombing. We have witnessed indiscriminate firing upon homes, schools, kindergartens, hospitals and even ambulances.

Armenia therefore believes that concerted actions are necessary at the national, regional and international levels to put an end to such brutal actions and policies. At the same time, our efforts should complement each other, with all stakeholders utilizing the comparative advantages of their respective mandates and experiences.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my Government's gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts to ensure that children can live and grow in peace and dignity. Ms. Coomaraswamy's role has been growing in recent years, with her field missions now serving multiple purposes, including the dissemination of the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. For its part, the Working Group has showed renewed improvement in its working methods and continues to play an active role in mainstreaming the issue in the Council this year.

It is unfortunate that, despite the legal safeguards in place, horrendous violations of children's rights, such as the use of child soldiers and the killing, maiming and rape of children still continue in many parts of the world. Obviously, it would be naive to expect that problems of such gravity could be resolved by the mere provisions of relevant legal norms. After a high-level debate on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in September 2010 (see S/PV.6389), the Council reaffirmed in its presidential statement the conviction that the "protection of civilians in armed conflict, particularly women and children, should be an important aspect of any comprehensive strategy to resolve conflicts" (S/PRST/2010/18).

We share the view expressed in this Chamber that the Council should also focus on the application of targeted measures against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children through the possible imposition of sanctions. My delegation therefore fully supports the adoption of today's resolution, which, inter alia, requests enhanced communication between the Working Group and the relevant Security Council sanctions Committees.

This debate represents an opportunity to become engaged in a serious discussion on how to address issues of cross-border violations against children, reaching out to persistent violators. We believe that the commitment from Governments in addressing the issue of violations against children can also provide the impetus needed to begin to seriously address this matter.

Child protection is everyone's responsibility, and the future of children is dependent on the actions we take today. The Government of Armenia is committed to doing its utmost and to constructively contributing to global efforts to promote this noble cause.