

## **Children and Armed Conflict**

**12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber**

### ***Statement by Mr. Seger, Representative of Switzerland***

It is my honour to speak on behalf of the Human Security Network, namely, Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Greece, Ireland, Jordan, Mali, Norway, Slovenia, Thailand, South Africa as an observer, and my own country, Switzerland.

We welcome the efforts and the important progress in different parts of the world in addressing the six grave violations against children in armed conflicts. The adoption of resolution 1998 (2011) today fills an important gap in the comprehensive childprotection framework by including attacks against schools and hospitals as the latest trigger in the monitoring and reporting mechanism. This step will also complement ongoing efforts by other bodies of the United Nations system. However, challenges remain.

Accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children should further be strengthened. We call on the Security Council for further decisive action, including through targeted and graduated measures against such perpetrators, and to consider how to address the accountability gap through proactive and effective means. We also call for more efforts to address impunity and to investigate, prosecute and punish all those who commit grave violations against children.

We acknowledge the positive trend towards mainstreaming the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within some United Nations missions on the ground. We encourage the relevant departments of the Secretariat responsible for providing support to the field to continue to work closely together to ensure a more systematic and consistent approach in all missions. The appointment of more child protection advisers and the inclusion of child protection modules in the pre-deployment training of police and troop-contributing countries could also contribute to that end.

From a human security perspective, it is important to complement existing action plans with a strong programmatic response to support Governments in the implementation of comprehensive national strategies that include prevention and provide a multisectoral approach to the assistance and social protection of children who have been associated with armed forces and groups. Assistance measures must focus on avoiding their marginalization and stigmatization, as well as facilitating their social reintegration. Furthermore, a more stable and longterm funding structure to fulfil all the elements of the action plans is crucial.

Last but not least, the Human Security Network invites the Council to enhance its efforts in order to approach the protection of civilians in a more systematic and coordinated manner, taking into account the situation of children and women. We therefore appreciate the fact that consultations on how to foster such synergies were held under Brazilian presidency of the Council in February. We encourage further discussions on this issue and call on members of the Council to be as inclusive as possible.

With the President's permission, I should now like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

With regard to General Assembly resolution 64/290, on the right to education in emergency situations, Switzerland welcomes the fact that, through resolution 1998 (2011), the Security Council has today filled an important gap in the framework for the protection of children by including in the list of triggers recurrent attacks against school and hospital facilities. The inclusion of those new elements should make it possible to expand the roll of shame maintained by the Secretary-General not only to combatants who carry out such attacks in violation of international law and international humanitarian law, but also to those who repeatedly threaten or attack all those afforded protection in this context.

We also call for new and decisive steps be taken against perpetrators. First of all, we urge all sanctions committees to ensure that the gravest violations against children be made subject to sanctions at the time that mandates are established or renewed.

Secondly, we call on the Secretary-General to include in his annual reports all the steps taken in sanctions committees with regard to the actions called for in those reports, as well as with regard to proposals made to move towards greater responsibility for the perpetrators of such violations.

Thirdly we remain very concerned about the lack of responsibility owing to the lack of sanctions committees charged with dealing with repeat perpetrators of violations set out in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports. We commit to urgently taking resolute measures against these offenders, thus filling the gaps in a proactive manner.

Oversight of the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations in implementation of resolution 1882 (2009) is of capital importance. That is why we would invite the Working Group to request a response from countries or the concerned party, if necessary, on the report on the conditions for the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. We expect a strengthening of existing tools, starting with field missions and making extensive use of options already available, as well as emergency meetings in order to grapple with the resurgence of violations on the ground.

Like my colleague from New Zealand, who just spoke, Switzerland once again calls on Member States to facilitate contacts between the United Nations and local and international actors, with a view to guaranteeing comprehensive and effective protection of children. These contacts will in no way prejudice the political and legal status of non-State actors.

Finally, children are increasingly being detained for association with armed groups. Their detention often includes the use of violence, abuse, threats of violence or abuse and other brutality, with the sole purpose of obtaining information from them. Switzerland counts on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to address this issue in a working document and propose appropriate measures for strengthening the protection of children.