

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

Statement by Mr. Errázuriz, Representative of Chile

Chile congratulates the German presidency on its decision to make this important issue the subject of an open debate in July. My delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and interesting report (S/2011/250). We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for the valuable information she shared with us today, and Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director of UNICEF, for his comprehensive briefing.

Chile associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Switzerland on behalf of the Human Security Network, of which Chile is a member.

The protection of children in general, and of those living in areas of armed conflict in particular, is a matter of special concern for my country, which is why Chile is a sponsor of resolution 1998 (2011), adopted by the Council today, and hopes to see it fully implemented.

There is no doubt that the issue of the protection of children in armed conflict has made progress since the Security Council first included it on its agenda. The Secretary-General's decisive action in appointing a Special Representative for this area, and the efforts of that Special Representative, have contributed effectively to this progress. Moreover, the increased interaction between the latter and the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict should be emphasized, since they deal with two sides of the same coin. I also stress the growth of coordination with other United Nations agencies devoted to the protection of children once they have returned to society and have been reintegrated into the educational system. Special attention should be paid to the scars that the experience of violence has left them with, and of course even more attention and care are needed if they have been subject to sexual violence.

We share the concern, expressed in the Economic and Social Council ministerial declaration adopted yesterday in Geneva on implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education that "a large number of the world's out-of-school children live in States affected by armed conflict and natural disasters" (E/2011/L.28*, para. 30). This is a clear warning that we must work to improve access to education in a safe environment for children living in armed-conflict or post-conflict situations. Assistance in helping these children to recover must be provided through the appropriate channels and reach the families and communities, who are generally those most directly involved in the recovery process.

Chile calls on those Governments suffering through armed conflict to make every possible effort, while taking necessary precautions, to establish channels of communication with the other actors in the conflict so as to keep children at a distance from the hardships of conflict and prevent their direct involvement in it. At the same time, justice must be done when children are involved and abused. This goes hand in hand with reparation, which could be provided in special facilities for education, health and so forth, including symbolic reparation as well.

My country shares the Secretary-General's concern about the increase in attacks on hospitals and schools. In that regard, Chile calls on the parties to conflict to refrain from using any people — much less children — as human shields. Whatever the situation, attacking schools and hospitals is to be especially condemned.

Lastly, Chile joins in calling on those States that have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict to do so.