

Children and Armed Conflict

12 July 2011, United Nations Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Wang Min, Representative of China

I welcome Germany's initiative to convene today's meeting. I thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his statement, as well as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and UNICEF Executive Director Mr. Anthony Lake for their respective briefings.

China attaches the utmost importance to the issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict. China rejects the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other acts that violate the rights of children in armed conflict.

China supports the continued efforts of relevant United Nations bodies to protect children affected by armed conflict in accordance with their respective mandates and based on their advantages and strengths. In this connection, I would like to emphasize the four following points.

First, in order to ensure that children affected by armed conflict are protected against harm, the issue must be tackled from its root causes. More attention should be focused on the prevention, control and elimination of armed conflicts. The Security Council should effectively implement its primary responsibility to maintain international peace and security. It should strengthen preventive diplomacy to encourage and support the peaceful settlement of disputes by the parties through good offices, mediation, dialogue, negotiation and reconciliation, and should work to reduce and respond in a timely and appropriate manner to situations of conflict so as to create a safe and favourable environment for the healthy development of children.

Secondly, the mandates of Security Council resolutions must be strictly implemented, in accordance with provisions of the Charter as well as of relevant Security Council resolutions. The Council should give priority attention to the issue of children affected by armed conflict. China supports the important role of the Special Representative on the issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict, in accordance with the Council's mandate.

Since armed conflicts have varied causes, protection measures for children affected by armed conflict should be established based on relevant factors of each particular situation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Sanctions remain the choice of last resort at the Council's disposal to address situations that pose a threat to international peace and security. China has always advocated caution in adopting sanction measures.

Thirdly, efforts should be made to ensure the effectiveness of various programmes and plans to protect children while adhering to the principle of national ownership. Governments bear the primary responsibility to protect children affected by armed conflict. The actions of relevant United Nations entities are meant to support and supplement Government actions. The Security Council and its Working Group in Children and Armed Conflict should strengthen communication with the Governments concerned. The Secretary-General and his Special Representative should establish a channel for sharing information at the earliest possible moment and maintain contact thereafter. The Council should consider the information provided by all the relevant parties to an armed conflict, particularly that of the Government.

Fourthly, the long-term impact of armed conflict on children must be addressed seriously. Comprehensive measures must be adopted to ensure the return of children affected by armed conflict to society and the resumption of their normal life. In promoting post-conflict reconstruction, the international community should ensure the return of children to their families, schools and societies as a priority matter. In this connection, the international community must provide sufficient resources, scale up development assistance and redouble efforts in the areas of poverty elimination, universal education and the promotion of sustainable development in order to provide safe and favourable conditions for the development of children.